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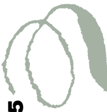

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SPECIAL ISSUE

The Waste Land: A Hundred Years Later / *La tierra baldía*: cien años después

INTRODUCTION

Viorica Patea & Dídac Llorens-Cubedo
Universidad de Salamanca & UNED

For Ezra Pound, literature is "news that STAYS news" (Pound 1987, 29). Does *The Waste Land* stand the test of time one hundred years after its publication? What does it mean to us now? Is it still a revolutionary poem? Does it mean something different in the twenty-first century than in the twentieth? After the many exegeses, which have become an industry, is the poem still the avantgarde revolutionary poem it was in 1922? In what way did it influence later generations of poets? Thinking of the one hundred years that have elapsed, is the poem as timely in 2022 as it was in 1922? Do the voices we hear in the poem speak from the same fears and weariness that people have one century later? This commemorative issue of *The Waste Land*, as it celebrates its centennial, seeks to provide answers to the many questions the poem raises today.

When *The Waste Land* was published in 1922, the *annus mirabilis* of Anglo-American letters, it became an "instant" classic. As soon as it was published, it enshrined Eliot as one of the most authoritative voices as poet and critic of his time. Pound recognized the poem as "the justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment, since 1900" (Pound 1950, 180),[1] which is to say that *The Waste Land* epitomizes not only Eliot's personal achievement, but the coming of age of modernism as a movement, the investment of twenty years in the creation of the modernist idiom.

A polyglot poem, written in seven languages, *The Waste Land* is an encyclopedic epic ranging across different cultures and literary periods. From "April is the cruellest month" to "Shantih shantih shanti", the poem spans 433 lines, full of allusions to Hindu, Buddhist and Christian texts, ancient and modern literature, and popular music. With its juxtapositions, collages, unprecedented shifts in tone, time and space, *The Waste Land* shaped a new poetic language based on the technique of non-figurative visual arts. The dazzling gaps, ruptures and discontinuities marked a turning point in English poetry, a watershed as important as that of the advent of the *Lyrical Ballads* in 1798. In his relentless experiment with form, style, meter, and voice, Eliot did away with stable literary conventions, with patterns of form and style, while forging new paradigms for poetic expression and systems of belief. Soon *The Waste Land* became part of modern consciousness. It is without doubt one of the most significant poems of the twentieth century, presiding over poetic language well into the twenty-first.

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The Waste Land is a succession of dramatic monologues in different voices, serving as a survey course in comparative literature of the European tradition and beyond. It provides a poetic illustration of Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), a text that can be considered his modernist manifesto, where he defined his concept of tradition and of the mind of Europe, "which abandons nothing *en route*, which does not superannuate or wither Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawings of the Magdalenian draughtsmen" (Eliot 2014a, 107) –a mind which also plunges its roots into archaic cultures and Oriental religious and philosophical texts.

The Waste Land is also an illustration of a new method of composition, "the mythical method" (Eliot 2014b, 479). In "*Ulysses*, Order and Myth" (1923), Eliot credits Joyce with its invention, but the article indirectly expounds the principles that informed his own poem. Eliot defined the mythical method as a "continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity," which implied "a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history" (Eliot 2014b, 478). Joyce used Homer's *Odyssey* as a plan for/of his *Ulysses* (1923); Eliot, in turn resorted to the web of classical and anthropological sources in which he grounds *The Waste Land*. Thus, as he remarks in his notes to the poem, the plan, title and set of values draw on Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, two studies that center on the quest for the font of life and regeneration. *The Waste Land* is a vortex of many interweaving paths constructed from fragments of history, pagan rituals, medieval legends and romance, biblical journeys and modern expeditions, which melt into the present consciousness of the narrating voice. Action becomes archetypal, transcends the boundaries of a single culture and epoch. The various narratives unfold simultaneously in historical, mythical and psychological times, and take on the shape of an internalized quest for consciousness. In its search for origins and identity, *The Waste Land* looks beyond the founding monuments of Western tradition into the more remote beginnings of Eastern culture –it refers to the Upanishads and Buddhist scriptures– and further back into archaic myths.

From the very beginning, *The Waste Land* became a cultural icon of modern pessimism and post-war desolation. For Edmund Wilson, it expressed the spiritual "drouth" of the modern world. Eliot was "speaking not only for a personal distress, but for the starvation of a whole civilization –for people grinding at barren office routine in the cells of gigantic cities, drying their souls in eternal toil" (Wilson 2004, 86). I.A. Richards saw in the poem what continues to be the prevailing interpretation today: the expression of a "sense of desolation, of uncertainty, of futility, of the groundlessness of aspirations, of the vanity of endeavor, and a thirst for a life-giving water which seems suddenly to have failed" (Richards 2004, 140). Today we still read *The Waste Land* as a post-apocalyptic cry, "one of the most

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[1] Pound in a letter to his former teacher Felix. E. Schelling written on July 9, 1922: "Eliot's *Waste Land* is I think the justification of the 'movement,' of our modern experiment, since 1900".

terrifying poems of a terrifying century" (Bush 1984, 71). Yet Eliot dismissed the pessimism scholars attributed to a generation as a "simple grouse against life" (Eliot 1971, 1). In time, the radical poet of impersonality proved to be quite personal, in his confessions of his own suffering and of the marital crisis out of which the poem was born. This autobiographical dimension is strengthened with the publication of the sealed correspondence between Eliot and his lover, Emily Hale, on January 2, 2020,[2] through which light has been shed on the last mysteries of Eliot's poems.

A hundred years after its publication, *The Waste Land* continues to make an impression on us; it has become part of our postmodern consciousness. Because it addresses the eternal questions of human beings about their position in the universe, it is timely as well as timeless. Its poetic expression and ongoing relevance apply to "current events" as well as to the articulation of selfhood. This emptiness resonates in the music and rhythm of the poem, thereby sustaining language in a way that creates the foundation for renewal. It expresses despair, yet this despair is projected in a framework of poetry that creates a potential foundation for renewal while beautifully providing its readers with perspective and sustenance.

Although the many explications and exegeses have tamed its spirit, the poem still strikes a student reader in a much the same way that it struck readers in 1922. Its novelty may have faded, yet its power remains.

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This special issue, dedicated to the hundredth anniversary of Eliot's *The Waste Land*, presents new global perspectives of this epochal poem, one that has become a hallmark of modernity, and which remains an icon of our postmodern age. This centennial issue is divided into two parts: Part I comprises fourteen critical, scholarly, essays on *The Waste Land* by scholars from five different countries (Spain, USA, UK, Germany, and Russia). Part II is dedicated to creative artwork in commemoration of Eliot's poem, including poetry written by four poets from the USA, Spain and Mexico, paintings by two artists from Germany and Spain, and a special section on music (the recording of a recital titled "Then Spoke the Waste Land: Songs and Fragments," performed in 2022).

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The essays reflect various approaches of scholars from different generations, renowned Eliotians, who have shaped our understanding of the poet as well as a younger generation of scholars who approach the vibrancy and complexities of the poem from different angles and that attest to its freshness even today. While these authors raise new questions, address some continuing ones, or offer new discoveries on Eliot's text, they consistently open his work to avenues worthy of further exploration. This special issue offers international and cross-cultural perspectives on *Eliot's The*

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[2] To be edited by John Haffenden, Eliot's *Letters to Emily Hale* will be published in 2022 (see especially, Brooker 2022).

Waste Land, covering areas of interest ranging from poetry criticism to literary theory, translation studies and philosophy.

Readers already familiar with Eliot scholarship will recognize the names of distinguished Eliot scholars in this volume: Jewel Spears Brooker, Michael Alexander, Clive Wilmer, Charles Altieri, and Teresa Gibert, as well as well-established critics in other fields of research such as Fiona Sampson, poet and nineteenth century biographer and critic, and Francisco Collado, an eminent Spanish scholar in the field of the postmodern novel. This special issue also hosts a younger, highly accomplished generation of scholars such as Natalia Carbajosa, Rhett Forman, Leonor María Martínez, Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, or Anna Kurasova. They not only present an eclectic, international gathering of ideas, but they also invigorate Eliot studies in new areas.

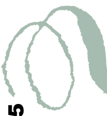
Jewel Spears Brooker's "Inside / Outside: Eliot, Perspective, and the Modernist Moment" approaches the poem from a philosophical perspective and enquires into the possibility of knowing time while still living in time; it argues that Eliot advocates, in his prose and in poems such as "Gerontion" and *The Waste Land*, the need to adopt a binary perspective: a platform inside history based on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley, which ensures its veracity, as well as a point of view outside history, based on James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, which guarantees its understanding. Charles Altieri investigates the way in which Anglo-American modernist poets distinguish themselves from their nineteenth century predecessors in their rendering of subjectivity through the philosophical lens of William James, F.H. Bradley and Hegel. Altieri defines Eliot's impersonality as "transpersonality," which consists in an interweaving of subject and object within experience, leading Eliot to a concrete poetic language, "an invitation to feel in terms of what is experienced rather than in terms of the needs of the ego." This faith in concreteness and immediate sensuousness changes mere evocative presentations of situations or direct statements of feelings into a new language of impersonality and experience, that is, of subjective states, different from mere interpretation: "What matters is not who the self is, but how it can find a ground that resists the value of diversity and cultivation, and instead offers the possibility of total commitment." Clive Wilmer, a distinguished poet and critic, traces Eliot's evolution from his earlier poems, "Prufrock" and "Gerontion." In "Language as Experience in 'Gerontion' and *The Waste Land*," *he* pursues the notion of experience and language in Eliot's dramatic monologues in *The Waste Land*, illustrating his debt to his Victorian predecessors, and to the versification of the Jacobean playwrights as well as to Jules Laforgue's irony; they all helped Eliot create a poem of many fragments and voices that coalesce in one experiencing consciousness. Dídac Llorens-Cubedo furthers the investigation of the dramatic nature of *The Waste Land*, reading the poem as a proto-dramatic text and a springboard for Eliot's future career as a dramatist, while tracing the symbolism and imagery of the poem in his later dramas.

In his moving memoir, poet and reputed medieval scholar, Michael Alexander, focuses on the impact and reputation Eliot's poem had in the nineteen twenties in literary circles, especially from the Bloomsbury group of writers. He traces Eliot's source for the Grail legend in Sir Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'arthur* (1470)

and unearths the many biblical connotations of Eliot's symbols. He focuses on the Christian dimension of the poem, which most critics overlook, and re-interprets the final message of a poem famous for its apocalyptic pessimism, providing an in-depth analysis that changes the paradigm though which the poem has been read until now. Along the same lines, poet and critic Rhett Forman's "Reading *The Waste Land* in Our Ideological Age" makes a case for the religious and spiritual message of the poem, which has quite often been minimized. Pursuing the theoretical implications of allusions, as studied by Robert Alter's *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* (1989) and Ziva Ben-Porat's "The Poetics of Literary Allusion" (1976), Forman focuses on "The Burial of the Dead" as a case in point, highlighting the hidden religious connotations and many Biblical ramifications in relation to the "The Order for the Burial of the Dead" from The Book of Common Prayer. Viorica Patea's "'With Inviolable Voice': Eliot's Redeeming Word in *The Waste Land*" advances a reading of the poem's despair and notion of selfhood, taking Soren Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death* (1849) as a reference. This article offers a reading of the poem's "despair" in the light of Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism as being congenial with the philosophy of the Vedanta and Buddhism in which Eliot grounds the poem. In this sense, Eliot is a twentieth-century Dante who goes beyond the frontiers of European culture in a quest for its origins. Eliot does not pursue a form of syncretism; he preserves the specificity and concreteness of each system of belief while showing the self's call to the transcendent which is a common impulse, regardless of the culture one belongs to.

Leonor Martínez's "Reading the More-Than-Human World in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*" opens a new approach to Eliot's poem from the most recent eco-critical theoretical presuppositions. She interprets *The Waste Land* as an ecopoem that anticipates the challenges of the Anthropocene, focusing her attention on the multiple references to waste and environmental degradation in the aftermath of the Great War, which brought the world to the brink of collapse. She contends that, in a secularized atmosphere, Eliot seeks solace in the "more than human world," which includes nature and the transcendent. Poet and scholar Fiona Sampson and Francisco Collado-Rodríguez peruse the poem from a postmodern perspective. Sampson's "*The Waste Land*: Meaning and Multiplicity" views the poem from within the British twenty-first century lyric tradition, and argues that the current mode of contemporary postmodern poetics –keen on the proliferation of meanings, multiplicity of sources of authority or identity politics– represent a counter example to *The Waste Land*'s need for coherence. From a different angle Collado, in "*The Waste Land* and the Release of Social Energy," underscores Eliot's appeal to postmodern writers. He offers "an Eliotean reading of Thomas Pynchon's fiction" and pursues Eliot's bearing on Pynchon's oeuvre, highlighting the latter's adoption of many Eliotian symbols, motifs and images. The narrator's bouncy character, the condition of some characters as both living and dead, the evocation of the violet hour, and the appearance of Belladonna or the "lady of situations": all these are constants in Pyncheon's complex experimental style throughout his narrative oeuvre.

The last group of essays center on Eliot's influence. Anna Kurasova undertakes a comparative approach between Eliot's poem and the poetry of the



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great Russian poet Anna Akhmatova, who believed Eliot was a kindred spirit. In her comparison, Kurasova finds another source for Eliot's "third" and traces it back to Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. The remaining three essays focus on translation and Eliot's bearing on Spanish poets. Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan, in "Romantic Eliot: The Reception of T.S. Eliot in Spain in the Second Half of the Twentieth Century," offers a general overview of Eliot's reception in Spain and the poets he has influenced, with a particular interest in three Spanish poets: José Ángel Valente, Andrés Sánchez Robayna and Antonio Colinas. He contends that postwar poets looked up to Eliot as a mentor who showed them how to renew poetic language and argues that Spanish poets considered Eliot not a modernist, but a romantic forebear. Natalia Carbajosa's "*The Waste Land* in Spanish a Hundred Years Later: The Case of Claudio Rodríguez" follows the path of influence through translation but not of Eliot's admirers but of those poets who were distanced from the Eliotian doctrine, like the Spanish poet Claudio Rodríguez, who was nevertheless influenced by him and who translated *The Waste Land* and other poems. Last but not least, Teresa Gibert both revisits and extends her pioneering work on Spanish translations of Eliot's poetry with "*The Waste Land* in Spanish Translation (1930-2022)," discussing the many linguistic challenges that thirty-five translators, poets, amateurs, and scholars have faced, and the solutions they have come up with.

As editors of this special issue, we would like to thank both the *Revista Canaria de Estudios Ingleses* and the scholars, poets and artists whose work and enthusiasm have made it possible. Their contributions attest, one hundred years after its publication, to the richness, vitality and contemporary significance of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*.[3]

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[3] This special issue has received funding from the research project "T.S. Eliot's Drama from Spain: Translation, Critical Study, Performance (TEATREL-SP) (PGC2018-097143-A-I00)".

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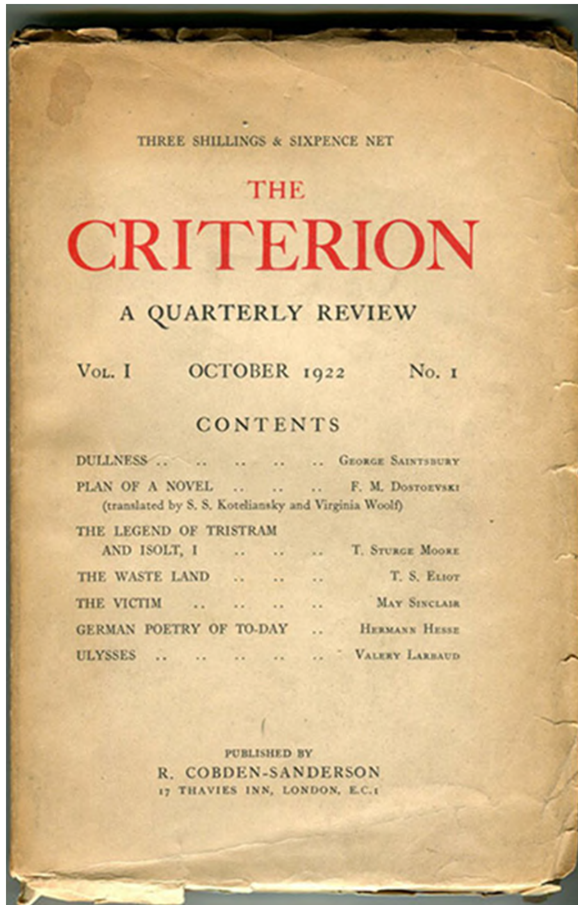
THE MODERNIST MOMENT AND FORM / EL MOMENTO Y LAS FORMAS DE VANGUARDIA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INSIDE / OUTSIDE: ELIOT, PERSPECTIVE, AND THE MODERNIST MOMENT

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Abstract

How can the poet, confined to the ruins of contemporary history, gain the perspective required to understand it? Perception occurs in time; perspective requires a view that transcends time and place. Eliot's position, discussed in his prose and illustrated in "Gerontion" and *The Waste Land*, was that art requires a binary perspective. To be true to the moment, the poet needs a perspective within history; to understand it, he needs a perspective that transcends it. In "Gerontion," Eliot draws on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley to generate a platform from which to understand his moment; in *The Waste Land*, he draws on the work of J.G. Frazer and Jessie Weston to create a timeless reference point.

Keywords: "Gerontion," *The Waste Land*, perspective / point of view, time, history.

DENTRO / FUERA: ELIOT, LA PERSPECTIVA Y EL MOMENTO VANGUARDISTA

Resumen

¿Cómo puede el poeta, confinado en las ruinas de la historia contemporánea, adquirir la perspectiva adecuada para comprenderla? La percepción se produce en el tiempo; la perspectiva requiere una visión que trascienda el tiempo y el lugar. En este artículo sostengo que el punto de vista de Eliot, que él expuso en su prosa e ilustró en "Gerontion" y *La tierra baldía*, era que el arte requiere una perspectiva binaria. Para ser fiel al momento, el poeta necesita una perspectiva dentro de la historia; para entenderla, necesita una perspectiva que la trascienda, y necesita ambas simultáneamente. En "Gerontion", recurre a la filosofía de F.H. Bradley para generar un marco desde el que entender sus pesadillas y las de su época; en *La tierra baldía*, recurre a la obra de J.G. Frazer y a la de Jessie Weston para crear un punto de referencia eterno.

Palabras clave: "Gerontion", *La tierra baldía*, perspectiva / punto de vista, tiempo, historia.

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> Elam, Ninevah, Babylon were… beautiful vague names, and the total ruin of those worlds had as little significance for us as their very existence. But France, England, Russia, these too would be beautiful names… And we see now that the abyss of history is deep enough to hold us all. (Paul Valéry 1919, 182)

In April 1919, the *Athenaeum* published Paul Valéry's "La crise de l'esprit," a brilliant analysis of the aftermath of the Great War. Valéry maintained that the catastrophe could only be explained as a collapse of the mind of Europe, a moral and mental breakdown in which her greatest virtues had led to unimaginable evil. Eliot praised this "meditation on the decay of European civilization" as "extraordinary" and "prophetic" (Eliot 1927; Prose 2015, 156). In *The Waste Land*, he alluded to it by imagining "hooded hordes swarming / Over endless plains" and representing "Falling towers / Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London" bursting "in the violet air." (Eliot 2015, 69).[1]

Valéry's image of psychological and spiritual collapse struck home with Eliot, who was struggling not only with the ruins of the mind of Europe but with his own psychological breakdown. The challenge for the poet, addressed in his 1923 review of Ulysses, was finding a reference point that would enable artists to represent both the double nightmare of the 1919 moment and, simultaneously, the historical pattern of which it was a part. "[T]o make the modern world possible for art," contemporary artists would have to generate binary perspectives, points of view that were at the same time both inside and outside of their moment in history. In "Gerontion," Eliot drew on the philosophy of F.H. Bradley to create an epistemological image for representing an old man's collapsing mind and, concurrently, the "fractured atoms" of his whirling world; in *The Waste Land*, he drew on E.B. Tylor, J.G. Frazer, and Jessie Weston to generate a mythic platform for dealing simultaneously with the nightmares of the post-war generation and the fears that had bedeviled humans from the dawn of time.

THE HISTORICAL SENSE

> This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. (Eliot 2014, 106)

Eliot's focus on perspective began as early as 1910 with the characterization of J. Alfred Prufrock, who reflects that there will be "Time to turn back and descend the stair, / With a bald spot in the middle of my hair – / (They will say: 'How his hair is growing thin!')" (Eliot 2015, 6). In this analysis of self-consciousness, Prufrock is both descending the stair and as he does so seeing himself from above and behind, through the eyes of others. In 1914, while immersed in the epistemology of F.H. Bradley, Eliot focused more specifically on perspective and point of view as he

[1] All quotations from Eliot's poetry in this essay are from Eliot 2015, edited by Ricks and McCue.

commenced what was to be a lifelong preoccupation with history. Despite his later remark that he was influenced primarily by Bradley's prose style, his early writing indicates that he was strongly influenced by Bradley's notion of "knowing the real," versions of which appear in his early criticism and post-war poems. Bradley begins by distinguishing between appearance and reality (the part and the whole): appearance being truth from a limited perspective, and reality truth from an ultimate perspective. Knowing the real, to the extent that it can be known, involves an awareness of the part and simultaneously of various perspectives thereon. In other words, knowing requires transcendence from chaos and disorder to perspectival platforms that simultaneously include the chaos and provide perspective on it. To illustrate the challenge of discerning truth, Bradley suggests imagining oneself suspended in space over a moving stream.

> Let us fancy ourselves in total darkness hung over a stream and looking down on it. The stream has no banks, and its current is covered and filled continuously with floating things. Right under our faces is a bright illuminated spot on the water, which ceaselessly widens and narrows its area, and shows us what passes away on the current. And this spot is our now... behind our heads there is something perhaps which reflects the rays from the lit-up now... Outside this reflection is utter darkness, within it is gradual increase of brightness until we reach the illumination immediately below us. (Bradley 1897, I.54-55; quoted in Brooker 1994, 85-87)

The allegory continues, with similarities to Plato's allegory of the cave, but for present purposes, several points should be underscored. The image contains two levels: (1) the moving current with its flotsam and jetsam; and (2) the platform above the stream, momentarily fixed in place, permitting a person in the stream to view portions of it as they pass in and out of the spotlight of his "now." The objects in the stream are continuous with each other, and the stream is continuous with the bank, which is continuous with a larger area, which is in darkness, which is continuous with reality. The viewing station is an imaginary construct, a "fancy" in the mind of the knower. Being finite, he is and must remain in the stream (in time, in history). Unable to remove himself from the current, he generates an abstraction which enables him to be in the flow and achieve a limited perspective on it. The ordinary person simply flows with the current, but the poet (the philosopher, the historian) imagines a reference point that will enable him to view the stream from a binary perspective, both from within the moving stream and above it from a temporarily fixed position.

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In 1919, Eliot published his landmark essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and "Gerontion," his first major poem after completing his dissertation on Bradley. Written before the ink was dry on the Treaty of Versailles (28 June 1919), each in its own way reflects the post-war moment, and each deals with the challenge of discovering a perspective from which one could make sense of contemporary history. In these signature works, Eliot deals with the moment by imagining points of view that facilitate binary perspectives. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he associates individual artists and their works with the moving stream, and tradition with the ideal from which they can be understood. He defines tradition as a "living

whole of all the poetry that has ever been written," thinking of literature, as he says in 1923, "not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as 'organic wholes,' as systems in relation to which, and only in relation to which, individual works have their significance" (Eliot 1919; *Prose* 2015, 106, 458). Because the individual works are part of one thing, they are systematically connected, which means that adding new works changes the whole. Paradoxically, then, the platform (tradition) is both inside and outside of time, constantly adjusting itself as new individuals enter the stream and as the critic's awareness expands or contracts. "The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new... work of art among them." The point of view from which one can view individual artists is generated by continuous "comparison and contrast." The critic who puts in the "great labour" of mastering a broad range of individual artists will gain a vision of the literary tradition as unitary, simultaneous, and ideal. He will be equipped with a binary perspective, which Eliot refers to as the "historical sense... a sense of the timeless as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together" (Eliot 1919; *Prose* 2015, 106).

In "Gerontion," Eliot creates a bewildering proliferation of perspectives by using a "Chinese box" structure of houses within houses. Each house becomes a viewpoint for understanding less comprehensive houses which randomly materialize and disappear, and in an allusion to the 1919 moment in Versailles, multiplying perspectives in a "wilderness of mirrors." As in Bradley's doctrine of internal relations, all of the houses are connected so that the whole (the ideal, the epistemological platform) of which they are a part is continuously changing, as new houses are added and as the speaker shifts from context to context. The speaker introduces himself in the opening lines as old and blind; as revealed by his name, he is of Greek descent. A senile Socrates, he lives in a rented house and spends his time thinking and waiting for death. His "decayed house" is located in an unkempt yard on a windy knob in post-war Europe. He is unable to see his house, not just because he has lost his sight and is losing his mind, but because he is and always has been inside. The notion that being inside a structure (a stream, a house, a moment, a life) limits perspective is a commonplace in philosophy and literature, having as a correlative the idea that understanding requires distancing oneself and, in the argument Eliot makes, perceiving both inside and outside simultaneously. But although confined within his house, Gerontion is afforded fleeting perspectives, in large part because he is a thinker, an intellectual who meanders in thought through various houses in no particular order. The most comprehensive house for understanding his post-war moment is History, which functions in the poem as Tradition does in the essay.

> ...Think now,
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities. Think now
> She gives when our attention is distracted
> And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
> That the giving famishes the craving. (Eliot 2015, 32)

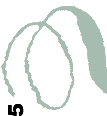
Compounding the complexity, Gerontion associates the house of History with the womb of a seductive and deceitful whore. In the last lines, he finds that his "thousand deliberations" are no more than "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season," musings which "multiply variety / In a wilderness of mirrors," largely because all of the occupants are, like himself, "Tenants of the house" (Eliot 2015, 33). As I discussed in detail in *Mastery and Escape*, the structure of "Gerontion" includes many interconnected houses, all offering perspectives on contemporary history (Brooker 1994, 81-109).

THE MYTHICAL METHOD RECONSIDERED

> Psychology... ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of the narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history... It is a step, I seriously believe, toward making the modern world possible for art. (Eliot 1923; *Prose* 2014, 478-479)

In "Gerontion," Eliot draws principally on Bradley's neo-idealism, but in *The Waste Land*, he draws principally on the social sciences, including E.B. Tyler's *Primitive Culture* (1871), a landmark in anthropology and cultural evolution, Frazer's massive catalogue in comparative religion, *The Golden Bough* (1890, 1906-1915), and Jessie Weston's study of the Grail legends, *From Ritual to Romance* (1920). In a note to *The Waste Land*, he refers serious readers to this scholarship, mentioning Frazer and Weston by name. His indebtedness is confirmed on the first page, for the title is an allusion to the waste land in Frazer and Weston, and the epigraph features the Sibyl of Cumae, a central character in *The Golden Bough*. But more important than Eliot's references to the content of the ancient narratives is his adaptation of the method used to re-construct them. The social scientists used fragments of vanished religions and cultures to imagine the whole (by definition, an abstraction) which could then be used as a platform for understanding the fragments with which they had begun. The fragments at issue are what Tyler termed "survivals," bits and pieces of primitive life and thought that have survived intact into different and alien contexts (Brooker 2018, 63). In their quest for lost originals, scientists hypothesized that these decontextualized fragments were remnants of a single myth. A rough analogy of the process would be using a few random pieces of a jigsaw puzzle to imagine the missing image of which they had been a part, and then using the abstraction to imagine missing pieces, a dialectical process that continuously refines the image of the lost original.

Although Eliot rejected Frazer's positivism (from magic to religion to science) and disagreed with his interpretations, he felt that the Frazerian method of juxtaposing largely uninterpreted fragments provided a starting point for generating the epistemological position from which to gain a more comprehensive perspective on ancient and contemporary history (Brooker and Bentley 1990, 48-49). As Professor Bentley and I argued in *Reading "The Waste Land,"* one way of passing beyond the moment,



> one way of manufacturing a synthetic perspective, a place from which the feeling of seeing from the outside can be juxtaposed with the problem of being trapped on the inside, is by alluding to ancient myths. Alluding without explanation to many myths generates an abstraction, something outside ourselves in both time and space. (Brooker and Bentley 1990, 52)

Eliot's most explicit statement on the "mythical method" is contained in his review of *Ulysses*, the core of which is quoted above. With Joyce's *Ulysses* and Wyndham Lewis's *Tarr* as examples, he maintains that the perspective associated with the narrative method –that is, viewing the world from within the stream of time– is not only limited, but also inadequate for artists in the early twentieth century; on the other hand, the perspective arising from the mythical method enables one to imagine a platform outside the stream. The narrative method, in which events and situations exist as links in a chain, misrepresents the reality of the moment in 1919. Viewed from the inside, this history (any history) is "an immense panorama of futility and anarchy"; viewed from the outside, history assumes a shape and reveals significance, making the "modern world possible for art" (Eliot 2014, 479, 478). To grasp the shape, as argued in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," one must temporarily transcend the moment and experience "the temporal and the timeless together" (Eliot 2014, 106).

BINARY PERSPECTIVES IN *THE WASTE LAND*

> "These fragments I have shored against my ruins." (Eliot 2015, 71)

Tyler's definition of survivals is especially helpful in reading *The Waste Land*, a poem littered with "withered stumps of time," decontextualized fragments in various languages assembled without conjunction or context from diverse civilizations spanning millennia. The epigraph is a first century fragment in Latin, which embeds a pre-historic fragment in Greek, and the final paragraph is a cascade of fragments in Latin, Greek, Italian, French, and Sanskrit, with an English language insertion –"These fragments I have shored against my ruins." Some of the fragments, as suspected by Eliot's earliest readers, are decontextualized fragments of the poet's private life, a suspicion confirmed by the release in 2020 of love letters to his American friend, Emily Hale.[2]

The distinction between survivals and allusions, as I argued in *T.S. Eliot's Dialectical Imagination*, is important in achieving perspective on the "heap of broken images" that constitutes *The Waste Land* (Brooker 2018, 63). Eliot himself refers to this distinction in responding to a reader of *Ash-Wednesday*. "The line beginning

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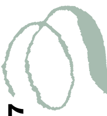
[2] Eliot's letters to Emily Hale, under seal at Princeton University for fifty years, were opened to the public on 2 January 2020 and are being edited by John Haffenden for publication in 2022. Quotations from these letters in this essay are from my transcription at Princeton in 2020.

Ash-Wednesday is a straight borrowing and not an allusive borrowing. That is an important distinction."[3] "Straight borrowings" or survivals are fragments from the remote or recent past, like a prayer in Sanskrit from the Upanishads or the rubble of Verdun along the River Meuse. Allusions, by contrast, are interpretations of the past emanating from the mind of a contemporary, like the opening allusion to *The Canterbury Tales* or the allusion in part v to Christ on the road to Emmaus. Neither allusions nor survivals alone are capable of generating a binary perspective, but both together, co-existing in the mind of a person who is aware of his own ephemerality, can generate a platform from which the feeling of being trapped on the inside co-exists with the feeling of seeing from the outside.

As an illustration of the distinction between allusions and survivals, consider the Shakespearean frame of "A Game of Chess." This section of *The Waste Land* begins with an allusion to *Antony and Cleopatra*. "The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Glowed on the marble" (Eliot 2015, 58) echoes Enobarbus's description of Cleopatra's ceremonial boat as it moves down river toward her first meeting with Antony: "The barge she sat in, like a burnish'd throne, / Burn'd on the water" (II. ii.1). As a man in contemporary London observes a woman observing herself in a mirror, he is nearly blinded by the reflection in the glass of the flames of a candelabra and the glitter of jewels, a scene that sparks a fleeting thought of the Queen's barge, burnished by sunlight on water, resembling a throne of gold. "A Game of Chess" ends with a survival from *Hamlet* (IV.v), "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night," a verbatim quotation of Ophelia's farewell to the ladies of the court in Denmark, after which, driven mad by Hamlet's rebuke, she drowns herself. The allusion to *Antony and Cleopatra* is an interpretation by a post-war Londoner; the survival from *Hamlet* is a poignant farewell by an innocent girl driven mad by a prince. The first is ironic, the second, pathetic; the first, subjective, the last, objective. The voice of the man who alludes to Cleopatra does not take us out of the cluttered boudoir or the local pub. The voice of mad Ophelia, arriving intact from the past, is not only more powerful, but takes us out of the bedroom and the pub and generates the binary perspective, inside and outside of contemporary history, from which we can view all the women in this section of the poem with more objectivity. The note of tragedy in Ophelia's valediction connects these women with each other, and also with the men who shaped their ends. The models for the women include Vivien Eliot and Emily Hale, whom Eliot identified as the hyacinth girl (Southam 157; Brooker 2022; Eliot 2019).

The most striking example of survivals in Eliot's poetry are his epigraphs and the avalanche of fragments in the final paragraph of *The Waste Land*. Epigraphs, like titles, are not related to opening lines, but to the poem as a whole. Like the scream of Agamemnon in the epigraph of "Sweeney among the Nightingales," these fragmentary voices arriving from outside the poet in time and space result in sharp juxtapositions of the temporal and the timeless. In the two epigraphs associated with



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[3] Eliot to H. Warner Allen, 25 May 1960. Forthcoming in Eliot, *Letters*.

The Waste Land –one from Conrad, the other from Petronius– the binary perspective is generated by form (the epigraph) and reenforced by content dealing with knowledge and perspective. Eliot's first choice was the passage from *Heart of Darkness* in which Marlow reveals the dying words of the European ivory trader, Mistah Kurtz.

> Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision –he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath– "The horror! The horror!" (Conrad 1988, 68; Eliot 1971, 3)

Marlow's interpretation of "The horror!" associates it with a "supreme moment of complete knowledge," a transcendent moment in which Kurtz, teetering between life and death, has a vision of both at once. This perspective is unavailable to Marlow, who speculates that Kurtz is not only in the moment (he is dying) but also on a platform from which he can re-live his entire life in a flash. "The horror," Marlow suggests, stems from Kurtz's binary perspective, his sudden vision of the temporal and the timeless together.

Partially in deference to Pound, who did not consider Conrad weighty enough for the poem, Eliot dropped the epigraph from *Heart of Darkness* and substituted one from the *Satyricon*, a first-century fragment by the Roman satirist Petronius. The fragment of the fragment that Eliot uses is from a banquet scene in which drunken guests tell stories to impress other guests. The host, Trimalchio, boasts that he has seen the revered Sibyl of Cumae, the gatekeeper to the underworld who was consulted by Aeneas when he landed in Italy. As a mortal loved by Apollo, she was granted as many years as the grains of sand she could hold in her hand, but she was not granted perpetual youth. The sensational part of Trimalchio's boast is that this semi-divine prophetess had withered to the size of a cricket and was confined in a bottle, unable to escape, unable to die.

> "Nam Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi
> in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent:
> Σίβνλλα τί Θέλεις; respondebat illa: άπο Θανεῖν Θέλω." (Eliot 2015, 53)

> [With my own eyes, I saw the Sibyl at Cumae hanging in a bottle, and when the boys said to her: "Sibyl, what do you want?" she would always respond, "I want to die."].[4]

This epigraph, like the one from Conrad, deals with knowledge and perspective. But Trimalchio, speaking in Latin some two thousand years ago and quoting a much older character speaking in Greek, is more remote than Kurtz and

[4] Following D.G. Rossetti's mistaken translation of *ampulla*, critics often discuss the Sibyl as suspended in a cage. But the most startling aspect of Trimalchio's picture is that it presents a seer contained within the closed system of a flask or jar. See Brooker and Bentley 1990, 45.

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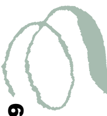
automatically enables a larger perspective on contemporary history. The Cumean Sibyl was a seer, and as such, she was not confined to a single perspective in a single moment. Mortals are bound in time and limited to one perspective at a time, which may change from moment to moment, but at any given moment, it remains single. Mortals do not see the world as a whole, but as a continuously shifting array of sights and sounds. Finite beings, as Eliot argues in his dissertation, do not have the luxury of contemplating one consistent world, but rather, "the painful task of unifying (more or less) jarring and incompatible ones" (Eliot 1916, *Prose* 2014, 362; Brooker and Bentley 1990, 46). The Sibyl, by contrast, exists both inside and outside of time and space. In an earlier stage of her existence, she could grasp the entire history of Rome in a single picture, either before or after it happened, but according to Trimalchio, she has now lost her mythic perspective. Confined in a closed system, limited in her ability to know, she has lost her will to live.

The Sibyl of Cumae is the first of several characters with extraordinary perspective in *The Waste Land*–prophets such as Ezekiel, charlatans such as Madame Sosostris, incarnated divinities such as the post-resurrection Christ, and of special significance, Tiresias, whose centrality is underscored in Eliot's notes.

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (Eliot 2015, 74)



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As Joseph Bentley and I explained in *Reading* "*The Waste Land*," the blind Theban prophet functions as an observer (not an actor) in the poem; he is an impotent voyeur with binary perspective. An "old man with wrinkled female breasts," he is both male and female; "throbbing between two lives," he exists both inside and outside of history, equally at home with bank clerks in London and with Achilles and Agamemnon in the underworld. Though blind, he can "see" a typist clearing her breakfast dishes in London and he waits with her for "the expected guest" (Eliot 2015, 63). From his position inside history, he experiences in detail what is enacted in this sordid affair; from his perspective outside of history, the characters "melt" into each other, revealing the "substance of the poem" (Brooker and Bentley 1990, 53). Tiresias is also a symbol of the complex relationship between knowledge and power. In *Oedipus Rex*, he knows that the curse on Thebes was caused by the king's incest, but he can only see and say; he cannot change the course of history.

The most spectacular juxtaposition of allusions and survivals in Eliot's poetry is found in the last eleven lines of *The Waste Land*.

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
> *Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*

> *Quando fiam uti chelidon* –O swallow swallow
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
> Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
> Shantih shantih shantih (Eliot 2015, 71)

This conclusion contains three allusions. All are in English, all use the first-person pronoun, and all are interpretations of materials related to the controlling myth of the waste land. The image of the Fisher King on the shore is, as Eliot says in his note, an allusion to the connection between the sickness of the king and the aridity of his land in Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. The second allusion, a question, supplements the reference to the mythic materials with a reference to Isaiah 38, where the prophet tells Hezekiah, a king who is "sick unto death," to set his house in order and prepare to die. The third and final allusion –"These fragments I have shored against my ruins"– is also a reference to the mythic materials and, in addition, to the heap of broken images making up the text of this conclusion and of the poem as a whole.

Mixed in with these allusions are seven survivals or, as Eliot refers to them, "straight borrowings." All of these are uninterpreted and thus impersonal fragments, beginning with a childhood nursery rhyme (with mythic roots) and concluding with the formal ending of an Upanishad. The survivals are all in their original languages –Italian, Latin, English, French, and Sanskrit. One of the fragments, the reference to the Provençal poet Arnaut Daniel, deals directly with knowledge and binary perspective. Dante encounters him in the seventh circle of Purgatory, where he now has perspective on his life on earth and a vision of his life in Paradise, and so he joyfully plunges into the refining fire. The survival that is most important for binary perspective, however, is "Shantih shantih shantih," repeated three times as in the conclusion to *The Waste Land*, which takes us out of western culture altogether, generating a platform from which we can imagine the temporal and the timeless together, enabling us to imagine a timeless realm from which to view both contemporary history and the fragments in Eliot's poem.

CONCLUSION

> Now and then, ... I get flashes of perception of a kind of 'pattern' in life, in my life, which are like mystical moments; flashes which... while they last, reconcile one to all the mystery of... suffering in the past. (Eliot to Emily Hale. 31 December 1931)[5]

By the late 1920s, the high modernist moment, brilliantly caught in Valéry's "La crise de l'esprit" and Eliot's *The Waste Land*, had spent itself. Eliot remained

[5] Eliot's letters to Emily Hale are scheduled for publication by Faber and Faber in 2022.

preoccupied with time and history and with the tension between entrapment in time and possibilities for transcending it. But his focus had changed. Instead of a vertical image of a higher platform from which one has greater perspective, he presents a horizontal image of an intersection, a boundary where time and the timeless meet. The turning point was his acceptance of the Incarnation, the central idea of which is that the Logos (the Word, timeless) became flesh (entered history) and dwelt among us (John 1:1). In June 1927, Eliot turned his back on his *papier-mâché* culture, was baptized into the Christian Church, and began edging toward the understanding of time and perspective realized in *Four Quartets*. *Burnt Norton* inaugurates a series of philosophical meditations on being in time, meditations indebted to Eliot's readings in mysticism, his understanding of the Incarnation, and his own spiritual exercises. The three war-time Quartets – *East Coker*, *The Dry Salvages*, and *Little Gidding* – extend and deepen the reflections in *Burnt Norton* by focusing, as in *Little Gidding*, on history as a "pattern of timeless moments," on the intersection of time and the timeless moment that is available on winter afternoons, here and now, in England and nowhere.

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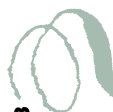

THE CONCEPT OF EXPERIENCE AS GROUNDING FOR *THE WASTE LAND*

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Abstract

This essay tries to understand one shaping logic by which Anglo-American modernist poets distinguish themselves from their nineteenth century predecessors. Both William James and F.H. Bradley developed ways of thinking that did not divide experience into how subjects process objects. Instead there is, first, experience –an encounter with qualities of events. The mind imposes its interest either in experience, mainly mattering for the person, or for the state of the world it makes present. But for Eliot and the Modernists there was something beyond the person and so a call for impersonality as a potentially fuller, more immediate encounter with the world. Eliot's concerns for immediate experience operate in *The Waste Land* primarily to shape how he treats events and voices. But by the end, he cannot but place interpretation against experience in regards to the Thunder. This prepares for Eliot's separation of humanism from the ways faith requires direct experience.

Keywords: Experience, Subject-Object, impersonality, immediacy vs interpretation, *The Waste Land*.

EL CONCEPTO DE EXPERIENCIA COMO FUNDAMENTO DE *LA TIERRA BALDÍA*

Resumen

Este artículo trata de comprender el principio conformador por el que los poetas modernistas angloamericanos tratan de distinguirse de sus predecesores del siglo xix. Tanto William James como F.H. Bradley desarrollaron formas de pensar que no escindían la experiencia en la forma en que los sujetos procesan los objetos. En su lugar se da lo primero, la experiencia: un encuentro con las cualidades de los acontecimientos. La mente impone su interés en que la experiencia sea principalmente importante para la persona o para el estado del mundo que hace presente. Pero para Eliot y los modernistas existe algo más allá de la persona y, por tanto, se impone la necesidad de la impersonalidad como un encuentro potencialmente más pleno e inmediato con el mundo. Las preocupaciones de Eliot por la experiencia inmediata operan en *La tierra baldía* y dan forma a su tratamiento de los acontecimientos y de las voces. Pero al final no puede dejar de oponer la interpretación a la experiencia en lo que respecta al Trueno. Esto nos prepara para la separación que Eliot establece entre el humanismo y el modo en que la fe requiere la experiencia directa.

Palabras clave: experiencia, sujeto-objeto, impersonalidad, inmediatez vs interpretación, *La tierra baldía*.

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Many of us have perhaps forgotten how great *The Waste Land* seemed to sophisticated readers in the 1920's. This forgetting is of course a sign that we have trouble in sharing the response of those readers. Familiarity not only kills but it deadens –which is perhaps worse, since the victim remains a near comatose butt of uncomprehending jokes. But the situation also creates the possibility of criticism as a life-giving practice– a fantasy dear to my heart. I want to show one way we might begin to see the poem as being at least as great as it struck its initial readers.

What criticism may lack now, but was available then, was a fascination with concepts of experience as the fundamental meeting place of mind and world. This fascination stemmed from the possibility that thinking of experience in this way freed the imagination for projecting its basic task as either accurately representing objective conditions in the world, or as stressing how subjective energies try to transform facts into values. I want to return to that intellectual atmosphere. For while we certainly have a great deal of philosophy that is useful when talking about the ideas and ideals of Modernist writing, most of it is not contemporary with the emergence of the revolution that reached its climax with *The Waste Land*. What was contemporary, like the work of Henri Bergson and Edmund Husserl and William James's *Pragmatism* (1907), either tends toward an occasional a glib ease prone to general assertions, or depends on an intense and difficult philosophical concentration on a single process such as intentionality that could not elicit the extended attention of writers. Such work could not suffice for the young Eliot's philosophical ambitions.

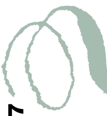
There is, however, a different side of James, as represented by his late work *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (1912), which I think at least parallels and explains, if not helps elicit, what is most radical in the thinking of Modernist poets. Eliot is the most articulate proponent of this new domain of discourse, albeit directed more by F.H. Bradley's criticisms of James than by James's writing itself. At stake for him, and maybe for us, was finding for modernist poetry an entirely different model of writing and of emotion from a Romanticism whose theoretical limitations had, by the end of the nineteenth century, become painfully obvious.

In order to appreciate why this philosophical work by James and Bradley mattered for modern writers, we first have to hear again Coleridge on the work of genius. Genius becomes the transforming power for suffusing the world of fact with a faith that artists could participate in a human version of Divine activity. This power spreads "the tone, the atmosphere, and with it the depth and height of the ideal world... with feelings as fresh as if all had then sprang forth at the first creative fiat" (Coleridge 2006, 476). By the twentieth century, the darker side of these idealizations had become all too evident –Kant's version of human powers had come to justify a dangerous sense of domination over the object world; Hegel's dialectic had succumbed to the forces of ironic self-paralysis because of the always incomplete work of reflective self-consciousness; and Coleridge's marriage of fact and spirit had entered the divorce proceedings for which the course of Victorian poetry could everywhere provide testimony. In sum, by Tennyson and Swinburne, genius had largely become a dependence on the limitations of situated perspectives and was pronouncedly incapable of seeing beyond the limits of personality.

For James and for Bradley, one had to ground philosophical reflection in principles that avoided the options of putting the real within the subject or treating the subject as an object amidst other objects. Both thinkers conceived the fundamental ontological condition to the working of experience as an event from which ideas about subject and object might be formulated. For James, this transfer of perspective could occur without difficulty, while Bradley saw inevitable confusion as we try to parse out what is involved in experience. Yet both philosophers dealt with the problems of analyzing the nature of experience in ways that make it easy to appreciate how Eliot eventually developed a poetry dependent on these ways of understanding the appeal of concrete presence.

I

Now I should be as concrete as possible on the complex issues opened up by concentrating on the constitutive force of experience. Both James and Bradley were sharply critical of what I will call the fundamental divide in the nineteenth century, that between object-based empiricism and the subject-based heritage of Kant. They, like Whitehead after them, proposed instead that subject and object were interpretive categories for handling a more primary condition of "experience" where both co-existed, held together by immediate feeling. Experience provided an elemental and impersonal or transpersonal condition of activity from which both subject and object could be derived, depending on the interests of the one undergoing the experience.



For the purposes of literary criticism, we can break down James's argument in his *Essays in Radical Empiricism* into three basic claims about the nature of experience and the role of consciousness as a function rather than an entity.[1] The first is quite important for poetry because of the role of feeling in providing concrete modes of coordination. In James's view, the fundamental concern for philosophy has to be not "I think" but "I breathe" (James 15), a condition of feeling of the self in the world without depending on so abstract a process as thought or self-reflection from a particular perspective: this concreteness emerges for subjects as "conceptual manifolds" that "are in their first attention mere bits of pure experience" (James 9) made present by feeling. Because the experience is primary and does not derive from anything else, it cannot be explained from outside, for example by categories used for thought. Knowledge always depends on what the mind finds itself involved in:

> My thesis is that if we start with the supposition that there is only one primal material in the world, a stuff of which everything is composed, and if we call that stuff "pure experience," then knowing can be easily explained as a particular sort

[1] William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Anodos Books, 2019), pp. 5-6. This book was originally published in 1912. I have to cite here Maude Emerson, who about fifteen years ago wrote an excellent Berkeley dissertation on Radical Empiricism, titled *Radical Empiricist Poetics in the New York School and Beyond*. I apologize now for not pursuing her ideas then.

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> of relation towards one another into which portions of pure experience may enter... One of the terms becomes the subject of the bearer of the knowledge, the knower, the other becomes the object known. (James 15)[2]

This quotation also introduces the second feature. James is confident that at least two modes of inquiry can work without interfering with each other to explore the experience –as situated object and as situating subject (James 11). The divisions between subject and object fundamental to nineteenth century thought could be derived not from the nature of subjectivity in a world of objects, but from various needs to adapt experience to practice, or in James's terms, to "conjoin" needs for knowledge with subjective desires.[3] The third feature follows logically. Both James and Bradley stress subject positions within experience rather than subjectivities or points of view. This is the great benefit of treating consciousness as a function rather than an entity. If consciousness is not an entity, then it does not need to be grounded in another entity like an ego that offers a specific psychological orientation on the world. Because experience is primary, the person can discover various investments and distributions of the energies of the ego that are unpredictable and gloriously diverse. Subjective states become not a source of meaning, but a mode of inhabiting various kinds of densities with their own shaping influence and structurings of intentionality.[4] Because these inhabitings are intrinsic to the event, they are in principle available to any subject involved in the event.

James seems to me very precise. Where for classical empiricism only sense data is real, radical empiricism is based on taking conjunctive and disjunctive "relations at their face value, holding them to be as real as the terms united by them" (James 37):

> On the principles I am defending, a 'mind' or 'personal consciousness' is the name for a series of experiences run together by certain definite transitions... This is enough for my present point: the common sense notion of minds sharing the same object offers no special logical or epistemological difficulties of its own; it stands or falls with the general possibility of things being in conjunctive relation with other things at all. (James 29)

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[2] See also for James's criticism of subject and object being treated by philosophy as "discontinuous entities" (p. 20 ff.).

[3] "The experience is a member of diverse processes that can be followed away from it along entirely different lines. The one self-identical thing has so many relations to the rest of experience that you can take it in disparate systems of association and treat it as belonging with opposite contexts. In one of these contexts it is your 'field of consciousness'; in an other it is the room in which you sit" (James, 8). Bradley will differ radically on this point because he believes overlapping feelings are involved in each form of inquiry. Innocence is only within the experience, but any kind of unity is lost once one tries to locate either subject or object because interpretation always involves incomplete levels of ideality that accompany the application of concepts.

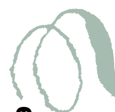
[4] "[As] a room, the experience has occupied that spot and had that environment for thirty years. As your field of consciousness, it may never have existed till now. ...In the real world, fire will consume it. In your mind, you can let fire play over it without effect" (James, 8-9).

James's own prose can seem poetic about the power of conjunctive features of language for making visible the concrete density potential in experience. One can think of prepositions as directing the flow of feeling for any mode of agency capable of tracking the relations they enable:

> Our concepts and our sensations are confluent; successive states of the same ego and feeling of the same body are confluent. Where the experience is not of conflux, it may be... of contiguousness (nothing between); or of likeness; or of nearness; ... or of in-ness; or of and-ness, which last relation would make of however disjointed a world otherwise, at any rate for that occasion a universe 'of discourse." (James 37)

II

It is easy to forget that Hegel was probably the first great modern thinker to ground philosophy in how subject and object come together within the dynamics of experience. It should not be surprising, then, that Bradley also begins there in his bizarre but intelligent effort to correlate pragmatism as an approach to concrete experience with what he considered a necessary Idealism in order to explain how the concepts we use in experience can be stabilized. For my purposes, I need only his account of the nature of experience and how our practical judgments displace us from immediacy into ultimately indeterminate efforts at drawing conclusions. Without access to absolute reason, experience fuses objective and subjective concerns in ways fraught with insuperable problems. T.S. Eliot's dissertation on Bradley posits the difference from James this way:



> The only independent reality is immediate experience or feeling... To think of feeling as subjective, as the mere adjective of a subject, is only a common prejudice... 'My' feeling is certainly in a sense mine. But this is because and in so far as I am the feeling. I do not in consequence know (in the sense of understand) my own feeling better than does an outsider... By the failure of any experience to be merely immediate, by its lack of harmony and cohesion, we find ourselves as conscious souls in a world of objects. (Eliot 1964, 31)

It is characteristic of Eliot to leap immediately to how Bradley helps explain why as conscious souls we suffer from a lack of harmony and cohesion. But Bradley also offers a quite generous account of what is involved in immediate experience that stresses the complex distributions of subjective agency in richer ways than James provides. Several critics have expounded Bradley on immediate experience, so I will address only the relevance of the idea as an inspiration for breaking with Romantic and Victorian poetics.[5] Bradley's denial of the split between subject and object is certainly more attentive to distinctive qualities of experience than what James offers:

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[5] I found Richard Wollheim's *F.H. Bradley* (1969) the most helpful text on Bradley's thought.

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> The experience will not fall under the head of an object for a subject... In my general feeling at any moment there is more than the objects before me, and no perception of objects will exhaust the sense of a living emotion... We in short have experience in which there is no distinction between my awareness and that of which it is aware. There is an immediate feeling, and knowing and a being in one... It is in the end ruin to divide experience into something on the one hand experienced as an object and on the other hand something not experienced at all. (Bradley 87-88, 411)

Once you try to make an object of either the experience or the subject experiencing, you introduce conceptual elements that involve an abstract domain antithetical to the kinds of integrations experience affords: "We should... not be aware of any distinction between that which is felt and that which feels"; rather "We must ask how immediate experience is able to make a special object of itself" (Bradley 95; 93 cf. 96).

This understanding of the interweaving of subject and object within experience offers a powerful sense of why concreteness can matter in writing, especially since that concreteness is, for Bradley, so easily lost when we begin to interpret experience and have to rely on ideas and ideals. There can be a fullness of attention and investment that is in principle free from the distortions created by the self-consciousness basic to rhetorical performance. Bradley's term for this subjective agency within experience is "finite centre." The finite centre is a location of full and intricate feeling that cannot be identified with a self, since a self or identification with a point of view involves interpretation rather than participation. So, there will be divisions and tensions among the conceptual frameworks posited to give the experience significance in social life.

It matters to Bradley, and to Eliot, that imagination takes on reality within these states of experience. "A hard division between the real and the imaginary is not tenable," because experience engenders both, linked in an immense variety of ways that pull against each other. (Bradley 13-14; cf. 92) We can say then that the real is a much more capacious category than that which can be rendered in objective terms. In one sense, this observation elaborates why interpretation is so problematic. Try restraining yourself to accounts of subjective behavior that rely on only one coherent set of predicates. (That narrow reliance on interpretive categories produces the kind of madness we see being acted out in American politics.) For Bradley, diagnosis involves dwelling in possibilities and trying to avoid the risk of our attention coming to rely on explanations. Because he acknowledges that imaginative materials can take on reality, the interdependence between the fictive and the factual offers at least three modes of permission for imaginative writing to assert the claim to modify audiences' senses of reality.

First, because the real cannot be identified with objectivity, one has to alter how we think of what kind of truth values we can assign to assertions about the nature of things. Here is where Bradley has his own version of pragmatic measures of usefulness, such as the idea that anything we can measure we have to take as real. But because he ultimately needs concepts –he cannot be content with simply what works– he develops the intriguing notion of "degrees of reality." Degrees of reality depend on how fully certain assertions can be adapted into the life of

a community. Fantasy has a very low degree of reality because it affects only an individual life. But communities are likely to agree on what is concretely manifest –like the immediate cause of an accident or a thrilling natural phenomenon.[6] That possibility of community agreement was a constant concern for Eliot, starting from the time he did not convert to Buddhism because there was no Buddhist community at Harvard.

The second and third permissions are closely interconnected. It is crucial to understand how this sense of the primacy of experience resists the solipsism to which it seems bound. The key permission here is the fact that the subject of feeling cannot be identified with the ego. Feeling cannot know itself because it discloses conditions that are at once objective and subjective. And these conditions are prior to the kind of interpretation which might limit the event to a distinctive self who is its possessor and who provides a foundation for claims about solipsism. The third permission is the crucial positive side of the critique of solipsism.

So long as one concentrates on the conditions of experience, there can be no ownership of these subject positions. And without ownership, there is the possibility of the particulars of concrete experience being available to all subjects who can participate in how feeling emerges:

> [Immediate] experience ... is a positive non-relational, non-objective whole of feeling. ... My world, of feeling and felt in one, is not to be called 'subjective', nor it is to be identified with myself. That would be a mistake both fundamental and disastrous. Nor is immediate experience to be taken as simply one with any 'subliminal world or any universe of the Unconscious. (Bradley 102)[7]

III

I will argue that Eliot's fascination from graduate school on with concepts of this kind of fusion within experience led to two major breakthroughs in his influential poetics that culminated in *The Waste Land*. First, concreteness must replace efforts by poets to make manifest acts of personal expression that produce a generalizable intelligibility for constructed states. Capturing what solicits feeling within the rendering of experience can afford both novelty and depth for imaginative participation. The second breakthrough is more complex. It involves the logic that led Eliot to his doctrine of impersonality. The complexity arises because what led to that doctrine seems to me more useful and suggestive than the primarily negative

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[6] See especially Chapter V. of *Essays on Truth and Reality*.

[7] See especially Bradley on the priority of feeling over consciousness, 105. The feeling dimension of immediate experience can be activated to incorporate higher Transcendental modes of unity that combine ideal forms of subject and of object. This is the path to Bradley's Absolute, whose reality Eliot denied but whose dream might inevitably affect recollection on immediate experiences like *The Waste Land*'s moment in the hyacinth garden or the experience of Hindu texts.

critique of personality that Eliot gave in the essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). What matters for me are the interwoven possibilities of the concepts of "finite centres" and "degrees of reality," because they have the power to alter substantially how one imagines writing connecting to audiences (Eliot 1964, 124-140). Once one can envision experience defining its own dynamics of feeling, subjectivity becomes not the source of meaning, but a source of intensity based on the agent's and reader's capacity to adapt or fail to adapt to what the situation calls for. (Think of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.") By contrast, Romantic demands for significant meaning simply displace what can matter in how experiences unfold into personal expressive contexts. Similarly, the concept of "degrees of reality" matters because high degrees of reality depend not on describing facts so much as coordinating feelings and imaginative projections. Art can construct states of feeling with high degrees of reality by composing conditions of experience that invite rich participation, even in strange and surprising contexts.

Finally, if we understand Eliot's commitments to impersonality as stemming largely from his understanding of the nature of experience, we can see creative uses of this principle that are a far cry from common critical understandings of this belief as a mode of self-defense. (Ellman 1988) For Eliot, the less a particular subjectivity or personality intervenes by interpreting a particular state, the more that state becomes capable of defining possibilities for any subjective life. (Of course, Eliot did not have to choose as emotionally loaded term as "impersonality." But I think he did so as a way of thumbing his nose at Romantic values, at the importance of perspective in the novel and in painting, at his own psychic needs, and as a means of bringing the work poets do closer to the rhetoric of science.) For working out the implications of Bradley's thinking on finite centres, I prefer the term "transpersonality," because it suggests the active status of the invitation to feel in terms of what is experienced rather than in terms of the needs of the ego.

Even Eliot's graduate school writings express considerable interest in the possibility of the James-Bradley view of experience replacing nineteenth century oppositions between subject and object. He speaks of feeling, not sensation, as the true immediacy of experience (Eliot 2014, 172). And he provides an interesting twist to this immediacy by elaborating a mistrust of explanation more radical even than Bradley's. Eliot insists that we enter an intellectual morass whenever we depart from description (Eliot 2014, 123 ff).

The payoff for this faith in concreteness consists largely in how rarely his poems up through *The Waste Land* indulge in anything but evocative presentations of situations or direct statements of feelings that we interpret at our peril. But oddly, Eliot only brought his thinking on impersonality and experience fully into his art when he faced the challenge of writing a poem with the intended social scope of *The Waste Land*. Consider the simple power of the opening of that poem:

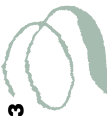
> April is the cruelest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. (Eliot 2015, 55)

We could of course dwell on an anthropological reading that emphasizes how the poem composes a ritual space where societies imagine seeking the possibility of relief from the conditions of a land that has lost its fertility. Indeed, the first line virtually demands that we attend to that dimension of experience in the poem. But I want to use the following lines to take up a concern for the nature of direct experience prior to acts of interpretation that sets up what I see as the fundamental problem with any interpretive structure –that it puts subjective concerns where it thinks it can claim objectivity, while remaining ignorant of how objective conditions are shaping what we take as subjective.

Notice here the way the details engage in active relations that seem to warrant the impersonal generalization and prevent its being taken as a subjective statement rather than itself being an aspect embedded in the conditions of experience. Two grammatical features establish this structure of concrete relations. First there is a series of abstract nouns –"memory," "desire," "winter," "spring"– that are immediately paralleled to other concrete nouns and conditions of physical action. The main effect I think is to have the abstract conditions embedded in the experience in the same way that Bradley and James see that feeling operates. Each kind of noun interprets and establishes reality for the other: in one direction there is the concrete April landscape; in the other there is the placing of these details in something approaching a timeless space of internal relations, specifying a scene of cruel unsatisfying vitality. Here the object becomes suffused by the subjectivities who invest meaning in it, while those subjectivities become at least partially objects because they are so thoroughly spoken for by the painful situation that elicits the plural first person pronoun "us."

Then there is the marvelous chain of participles concluding five of the seven lines (with the other two concluding words stressing material conditions). These participles present a great deal of activity within what would be otherwise a dead spatial scene. That vitality then paradoxically embodies the cruelty of April, because it displays a potential that the prevailing voice can only resent. That vitality is not anchored in any human agency. It is the description itself that in effect causes the situation to be both effective and affective. Here the participial verbs also function as adjectives, as properties of what makes a kind of action take on an aura of timeless presence. Concrete experience stretches out to include abstract states, which have a much more secure home in the landscape than they would in any kind of appeal to interpretation rather than direct evocation.[8]



[8] It is worth noticing that at the end of this first stanza Eliot extends the dynamics of merging abstract and concrete by heaping together pronouns for all three ways of regarding persons. It is as if the experience being rendered requires sounding the full range of pronoun positions: the "I" of a speaker cannot speak for the culture in the same way that a collection of modes of address can. Then the range of voices –from Marie's cries to the imposing authority of the opening of the

It is as if cruelty were not a judgment, but simply a part of describing what confronts the adventurers passing through this waste land. Later in the poem, this condition of agency being driven by quasi-objective forces will pervade most of the individual scenes, quintessentially in the condition of the young man carbuncular and the participants in the game of chess.

We have also to recognize how the various voices that the landscape seems to produce distinguish the kind of experience the poem makes present. Even these casual voices will not submit fully to either subjective or objective framings. There is only the concreteness of experience expanding to include multiple finite centres, rather than either personal feelings or the development of character. At first the voices seem simply personal expressions. But we eventually realize how thoroughly they are pervaded by the alienated angst fundamental to Eliot's images of social life.

As we come to appreciate the pathos of these voices, we might notice that each of the sections in Part I is dominated by a distinctive voice. And even the prophetic voice seems to enjoy itself too much to be taken absolutely seriously. I suspect that this organization of Part I, then, may be an indication of how to read the rest of the poem as primarily the experience not of subjective states, but of voices that weave subjective intensities into what we also must treat as objects caused in part by social conditions. Eliot's thinking about the nature of experience allows him a directly social focus on finite centres organized by speaking. Even the allusions then, become voices that culture preserves and cannot stop interpreting, even if it cannot break through a self-protective irony that simultaneously registers pain while protecting against a deeper sense of absolute loss.

IV

I do not have the time to trace the ways that Eliot gradually worked out what he could do with his understanding of Bradley. Suffice it to say that his first volume moves between poems like "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" that primarily present sequences of images providing transpersonal emblems of a world gone wrong contrasted with what we might call the expressions of Bradleyan subjects like "Prufrock" and "La Figlia Che Piange." These latter poems try to fuse states of immediate feeling with the deeply problematic efforts of speakers to interpret what they feel. They do present experience, but the focus is on particular characters enacting the difficulty of building ideas of self on feelings of awakened agency. For there seems to be no object capable of standing for a self without subjective shaping, and no subjective shaping without the distorting influence of objective historical

second stanza– repeat this sense of range, not by describing situations but by making various kinds of feeling present as aspects of the ways April is experienced by means of utterances.

forces.[9] And the most I can say about *Poems 1920* is that the poems so doggedly pursue impersonality that they largely ignore the need for the qualities of experience that can make readers care about finite centers.

Imagine Eliot's own surprise (and confusion) when he started collecting into one poem moments of "thick" experience constituting aspects of subjective agency that he realized could not be subsumed into ideas or ideals of self-hood. Tiresias may be the speaker of *The Waste Land*, since he does not have a fixed personality, but speaks out of genders fused together in a way that only present and do not interpret. But given his lack of personality, I think we are asked to see the poem primarily as presenting voices establishing states of feeling that engage subjectivity while repelling any effort to interpret those states in psychological terms derived from how we project selves as subjective agents. It is not that the poem does not invite the fleshing out of psychological states. But it wishes that fleshing out to emerge by more intensely inhabiting the projected condition rather than interpreting it for how it affects one's understanding of oneself. We get the presences of shifting finite centers, for which the ideology of personal expression is patently inadequate, as is the cultivation of sensitive artifice. Pursuing the idea of finite centres allows an exploration of complex modes of agency that become potentially available to anyone participating in the poem. Then it becomes possible for an author to take up the epic enterprise of defining and of sharing a culture's emotional pain, suffering, and hopes for relief. One might say the poem walks the psyche back to the states of need that are not deluded. Yet that authorial lucidity makes the figures of agency all the more helpless in the accomplishment of any intentions that might find actionable values in their shared situation. These speaking voices are trapped in a situation where the lucidity that they still possess does no good, because the mind is so caught up in its own constructions that it cannot engage any possibilities that the real might offer.[10]

The first three parts of this walking back develop an increasing fascination with how those voices both engage reality and manifest a kind of denial of what might be painful but also liberating in that reality. All this doubleness changes drastically in the fourth section, with its direct encounter with death. Here, the calm acceptance may be what all the characters need but are evading. Perhaps the first step in transforming the waste land is to become fully aware, at every moment, that life is a brief candle, lighting the fact that nothing we accomplish is likely to endure.

Then the quite different summary voice of the last section attempts to construct an expansive experience, lending everything that we have heard an

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[9] My recent work has been largely driven by Hegel's vision of subjective expression as getting the subjective "I" to equal the forces that make that "I" an object within history. These Bradleyan poems reverse that equation: the objective forces make actual subjective states confused and mystified.

[10] Similar observations led Edmund Wilson, in a review published the year after the poem came out, to conclude "Sometimes we feel that he is speaking not only for personal distress, but for the starvation of an entire civilization" (Wilson, 1922). This passage testifies to the experience of most contemporary readers who came to care for the poem: by eliminating the expressive ego Eliot could try to shape conditions of response that involved an entire civilization.

immediate urgency. This voice calls for the representatives of the culture to directly face their spiritual poverty. But the prevailing social conditions make it unlikely that society will profit from this opportunity. This final section thus ultimately settles for what critics mostly take as the merely formal "Shantih shantih shantih" (Eliot 2015, 719) that concludes this effort.

The best way to thicken how this conflict between the immediacy of experience and our needs for mediating interpretation becomes affectively charged –and so becomes a condition of intense experience– is to turn to two well-known passages in the final section that pretty much summarize the emotional density and complexity of the experience produced by the poem. In both, the psyche recognizes its needs and even the shifts in behavior that might bring relief from the conditions of the waste land. But the responses offered within the poem cannot produce the actions required to address the demands of the situation because the responses are bound to distort what is directly given. The first is the Shackleton scene echoing Christ at Emmaus:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding, wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> –But who is that on the other side of you? (Eliot 2015, 69)

There seem to be two primary aspects to this experience –the mode of awareness by which the subject senses another presence who cannot be seen, and the moment of questioning by which it tries to negotiate the situation. Ultimately it is the question that matters. For the passage develops a sense of a shadowy presence that could, if it manifested, complete the scene. But something blocks that manifestation. One possible response to the passage is that the two agents involved lack the faith necessary to allow this force sufficient presence. Here the sheer unfulfilled possibility is what completes the reality of the scene. Under the conditions of this culture, there can be only what Bradley would call the imaginary dimension necessary for the existence of the scene at all. Yet at the same time, there is also a level of the poem that introduces another kind of faith, a faith that reading itself can produce an involvement in the scene that itself reaches out to all the suffering that has been present in the poem. There is something in the observer, and by implication the reader, that recognizes a shadowy presence promising a more complete mode of being.[11] In that light, the passage opens up the various figures of literal quest that complete the poem –now explicitly an adventure of trying to see beneath speech to some kind

[11] I suspect that many of us create versions of this third always beside us when we project someone hearing our inauthentic voices and manifesting the capacity of making judgments that we do not want to heed.

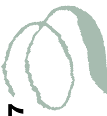
of basic need that may be the full shareable felt content of this experience. Perhaps this shadowy presence is in effect the potential within direct experience for hearing the pain of all these voices, so that individuals can begin to seek changes capable of making this voice intelligible and effective. The psyche is on the verge of knowing both what it cannot know, and that what it cannot know is necessary for its peace. The poem replaces the subject by the shadow of a more expansive center of feeling that one comes to sense as real, but only because one cannot bridge the gap that generates the figure in the first place.

The second situation is even more important, because the relation between direct experience and interpretation is so directly staged by the Thunder speaking –in ways that will confirm Eliot's sense that faith is not something we can reason to, but which requires a willed relation to something intensely immediate. In the thunder speaking, there is a form of power that might lead to life-giving rain. But that sense of potential vitality cannot be engaged adequately by consciousness trying to interpret that experience. Again Bradley's confusion of subject and object come into play. Just think again of how we feel we have to look elsewhere to understand the real positions involved in what the voices are doing. The difference between pure experience and its interpretations suggest that the Hindu words have to be heard, but not interpreted in terms of our mental categories. This demand for a distinctive form of hearing of the Word probably exists for any kind of religion involving belief in a divine being: we have to become attuned to a level of existence capable of modifying our psyches without destroying the appeal by interpreting it in the languages of everyday life.

Within this perspective it is heartbreaking to hear each of the three responses to the Hindu words translated as "Give," "Sympathize," and "Control." The sequence is well known, so I do not have to quote it. What is less well known is the nature of experience that hearing produces.

The situation is pure dialogue: a possible disposition is offered for all finite centres disposed to hear. But interpretation interferes with the hearing, so the states of agency rendered in the poem cannot honor this version of the Word. Here the actionable depends on judgments about need and possibility that finally cannot accept the authority of the pure command, however pressing that demand may be. The poem is brilliant in its interplay between the concrete experience of foreign expressions and the necessity of interpretations that are doomed to failure, largely because our culture cannot simply listen and heed. We have the material resources to translate Hindu wisdom, but not the public roles for the ego necessary to apply that wisdom. Instead we produce something fundamentally different and deferring: we produce escapist self-consciousness about conditions displacing what it should honor.

Each response to the thunder's command presents a different form of subjective agency as its way of experiencing what it has heard. All of the pronoun positions fail to engender the appropriate action, albeit for diverse reasons, largely because each turns to the past in order to interpret the present. This dependency guarantees a failure of listening. The response to "Datta" is collective and reflective. The initial reaction is to ask a question, perhaps a self-justifying one that does not reject the command: "What have we given" (Eliot 2015, 70). Instead it claims to have



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already taken this radical step in order to exist at all. But this "we" seems satisfied in its previous efforts, so it ultimately ignores any new sense of urgency. The second response, to "Dayadvam," roots the "we" in an "I" that absorbs the command into a painfully lucid and paralyzed self-consciousness. A "broken Coriolanus" must speak for us all. Finally, the past tense is most powerful and most painful in response to "Damyata," because it can generate in direct response only a contrast between concrete memory and the pathos of the future subjunctive, now without at all directly engaging the content of the command. No wonder the poem subsequently collapses into a frenzy of possible subject positions, not all "fit" for the experience the poem puts us through. The degrees of reality produced by the final utterances are sadly low –a measure of cultural knowledge in ruins.

V

I want to call upon an essay by Michael Levenson in order to contextualize my excitement about Eliot's artistry in constructing the emotional stances on which *The Waste Land* is built. I think the shape of Eliot's career virtually demands that we ask what proved deeply unsatisfying to him in the thinking that made this poem possible. Levinson too sees the poem as modernist poetry's most heroic effort to overcome perspectivism by making the poem itself the locus of a real experience beyond perspective. But he also elaborates the price of this emphasis on refusing to interpret finite centres as aspects of particular persons. Levinson grounds this critique in Eliot's essay "Second Thoughts on Humanism" (1929). In retrospect, we can see that Eliot seemed in *The Waste Land* to have exhausted several features of humanism. Learning is carried by quotations that seem to be alienating presences in a modern World where they evoke ideals which no longer resonate in our culture. And the variety of cultures seems more an exercise in frustrated universalism than any guidance that might lead out of the waste land. Speaking of professional humanists in his essay, Eliot complained that the only system of morals that they can elaborate seems to be founded on nothing but itself" (Eliot 1950, 432). Humanism's only full commitment is to cultivation and coverage of many cultures, hoping thereby to make up in breadth what it lacks in compelling particular values (Eliot 1950, 435). Ironically, that commitment makes humanism almost inseparable from positivism, since neither mode of thinking can rank cultures or modes of action. Their only criteria have to reside in a cultivated desire for variety. All that Humanism can ask is "is this particular philosophy or religion civilized or not" (Eliot 1950, 436). This kind of position is "more likely to end in respectability than in perfection" (Eliot 1950, 435). Such thinking –which *The Waste Land* both embodies and criticizes– "operates by taste" so that it is "fundamentally critical rather than constructive" (Eliot 1950, 436). Where religious culture sought a depth and conviction within religious life that made a full sense of individual experience possible, the humanist identification with the many must replace the possibility of a truth that fully mobilizes the individual's sense of commitment to a source of value.

In short, Eliot seems to change course in thinking about the importance of individual subjectivity. The individual comes to matter not for its power of expression but for its capacity to undergo the kinds of sustained experiences that open it to the possibility of faith and guidance. These subjective states will still be opposed to interpretation. What matters is not who the self is, but how it can find a ground that resists the value of diversity and cultivation, and instead offers the possibility of total commitment. With grace, the person takes on an inner sensuousness that processes experience for its manifestations of the affects that bind a person to what commitment makes possible. And then the work of poetry, at least in "Ash Wednesday," becomes identical to the processes of self-gathering that make an individual capable of acting to define his or her faith. The cruelest month interpreted by faith offers the most feasible possibilities of finding those sources of value within experience that depend on the discipline to be a certain kind of individual.

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LANGUAGE AS EXPERIENCE IN "GERONTION" AND *THE WASTE LAND*

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Abstract

This essay attempts some answers to the question, "How do we read *The Waste Land*?" It is a poem of many fragments and many voices, but the experiencing consciousness is one, symbolized by the impotent prophet Tiresias. The dramatic method, with its limited viewpoints and fragmented identities, derives from the Victorian dramatic monologue, filtered through the ironies of Jules Laforgue and the innovative versification of the Jacobean playwrights. This way of reading the poem is demonstrated through readings, first, of the monologue "Gerontion," and then of key passages in *The Waste Land* itself.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion," dramatic monologue, irony.

LENGUAJE Y EXPERIENCIA EN "GERONTION" Y *LA TIERRA BALDÍA*

Resumen

Este artículo procura responder a la pregunta: "¿Cómo leemos *La tierra baldía*?" Se trata de un poema de muchos fragmentos y muchas voces, pero la conciencia que vive la experiencia es una, simbolizada por el profeta impotente Tiresias. El método dramático, con su punto de vista limitado y sus identidades fragmentadas, deriva del monólogo dramático victoriano, filtrado por las ironías de Jules Laforgue y la versificación innovadora de los dramaturgos jacobinos. Esta forma de leer el poema se demuestra a través de la lectura, primero, del monólogo "Gerontion," y luego de pasajes clave de la propia *Tierra Baldía*.

Palabras clave: T.S. Eliot, "Gerontion," monólogo dramático, ironía.

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In Charles Dickens's novel *Our Mutual Friend* (1864-65), there is a foundling boy with the curious name of Sloppy. Sloppy has been taken into the home of a poor old widow, Mrs Higden, who finds that the boy brings benefits. "I do love a newspaper," she says. "You mightn't think it, but Sloppy is a beautiful reader of a newspaper. He do the Police in different voices" (quoted in Eliot 1971, 125). T.S. Eliot was a lifelong admirer of Dickens's novels, and it seems likely that his whole sense of the modern city –particularly of London– as a confused and troubling phantasmagoria, squalid yet hospitable to moments of illumination, has its roots in his childhood fondness for Dickens. So it is not surprising that when, in 1921, Eliot assembled a set of fragments united in part by their feeling for London life, the work of Dickens came to mind. At the head of the manuscript he wrote a Dickensian title: "He do the Police in different voices" (Eliot 1971, 4-5).

The fate of that manuscript is now a famous story. Eliot sent it to Ezra Pound for his opinion, and Pound went to work with his blue pencil, slashing whole pages, cutting lines and even half-lines, changing words, making suggestions. Eliot's wife Vivien likewise added comments and suggestions and, in the end, Eliot acceded to most of the proposed changes. Out of what seems at first sight an inchoate collection of bits and pieces, Pound constructed a form –or perhaps one should say that, like Michelangelo looking at crude stone in a quarry, he saw an implicit form– which he then exposed. Reading it today, however, one can still see something in it of Pound's contribution, for in its "ideogrammic" structure, it is much the most Poundian of Eliot's poems (Pound 1951, 26). But in the course of this radical process of collaborative revision, the Dickensian title disappeared to be replaced by a phrase that crops up a phrase that crops up in both Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and E.B. Pusey's translation of the *Confessions* of St Augustine: *The Waste Land* –in the first case, a desert, both physical and symbolic; in the second, a metaphor for spiritual dereliction (Southam 1994, 135).

The new title was clearly the right one. It is a poem about sterility, and we need to be reminded of the Arthurian material that unites its symbolism. But the earlier title, "He do the Police in different voices," also has something to tell us about Eliot's method as he understood it. For *The Waste Land*, published in 1922, is a poem of many voices, overlapping and intercutting and juxtaposed. In a note on Tiresias, the prophet Odysseus seeks out in the underworld, Eliot writes as follows:

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character", is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem. (Eliot 2015a, 74)

In other words, the police have different voices, ventriloquised by a single speaker: Sloppy or Tiresias or T.S. Eliot. It is interesting to learn that Tiresias is a "spectator" rather than a "character." As he says in the poem,

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> And I Tiresias have foresuffered all
> Enacted in this same divan or bed;
> I who have sat by Thebes below the wall
> And walked among the lowest of the dead. (Eliot 2015a, 64)

–which may remind us, not only of the other great Modernist masterpieces being written at this time– Pound's *Cantos* and Joyce's *Ulysses*, both similarly rooted in Homer's *Odyssey* –but of Eliot's most celebrated essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919):

> [T]he more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material. (Eliot 2014d, 109)

The key word here is "suffer" –"the man who suffers," "I Tiresias have foresuffered." To suffer is, like the French *souffrir*, to experience, to undergo, to be passive to –the opposite of "to act." But it is also impossible to avoid the more ordinary modern English sense of suffering –to experience pain– especially in collision there with "passions." The experiencing consciousness is one, Tiresias, but the manifestations of that consciousness are multitudinous, and they all include suffering.

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot ran the conversational tone and manner of Jules Laforgue back through the dramatic method of Browning and Tennyson. It is not Eliot who speaks the poem, but J. Alfred Prufrock, if indeed Prufrock can be said to be one person (as opposed to a set of homogeneous utterances). But homogeneous as they are, there are also moments of universality, as when the poem looks beyond specific persons to a generalised human experience in utterances that any of us might make. Thus, a dramatic monologue by Browning is itself a fragment –it often begins *in medias res*, or at least in mid-speech– although part of the process of reading it is to imagine the speaker in the round, to locate a history for her or him, a body and a manner. But Prufrock remains essentially a man made of words, existing only in fragments: we may draw conclusions about him from the fragments, but we cannot turn him into a whole. There are, indeed, major considerations surrounding the character that cannot be clearly interpreted. (For instance, when he says "I grow old, I grow old," are we to take him seriously? He seems much of the time a relatively young man and, of course, we are all growing old anyway, so what does it mean to say so? How old *is* he?) Though there is only one persona in "Prufrock," it is not a complete and integrated persona (Eliot 2015a, 9).

In the next major poem after "Prufrock," Eliot takes this matter of voice and identity a stage further. "Gerontion," which appeared in the volume *Ara Vos Prec* (1920), was at one stage considered as a possible prologue for *The Waste Land*. Pound very wisely discouraged this: it would clearly have unbalanced *The Waste Land* and distracted from the very considerable virtues of "Gerontion" itself. Nevertheless, the two poems do share a great deal, not the least of which is the fact that "Gerontion," though it appears to be a monologue, is in some sense a poem of many voices.

Looking back on his early poems in later life, Eliot recalled that he was in effect fusing what he'd learnt from Laforgue with elements he'd identified in Jacobean tragedy. In many respects, "Gerontion" is the first of Eliot's poems in which this fusion is plainly in evidence. Its tone and the versification derive, to a large extent, from Thomas Middleton and John Webster, while the allusiveness and kaleidoscopic intercutting are indebted to Laforgue and the Symbolists –though thanks to the Jacobeans, the tone has shifted away from the Laforguian irony of "Prufrock." But let us begin at the beginning, looking very closely at the detail and sequencing of it:

GERONTION

Thou hast nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.

Here I am, an old man in a dry month,
Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain.
I was neither at the hot gates
Nor fought in the warm rain
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,
Bitten by flies, fought.
My house is a decayed house,
And the Jew squats on the window sill, the owner,
Spawned in some estaminet of Antwerp,
Blistered in Brussels, patched and peeled in London.
The goat coughs at night in the field overhead;
Rocks, moss, stonecrop, iron, merds.
The woman keeps the kitchen, makes tea,
Sneezes at evening, poking the peevish gutter.

I an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces.

Signs are taken for wonders. "We would see a sign!"
The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger (Eliot 2015a, 31)

The title looks like a name but, in fact, *Gerontion* is simply the Greek for "little old man." So already Eliot takes away with one hand what he gives with the other. We expect a Ulysses, an Andrea del Sarto or even a Prufrock, and we get a mere generality. Then there is the epigraph: the Duke in *Measure for Measure*, advising Claudio to accept death –which seems in its way not only to undermine the value of Claudio's youth, but also Gerontion's age. We expect the old to be wise, but more often than not they just descend into reverie, "an after dinner sleep," ranging without sense or order over their past lives: which is a fairly good description of the poem at first reading.

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It begins with an apparently simple piece of scene-setting that recalls the method of Browning. We have a character, clearly not the poet, at a particular time of year –and perhaps of day: "an after dinner sleep" suggests the occasion– and as we are soon to learn, in a particular place. More than that, we appear to have a Browningesque interlocutor as well, a passive boy who can be expected to listen patiently, draw out the old man's wisdom and/or confession and, for the reader, provide the obvious contrast to the speaker's antiquity. And yet the boy is *reading* to Gerontion, so how can he be listening as well? Immediately, the convention is exploded, one effect being to convert dramatic monologue into interior monologue –or, as it is called in criticism of the novel, stream of consciousness.

Then, instead of the memories we might be expecting, we encounter a sequence of non-memories: "I was at none of these places where you might have expected me to be." One of them gives us a further clue: "the hot gates" translates the Greek name Thermopylae, the scene of the great battle between the Persians and the Spartans in the Peloponnesian War, which can be taken as one of the defining moments in the creation of a European identity: Leonidas and his small band of Spartans holding the narrow pass, the entrance to the European domain, and keeping the Asian enemy at bay. The next image –"the warm rain"– presumably looks at the opposite situation: the expansion of Europe in the imperial age, the drive outside our frontiers. And then the *gates* admit us to the *house*. Hugh Kenner interprets the meaning of this very neatly; "the Voice," he says,

> searches out all the recesses of the "house": the habitation, the family stock (not doomed like the House of Atreus but simply withered), the European family, the Mind of Europe, the body, finally the brain. (Kenner 1965, 108)

This is one of Eliot's most brilliant bits of symbolism. The more one examines it, the more one sees that it works all through. At this stage in the poem, we are probably more aware of the house as a literal building than as a metaphor for the old man's decaying body, the house of the mind that is revealing itself to us as we read. Yet the repetition of the word in one line –"My house is a decayed house"– prepares us for more, and the next line brings us to the notorious Jew, to whom Anthony Julius devotes some eight pages in his book on Eliot and anti-Semitism, without ever explaining the Jew's significance in the structure of the poem's symbolism (see Julius 1995, 41-49). Gerontion's disgust at the Jew –we cannot *assume* that the disgust is Eliot's own– –is inescapable: he is *squatting*, *spawned*, *blistered*, *patched* and *peeled*. The same goes for the assumption that slum landlords are all of the same race. To dwell exclusively on such prejudices, however, is to miss another, more important significance. The European culture which had repelled the Persians at the hot gates has become a derivative culture. Its central system of belief, Christianity, is an Asiatic religion, the offspring of Judaism, and in this context the slum landlord –for whom it seems there was no room at the inn, the "estaminet of Antwerp"– is, at the same time in another sense, the Jew Jesus of Nazareth: "Christ the tiger," as he next appears, but also the helpless infant (*infans* –unable to speak) and, paradoxically, the Logos, the source of all meaning, "The word within a word, unable to speak a word."

Certainly the Jew is there, in a somewhat Poundian way, to point to a civilisation in hock to commercial interests, and to that extent his presence is viewed with disgust. But Eliot is no kinder to his Christian, whose impermanence and sterility make him an *alter ego* to the "rootless cosmopolitan" of anti-Semitic euphemism. This is related to the ubiquitous theme of deracination in Eliot's work, which is shortly to re-surface in the list of foreign names –Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa, Mme. de Tornquist and so on– and which is at the heart of *The Waste Land*. So the Jew is both a type of modern humanity *and* the degraded heir of the great religion to which Western culture owes its existence.

"[T]he present," wrote Eliot, "is no more than the present existence, the present significance, of the entire past" (Eliot 2014c, 142). One of the functions of dramatic monologue is to situate poetic meditations in the present moment, in the very circumstances in which we think and speak and have our being, which is also of course the time it takes to read the poem. "Gerontion" is like the voice of a culture haunted by its past, by its betrayals, failures and fears; but, dramatically presented, that historical past is also necessarily a personal one. This is the layered effect of post-Symbolist poetry, which reaches its acme in *The Waste Land*. But clearly, as in "Prufrock," many of these betrayals, failures and fears are emotional and sexual, the personal symbolising the historical, and vice versa:

> Think now
> History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
> And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
> Guides us by vanities (Eliot 2015a, 32).

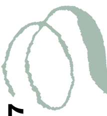
What are these passages? The corridors in which Polonius whispers into the ear of Claudius, perhaps, or those which lead to the Hall of Mirrors in the Palace of Versailles, where the peace of 1919 had just been negotiated and which is no doubt remembered in the phrase "a wilderness of mirrors." This image also recalls a lady's dressing-table, the glass reflecting facets of a failed relationship, as in part II of *The Waste Land*. But "passages" also suggests the passing of time, episodes in a life or a narrative, sections of a text (Eliot's own text is notably "cunning") and –connecting "cunning" with *cunnus* and "contrived" with "cunt"– sexual passages, both affairs and vaginas. And indeed, such passages lead to *issue*. (A verb here, or a noun? We can't immediately tell.)

It is through its sexual dimension that the poem leads us most radically away from its opening:

> I would meet you upon this honestly.
> I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
> To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
> I have lost my passion: why should I need to keep it
> Since what is kept must be adulterated?
> I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch:
> How should I use them for your closer contact? (Eliot 2015a, 32-33)

We have entered so far into Gerontion's unconscious mind that we have forgotten that he began by appearing to address the boy who reads to him. Moreover, is it Gerontion talking any more –whoever he was in the first place? The poem, though ascribed to one speaker, is more like an anthology of voices, though voices that blend into one seamless utterance. This is one of the discoveries that makes *The Waste Land* possible. The other we should notice at this stage is the versification, based on Jacobean blank verse, very different from the varying line-lengths of Prufrock's *vers libres.* The whole speech is, in fact, made up of echoes. There is not a line in it that does not have roots –rhythmic, verbal, or both– in Jacobean drama. There are other examples of this in the rest of "Gerontion." This particular section is dominated by the manner of the playwright Thomas Middleton (1580-1627), "a great master of versification' in Eliot's view, and the lines he quotes in his essay on Middleton are clearly the main source of the passage we are discussing (Eliot 2015c, 128):

> I am that of your blood was taken from you
> For your better health, look no more upon't,
> But cast it to the ground regardlessly,
> Let the common sewer take it from distinction,
> Beneath the starres, upon yon Meteor
> Ever hang my fate, 'mongst things corruptible,
> I ne're could pluck it from him, my loathing
> Was Prophet to the rest, but ne're believ'd
> Mine honour fell with him, and now my life. (quoted in Eliot 2015c, 128-129)



Eliot's point, I think, is that this immensely subtle versification –four of the eight lines deviate significantly from standard metrical practice– nonetheless has a compelling rhythm that draws the listener or reader on or in, not through the ordinary metrical alternation of slack and accented syllables, but through a sort of tranced syncopation. Middleton, like late Shakespeare, uses many feminine endings ("from you," "distinction," "loathing") and very lightly accented masculine ones ("regardlessly," "Meteor," "corruptible"), which in this case have almost the effect of rhyme and must surely be the source for the Dantesque passage in Eliot's "Little Gidding," where feminine endings alternating with masculine ones are used instead of rhyme to hint at the relentless forward movement of Dante's *terza rima*. The syncopation has to do with a sort of displaced accent. In the paragraph beginning "I would meet you upon this honestly," Eliot imitates this effect very closely, but he takes it much further in other parts of "Gerontion" and *The Waste Land*. In the opening passage of "Gerontion," for instance, we find several lines in which five accents can be located, but none of them serve to define iambic feet:

> The góat cóughs at níght in the fíeld overhéad;
> Rócks, móss, stónecrop, íron, mérds.
> The wóman kéeps the kítchen, mákes téa,
> Snéezes at évening, póking the péevish gútter. (Eliot 2015a, 31)

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The last of those lines almost restores the standard pattern –an essential feature of this method– but not quite.

An early essay of Eliot's, "Reflections on *Vers Libre*" (1917), comments on this "constant evasion and recognition of regularity." He notices that the metrist he most admires, John Webster, often ruptures the iambic pentameter "at moments of highest intensity" (Eliot 2014a, 513-514) –and he gives examples:

> I recover, like a spent taper, for a flash,
> And instantly go out.
>
> Cover her face; mine eyes dazzle; she died young.
>
> You have cause to love me, I did enter you in my heart
> Before you would vouchsafe to me for the keys.
>
> This is a vain poetry: but I pray you tell me
> If there were proposed me, wisdom, riches, and beauty,
> In three several young men, which should I choose? (quoted in Eliot 2014a, 514)

"The irregularity," he goes on to say, "is further enhanced by the use of short lines and the breaking up of lines of dialogue" (Eliot 2014a, 514). This is plainly the model for his own practice, except that he takes it a stage further, notably in *The Waste Land*, where the departure from the metrical norm opens the possibility for rhythms that are governed by no metrical principle at all. As a result, *The Waste Land* is written in a mixture of different prosodies: free verse (in the Poundian sense), blank verse (in the manner of Webster and Middleton), more or less orthodox rhymed verse, and bits of song and doggerel. It is remarkable that this variety is achieved in a poem which depends for its effect on a sense of uninterrupted movement. It *is* interrupted as narrative or in linguistic register, of course; but the discontinuous fragments that make up the poem can only be seen in relation to one another if the rhythm binds them together. Let us take two examples from the first section. First, a relatively straightforward one:

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> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
> Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
> To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
> With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (Eliot 2015a, 56-57)

We begin with a short and, in effect, extra-metrical line, which derives from Baudelaire, then proceed into a passage of blank verse, which is to say of iambic pentameter. The fourth, fifth and sixth of these lines are translated from Dante's *Inferno*, though taken from two different passages, and the second quotation begins

with the first of the passage's metrical disruptions: "Síghs, shórt and infréquent, wére exháled." This is the same sort of syncopation that we found in "Gerontion," but note how the placing of the five accents very much depends on our awareness of the underlying iambic pattern, which is then restored in the next line when we return from medieval Hell to modern London. The passage depends for its effect on a certain homogeneity of tone. A more remarkable instance comes a little earlier in the section:

> 'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
> 'They called me the hyacinth girl.'
> –Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
>
> *Oed' und leer das Meer* (Eliot 2015a, 56).

One more or less regular pentameter is followed first by a short line of three accents, then by a very irregular line that is nonetheless of five accents, and then –the syncopated effect again– a line of ten monosyllables with five accents irregularly placed. The startling enjambment –"I could not/Speak"– sets up a pattern of internal pause and fragmentation, so that the next line, though actually containing just four accents, seems to satisfy the requirements of line-length as it runs into another foreshortened line –"Living nor dead, and I knew nothing." The last English line restores the iambic pattern, though with variations, and suddenly gives way to a quotation from Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. In just eight lines, we have speech, tensed inward meditation and a phrase from a German opera.

That is to offer a *technical* description of the "hyacinth girl" passage, but I have not begun to consider its emotional effect. Is there a more moving moment in the poem than the enjambment I have referred to, where the failure to speak anticipates the word "Speak"? It is as if the speaker's silence were built into the poem, an effect then reinforced by the commas and negatives that follow –"not," "neither," "nothing"– and by the metrical lacunae that prune away at the line-lengths. It is not the least of Eliot's achievements in this poem that, amid all the technical brilliance and the display of his own intelligence, he manages to convey the *limits* of verbal expression: in silences, in negations and, perhaps most strikingly, in noises: "Twit twit twit," "Jug Jug," "O O O O," "Weialala leia," "drip drop drip drop drop drop drop," "Co co rico" and, most importantly, "DA."

These noises and silences; the prosodic inventiveness I have been discussing; the notorious allusiveness of the poem, in particular to poems in languages other than English: these are all aspects of the same central paradox –that this is a work that shows mastery of the furthest reaches of language, that delights in language of all kinds, and yet indicates at every point that all attempts to explain or expound, denote or indicate, are in vain. Language is *essentially* expressive and therefore seems to contain the heart of the mystery, but it cannot give an account of the mystery

because it is limited by the characteristics of those who use it –and indeed, created it– and because words are not things. Yet language is itself a world. Can it express the world of phenomena by means of analogy?

The Waste Land is a poem that arises out of much the same spiritual condition as that which confronted the Tennyson of *In Memoriam* and the Arnold of "Dover Beach." When faced with the spiritual desolation of modern life, Tennyson and Arnold tended to abandon the richly suggestive verbalism that, following their Romantic predecessors, it had been their main endeavour to develop. They abandon that to *argue* with the world. Eliot does not argue. Instead, he takes Victorian verbalism further. By enlarging the language of poetry, he also enlarges what it can touch upon and what it can imply, rather than state. Hence the preoccupation with prosody and, in particular with dramatic verse, since the development of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama is a progress of increasing inwardness. As dramatic skills developed, the dramatist moved further and further away from simple action and deeper and deeper into consciousness. This is what *Hamlet* is all about: the substitution of thought for action. Inwardness is also a preoccupation of the French Symbolist poets admired by Eliot –Laforgue, for example, and Paul Valéry: the interiorisation of the external world. But by a curious paradox, to interiorise is to imply a world independent of consciousness, which cannot be contained by it. In much the same way, inarticulacy –noises, silences– is often more expressive than lucid speech.

Let us take some examples. *The Waste Land* begins, as far as one can tell, with a party of foreign tourists by a lake near Munich. The speaker's words suggest a deep unrest in the way of life described, a fear of reality matched by a fear of pointlessness, a spiritual void that needs filling. The response of the tourists to the awakening of spring may remind the reader of *The Canterbury Tales*, but Chaucer's characters are pilgrims, not tourists: their journey has a goal as their life has a goal, and the cure of their physical sickness will be synonymous with the cure of their spiritual sickness. Where the spirits of the pilgrims revive with the new season, Eliot's speaker retreats. She and her companions seem preoccupied with ways of filling time:

> ...we stopped in the colonnade,
> And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
> And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
> Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch. (Eliot 2015a, 55).

That last sentence is the first instance in the poem of a language other than English, and indeed of quotation. New readers sometimes complain about Eliot's élitism and the extent of his erudition; he expects us to understand German and Italian, they say, and to have read all the books that he has. Yet surely this particular line has failed if we find ourselves instantly understanding it. It exemplifies the specifically modern experience the poem has begun by evoking: tourism, petty nationalism, rootlessness, the fragmentation of culture. It is like walking through a popular tourist destination when the coaches have discharged their human cargo and we hear a Babel of many different languages, most of which we cannot understand.

To that extent, the line is to be compared to the noises mentioned earlier –to "Jug Jug," "Weialala" and so on– but of course, it is also a quotation from a common European language, so, even if the listener has never learnt that language, the meaning can be guessed at and, eventually, translated and "understood." Readers will know that "deutsch" means German. Most will guess that "Russin" means Russian, and so it develops until we get the whole line: "I'm not Russian at all, I come from Lithuania, genuine German." Yet you cannot translate the *effect* and, indeed, what the translation primarily tells us is that what we took from the effect in the first place was, in substance, precisely the point.

It would of course be wrong to treat the quotations from poems in foreign languages –or even those from poems written in English– with the same casualness. Eliot was fond of making this point himself. On the lines from Dante I mentioned above, he commented that he meant the reader to recognise the allusion and that the reader "would have missed the point if he did not recognize it" (Eliot 2019, 484). This is undoubtedly true, though it is also true that Eliot believed in what he called "the 'auditory imagination'," and often asserted that poems make their impact on the reader in some cases before they are understood (Eliot 2015b, 664-665). This is especially true of *The Waste Land*. Moreover, what constitutes a quotation exactly? We can refer Dante back to his context, but can we do the same with the main source of that opening passage, the reminiscences of an Austrian Countess, whom Eliot happened to meet? (See Southam 1994, 14-16). Her book has no literary significance and the connection with *The Waste Land* was only discovered by chance. Is "Co co rico" a quotation? After all, we say "cockle-doodle-doo" in English, but "Co co rico" cannot be said to have any context more precise than the French language. Most interesting of all, what are we to make of the last line of the poem: "Shantih shantih shantih" –a Sanskrit word repeated three times? As we have noticed, even those who have never learnt any German at all will understand something in a German line, but only a specialised linguist will understand Sanskrit. Fortunately, we can consult Eliot's notes, where we learn of "shantih" that "'The Peace which passeth understanding' is our equivalent to this word" (Eliot 2015a, 77). We needed to be told. But isn't our need to be told an element of what is being said? Just as, quite trivially, the relative opacity of "Bin gar keine Russin" is expressive of the need we have to interpret the day-to-day human world, so here the very word exemplifies the difficulty of comprehending the peace of God –if that is what it is. At the same time, the sound of the word –the noise it makes– perhaps communicates a sense of peace to the "auditory imagination," even before one has tried to comprehend it.

There is certainly erudition in *The Waste Land*, but we are missing the point if we see that as something set up to exclude us. On the contrary, the purpose of it is to engage us more: a principle Eliot seems to have learnt from his friend Ezra Pound, in such poems as the two-line "In a Station of the Metro:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough. (Pound 2003, 287)

–where the absence of any grammatical copula between the lines obliges the reader to supply one, such that the meaning of the poem seems to belong to the reader

rather than the writer. Eliot's debt to his friend is implicitly acknowledged in the poem's dedication: "To Ezra Pound, *il miglior fabbro* [the better craftsman]" (Eliot 2015a, 52). Eliot is doing something along these lines when, for example, the neurotic lady on her "burnished throne" at the beginning of Part 2 (Eliot 2015a, 58), is juxtaposed with the Cockney speaker's friend in the pub scene at the end of it. The reader recognises –without being told– that they are versions of the same type, one high class, the other low, but substantially the same figure. And it is in this process of identifying them that we detect the spiritual malaise shared by the whole society. This is an implied analogy that not many readers will miss, though they may not notice that it is they rather than the poet who draw the connection.

A much more problematic example of juxtaposition, and one where erudition is decisively involved, is the poem's closing paragraph, the last line of which has already been touched upon:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
> Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
> Quando fiam uti chelidon –O swallow swallow
> Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
> Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
> Shantih shantih shantih (Eliot 2015a, 71)

In these eleven lines there are nine quotations from a total of five languages –six if we include the third of the lines quoted, which is from the King James Version of 1611, the classic English translation of the Hebrew Bible. The first two lines, in addition, allude to Eliot's primary source book, *From Ritual to Romance* (Weston 1920, *passim*). Only one line –"These fragments I have shored against my ruins"– is (as far as anyone knows) Eliot's own; and it is no accident that this is the line which gives meaning to the rest. Without it we would have only what we seemed to have at first reading anyway: a meaningless jumble of words, a cacophony, a versified Tower of Babel, a metropolitan street at the height of the tourist season. Once again, if we simply "understood" it, the point would not have been made. But if in our bafflement we take fragments to refer to the quotations that make up the rest of the paragraph, we may be led to pull them together in the Poundian way and draw connections. We will notice, for instance, that "ruins" appears to refer us back to "la tour abolie," which then connects with the fate of London Bridge in the nursery rhyme. Readers of Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587) will know that "Ile fit you" is an agreement to write a play in "sundry languages" –like the poem we are coming to the end of (Kyd 1959, 112). And so on. Though the poem *appears* to be chaotic and formless, the activity of the reader discovers an order beneath the surface.

But this dichotomy of order and chaos gives expression to Eliot's own confusion, a confusion embodied in the poem's ambiguities. An important example

appears in this very passage. Do the fragments merely shore up a doomed building (prevent it from falling down) or do they save it (restore it to practical use)? Can the meaning we have lost in the world be reconstructed in the world as it can be in the poem? Does finding an order beneath the chaotic words just tell us something about language and our human need to make sense of things, or does our language –does language in general– embody some truth about the world that our intellects have not yet managed to grasp? There is a wonderful sentence in Eliot's eulogistic essay on the Jacobean divine Lancelot Andrewes: "Andrewes," says Eliot, "takes a word, and derives the world from it" (Eliot, 2014b, 822). We think we hear a homophone, but *world* and *word* are not the same and their difference, slight though it is, haunts *The Waste Land* and many of Eliot's other poems and essays.[1]

It provides the very substance of the final section, "What the Thunder Said." There the issue, put prosaically, is whether or not it rains. On the most literal of levels we must understand that, although we expect rain in a thunderstorm, it is possible to have thunder without rain. And then the thunder must *say* something, as the title affirms, but need what it says be connected with the water? For the coming of rain in the symbolism of the poem would signify the return of fertility to the waste land and the healing of the Fisher King's wound. The land's sterility, as we are by now more than conscious, is partly physical, sexual and emotional, yes, but it is also as importantly spiritual, psychological and religious. Would the resolution of the one be also the resolution of the other? Clearly not –and yet there seems an anticipation that it might be so. In so far as the word mirrors the world, the word may achieve a resolution but, in so far as it does not, the world will remain unchanged. Here is a crucial example from "What the Thunder Said":

If there were water
And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water (Eliot 2015a, 68-69)

In this extraordinary passage, the poem creates water –or rather, the reader's imagination, prompted by the poet's language, creates water, though finally it is

[1] In particular, see "Ash-Wednesday V (Eliot 2015a, 94-95).

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something on the very fringe of language, the verbalisation of the bird's song, that seems to give it to us, even as the syntax denies and removes it: "there is no water," the passage concludes. So *The Waste Land* does not end on a note of hope, though it does suggest where to look for hope. The fact of sterility cries out for water; the land is sterile because it needs water; *ergo*, the coming of water must be possible. We can only speak when we have a meaning to express, yet the world we live in seems devoid of what our language appears to tell us we need. Paradoxically, the language that comes nearest to offering hope in the desert is not on first hearing a human language at all. If it is identified as an echo of human language, it is barely articulate. Yet what it says with its two capital letters and one syllable seems to be everything that needs saying:

> Dry bones can harm no one.
> Only a cock stood on the rooftree
> Co co rico co co rico
> In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
> Bringing rain
>
> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
> The jungle crouched, humped in silence.
> Then spoke the thunder
> DA
> *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
> By this, and this only, we have existed (Eliot 2015a, 70)

DA: the sound of thunder, the first syllable of the three Sanskrit imperatives from the *Upanishads*, "give" (imperative) in Latin, Italian and Spanish, "yes" in Russian, "father" in many languages, but –most important of all– one of the first two sounds a baby makes before it can speak. At the same time, it could be simply a hollow reverberation. Whichever it is, one cannot read *The Waste Land* without some sense of Eliot's need for a meaning outside himself and beyond language, and the quest for such meaning was to activate all of his subsequent work.

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THE WASTE LAND: POTENTIAL DRAMA, PERSISTENT POETRY*

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Abstract

Late in his career, when he was fully devoted to dramatic writing, T.S. Eliot made the provocative statement that his early poetry was "striving ... toward the condition of drama." This paper examines dramatic elements in *The Waste Land* (1922): scenes, voices/characters, and dialogue. In analysing the poem as a proto-dramatic text, it also considers Eliot's future career as a dramatist (mid-1930s-late 1950s), as well as his contemporary essays on drama, and the unfinished play *Sweeney Agonistes* (1926-1927). Finally, this study explores the pervading presence of "Waste Land" imagery, moods, and diction in Eliot's later plays. The dramatic quality of *The Waste Land* prefigures the plays, while these –as modern verse drama– hark back to the poem.

Keywords: dialogue, plays, scenes, T.S. Eliot, voices.

LA TIERRA BALDÍA: TEATRO EN POTENCIA, POESÍA PERSISTENTE

Resumen

Hacia el final de su carrera, ya plenamente dedicado a la escritura teatral, T.S. Eliot hizo la provocadora afirmación de que su poesía temprana "luchaba por convertirse en teatro". Este artículo se centra en elementos dramáticos de *La tierra baldía* (1922): escenas, voces/ personajes y diálogos. Al analizar el poema como texto proto-dramático, también tiene en cuenta la futura carrera como dramaturgo de Eliot (desde los años treinta hasta los cincuenta), así como sus ensayos contemporáneos sobre teatro y la pieza teatral inacabada *Sweeney Agonista* (1926-1927). Por último, este estudio se ocupa de la permanencia de imágenes, atmósferas y dicción propias de *La tierra baldía* en el teatro posterior de Eliot. El carácter dramático del poema anticipa las obras teatrales, que a su vez evocan el poema al ser ejemplos de teatro poético moderno.

Palabras clave: diálogo, obras teatrales, escenas, T.S. Eliot, voces.

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INTRODUCTION

Logically, this exploration should begin in or around 1922, the year of the publication of *The Waste Land*. However, our point of departure will be 1959, towards the end of T.S. Eliot's career. On the occasion of the premiere of his last play, *The Elder Statesman*, in Kassel (Germany), Eliot wrote a note for the production's programme where he looked back on his formative years:

> The theatre has always been of first importance in my career as a writer. Among the English influences upon my development as a poet, the verse dramatists of the age of Shakespeare took first place: many of my early poems appear, in retrospect, to have been striving, so to speak, toward the condition of drama.[1] (Eliot 2019a, 368)

The Elizabethan dramatists whom Eliot acknowledges were also the subject of insightful and influential essays: in 1919 alone, he wrote "Ben Jonson," "Hamlet," and "Christopher Marlowe." Furthermore, well-known poems from Eliot's first two published books, such as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (*Prufrock and Other Observations*, 1917) and "Portrait of a Lady" (*Poems*, 1920), rely on the dramatic monologue—the result of the combined influences of Robert Browning and Jules Laforgue—and are structured as scenes.

Given that Eliot's "early poems" are those written before his adoption of Anglo-Catholicism in 1927 –a factor that was to have a decisive bearing on his oeuvre– my claim is that *The Waste Land* does "strive to the condition of drama." Accordingly, I consider its dramatic features (scenes, voices/characters, and dialogue), seeking to establish connections with relevant contemporaneous works by Eliot, including his criticism on verse drama, and his unfinished play *Sweeney Agonistes*. Finally, I examine echoes of *The Waste Land* in the plays Eliot wrote as a committed dramatist from the 1930s onwards, and which bring to fruition the "condition of drama."

THE WASTE LAND, "STRIVING TOWARD THE CONDITION OF DRAMA"

Mayer argues that the "scenically conceived structures" of some of Eliot's early poems reappear in *The Waste Land*, "a kind of five-act 'play'" (1989, 244, 251). It follows from these theatrical metaphors of the poem as a play, and of its parts

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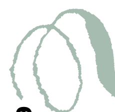
[1] The phrase "condition of drama" alludes to Walter Pater's dictum that "all art constantly aspires towards the condition of music," formulated in his essay "The School of Giorgione" (1873).

TABLE 1. PROPOSAL FOR A DIVISION OF *THE WASTE LAND* INTO SCENES				
I. The Burial of the Dead	II. A Game of Chess	III. The Fire Sermon	IV. Death by Water	V. What the Thunder Said
I.1. Spring opening I.2. Marie Larisch's recollections I.3. Prophetic vision I.4. Hyacinth garden I.5. Madame Sosostris' cards I.6. Unreal City: Stetson on London Bridge	II.1. Neurotic woman and husband II.2. The pub	III.1. Sweet Thames III.2. Fishing in the dull canal III.3. Unreal City: Mr. Eugenides' proposition III.4. The violet hour III.5. Lower Thames Street evocations III.6. The Thames daughters' songs III.7. Burning (Buddha and St. Augustine)	[Single scene]	V.1. Lamentation in the desert V.2. The third walking beside you V.3. Falling towers V.4. The Chapel Perilous V.5. The voice of the thunder V.6. Fragments shored against ruins

as acts, that a division into scenes is possible. *Scene* can be defined as a dramatic unit representing "actions happening in one place and at one time" (Baldick 1990, 300). The events in each scene will direct the dramatic action of the play towards its resolution. Such narrative progression does not occur in *The Waste Land*, a modernist poem that unfolds "shifting from scene to scene, very much like Pound in *The Cantos* and Eisenstein, Vertov, and Kuleshov in their films" (Probstein 2008: 183-184) –film, like drama, being a scene-based art form. At best, we could identify a quest whose protagonist, "through a strategy of dramatic encounter" (Mayer 1989, 244), deals with a personal crisis, witnesses discouraging circumstances and interactions, and finally glimpses hope. Although some structural units in Eliot's poem lack action –which is also true of certain forms of contemporary drama– they may all be considered scenes on account of their cumulative contribution towards the quester's transformation.

Scenes are conventionally delimited by "a curtain, a black-out, or a brief emptying of the stage" (Baldick 1990: 300), and, we may add, by the entrance or exit of characters. If we extend the metaphor, the opening of a new scene in *The Waste Land* is marked by a change that may involve one or several of these elements: speaker(s), tone, style, register, metrics, quotation/allusion, imagery, focus, time, or place. Table 1 is a proposal for a division of Eliot's poem into scenes.

Most of these divisions conform to the unity of place characteristic of scenes. We know that "the Waste Land" is an archetypal motif taken from Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), a study of Arthurian literature.[2] But we should bear in mind that the title of Eliot's poem primarily designates a place: a land become waste because of the illness of the king, where regeneration can be achieved if the



[2] "Waste Land" is not italicised when the reference is to this archetypal image as described by Weston, and not to Eliot's poem.

ruler is restored to health. One of Eliot's modern adaptations of this mythic space is the "Unreal City," recognisable as London, the unreality of whose urban wasteland is the result of its atmosphere of alienation and materialism. The main poetic speaker, a perplexed flaneur in "The Burial of the Dead" (the poem's opening section), is familiar with its streets and landmarks:

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
> Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
> To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
> With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (Eliot 2015, 56-57)

If we prioritise space as a criterion for outlining scenes, we could use locations of the Unreal City as identifying labels: "the London Bridge scene" (to which the above lines belong, and where the poetic speaker watches the City workers, recognising an old acquaintance, Stetson), "the Sweet Thames scene" in "The Fire Sermon" (where the same speaker, on the riverbank, laments the reigning desolation), or "the pub scene" in "A Game of Chess," where one evening at the end of the war, a patron (presumably a woman) reports a tense conversation with a friend, while the publican announces closing time:

> When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said–
> I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
> HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
> Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
> He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
> To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
> You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
> He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
> And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
> He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
> And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
> Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
> Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and gave me a straight look. (Eliot 2015, 60-61)

The Unreal City is arguably the most emblematic spatial setting in *The Waste Land*, but not all scenes in the poem are urban or distinctly set in London: the dreamlike hyacinth garden in "The Burial of the Dead," for example, the richly furnished room described at the beginning of "A Game of Chess," or the rocky desert we traverse in "What the Thunder Said." These scenes are less realistic in their spatial, as in their temporal references. We may assume that the time of the poem coincides with the time of its composition and publication during the post-

traumatic years following the First World War. However, Eliot's characteristic assimilation of ancient and modern times, of myth and reality –in other words, his own application of the "mythical method" that he identified as ground-breaking in Joyce's *Ulysses*– challenges this assumption. For example, the aforementioned London Bridge scene blurs temporal distinctions by characterising Stetson simultaneously as a City officer and as a soldier in the battle of Mylae, which took place in the context of the Punic Wars.

Another instance of Eliot's mythical method is the anachronistic presence of the Greek diviner Tiresias in the Unreal City, where he takes the prophetic role of critical observation. As he tells us in "The Fire Sermon,"

> At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
> Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
> Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
> . . . .
> I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs
> Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest– (Eliot 2015, 63)

"The violet hour", as "a winter dawn" or "a winter noon", is a memorable, more specific temporal marker of this *scene*. It is significant that Eliot has Tiresias, whom "we actually see and hear ... as if he were on a stage" (Probstein 2008, 193), choose the word "scene." He is not involved, however, and witnesses only the loveless sexual encounter between the typist and "the young man carbuncular," "enacted" –another semantic connection with drama and performance– in the former's flat (Eliot 2015, 63).

In discriminating cohesive scenic units in *The Waste Land*, we may focus on space (locations in the Unreal City of London, or symbolic settings) and time (contemporaneity interlocking with history and myth). However, spatiotemporal concreteness and action are absent in some scenes, given that the speaker is inclined to reflect, reminisce, lament, or admonish: these passages may therefore be compared to dramatic soliloquies.

Lyrical or prophetic in tone, they may constitute a complete "act" ("Death by Water"), function as a transition (in "The Fire Sermon," for example, the speaker's pleasant thoughts of traditional music and architectural beauty, surfacing after the encounter at the violet hour and before the Thames maidens' songs), or an opening, as in these lines from "What the Thunder Said":

> After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
> After the frosty silence in the gardens
> After the agony in stony places
> The shouting and the crying
> Prison and palace and reverberation
> Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
> He who was living is now dead
> We who were living are now dying
> With a little patience (Eliot 2015, 68)

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Rather than setting the scene, the anaphoric use of "after," the combination of past and present tenses, and the images evocative of place and time convey the hopelessness of a Passion without a Resurrection.

If Eliot's poem can be read "as a series of small-scale scenarios" (Levenson 2015, 92), character –as an essentially dramatic aspect– is equally relevant. But are the dwellers of the Waste Land "characters" in the same sense as the people in a play? Eliot's "The Three Voices of Poetry" (1953) elucidates this point: he considers a category of "quasi-dramatic verse," not written expressly for performance, and refers to *persona*, the term used by Pound for his dramatic monologues, which suggests an impression of personality (2019b, 817, 822-823). These masks or *personae*, however, are inadequate for strict dramatic verse, where "character is created and made real only in an action" (Eliot 2019b, 823). From Eliot's remarks, we may conclude that *voice* –as used in the title of his essay, different from Pound's legendary *personae*, and not necessarily realised through action– is the most accurate synonym for "speaker" in *The Waste Land*. After all, the working title for the first two parts of the poem, inhabited by its most memorable people, was "He do the police in different voices," a quotation from *Our Mutual Friend* (1865) by Charles Dickens, whom Eliot greatly admired for his vivid characterisations. Introducing a reading of *The Waste Land* in 1988, Ted Hughes famously called it "a drama for voices," recalling Dante's *Commedia*, and specifically his *Inferno*: "voices in a Dantesque, infernal space, where they cry out, relive their unforgettable moments, and see strange hallucinations" (1992, chap. 2).[3]

Mayer (1989, 241-291) has insightfully analysed *The Waste Land* as an interplay of voices, distinguishing between personal or impersonal –in other words, character-like or disembodied. Yet, conceptualising all the poem's figures as voices is not completely exact: some (Madame Sosostris, or the woman at the pub) are so effectively portrayed that we cannot help but think of them as characters; some (Stetson, Lil and Albert, or Sweeney) are important, despite being only addressed, or alluded to; finally, some (the typist, or the bank clerk) speak very little, if at all, but are defined through action, thus qualifying as dramatic characters. Levenson suggests "voicing" as preferable to "voice," "since the acts of speech pass too quickly to establish any stable personhood" (2015, 90). In any case, and although distinctions are not always clearcut, it is useful to refer to both "voices" and –to employ Eliot's adjective for a variety of verse in "Three Voices"– "(quasi-)dramatic characters." Table 2 is a proposal for the classification of the *dramatis personae* of *The Waste Land*, contemplating four different, nuanced categories:

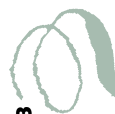
As the poem's spatiotemporal settings, these voices and (quasi-)dramatic characters are heterogeneous in their origins (fictional, historical, mythical) and in their role within the poem. Tiresias, discussed above as the witness of the "violet hour

[3] Hugues's phrase "drama for voices" also brings to mind another twentieth-century classic: Dylan Thomas's *Under Milk Wood* (1954), originally written for the radio and subtitled "*A Play for Voices*."

TABLE 2. PROPOSAL FOR CLASSIFICATION OF VOICES AND (QUASI-)DRAMATIC CHARACTERS IN *THE WASTE LAND*	
I) Actual first-person voices, spoken or rendered as thoughts (mostly Eliot's creations)	The protagonist/quester/seeker, Marie Larisch, the hyacinth lovers, Madame Sosostris, the neurotic woman and her husband, pub patrons (Bill, Lou, May), publican, Tiresias, the typist
II) Quasi-dramatic characters whose speech is implied or reported (Eliot's creations)	Stetson, Mr. Eugenides (the Smyrna merchant)
III) (Quasi-)dramatic characters who do not speak, but whose actions/ presence are relevant (Eliot's creations)	The Phoenician sailor/Phlebas the Phoenician, the young man carbuncular
IV) Voices of tradition speaking/ singing through quotation – not allusion (from the Bible, myth, literature, opera)	The Sybil of Cumae (*Satyricon*), Ezekiel, the Preacher (Ecclesiastes), a sailor and a shepherd (*Tristan und Isolde*), Ferdinand (*The Tempest*), Philomel (as a nightingale), Ophelia (*Hamlet*), Olivia (*The Vicar of Wakefield*), the Rhine maidens (*Götterdämmerung*), St. Augustine (*Confessions*), the Thunder (*Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*), Arnaut Daniel (*Purgatorio*), Hieronymo (*The Spanish Tragedy*)

scene," has a special significance. In one of his notes to *The Waste Land* –which, in line with our metaphor of the poem as a play, we might think of as stage directions determining the performance of reading– Eliot tells us that "Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest" (2015, 74), male and female. The prophet of myth and modernity, who has lived both as man and woman, literally blind but able to foresee the future, is then a "personage" –suggesting greater importance– and not a "character". He is also a "spectator" in the drama of *The Waste Land*, making those he watches "actors" who "do things [...] move in a world of appearances only, performing roles for ends they cannot see, on a stage they cannot comprehend" (Mayer 1989, 250). The protagonist (the quester or seeker) is one of these actors; although primarily the voice of the lyrical or prophetic vein that runs through the poem, he momentarily seems to take on other roles (one of the lovers in the hyacinth garden, or the neurotic woman's husband), eventually assuming Tiresias' "prophet-role" and "his moral make-up and reality of vision" (Mayer 1989, 251). Tiresias' vision, therefore, is "the subject of the poem" (Eliot 2015, 74) in as much as it complements that of the protagonist's.

What the quester and his mythical alter ego see is widened by the voices of tradition, belonging to different periods and cultures and emerging in the dismal world depicted by Eliot. The multiplicity of personal and traditional voices in *The Waste Land* suggests the Bakhtinian notions of polyphony and dialogism –even if Bakhtin applied these exclusively to the study of fiction. The quotations and allusions punctuating the text allow "a dialogue in time and space with its predecessors," reinforcing its dramatic and dialogic nature: "the poem is essentially dramatic, and it is dialogic imagination embracing centuries and civilizations that makes the poem a human drama" (Probstein 2008, 182, 184). Nowhere is this more evident than in



the closing stanza, a multilingual allusive collage that refers readers to Arthurian romance, the Bible, popular nursery rhymes, medieval Italian and Provençal poetry, late Latin poetry, Victorian English poetry, French Romanticism, Elizabethan tragedy, and the Hindu Upanishads:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
> *Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*
> *Quando fiam uti chelidon* –O swallow swallow
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie*
> These fragments I have shored against my ruins
> Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
> Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.
> Shantih shantih shantih (Eliot 2015, 71)

The Waste Land may be read as its protagonist's existential drama, as well as a drama of intertextual dialogism. Within the text, however, dialogue is not used conventionally, as an effective means for communication. As Ted Hughes remarked, "these voices do not speak to each other, or really to us" (1992, chap. 2). According to Levenson, "the absence of dialogue must stand as one of the signal formal aspects of the poem" (2015, 94). But we find hints of dialogue, even if only implied, in the three scenes of estranged or doomed love, in "The Burial of the Dead" and "A Game of Chess." In the pub scene, there is only one speaker, except for the patrons' farewells at the end; this speaker's part in turn reports a conversation with Lil, while others presumably listen without contributing. In the hyacinth garden scene, the girl speaks, and this is signalled by the use of quotation marks. Her lover seems to reply, but there are no typographical signs for his part of the dialogue, which, together with the reminiscing tone, makes it appear thought rather than speech:

> 'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
> 'They called me the hyacinth girl.'
> –Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
> Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (Eliot 2015, 56)

The same combination of a woman's speech between quotation marks, and a man's introspective, silent thought characterises the frustrated dialogue between the neurotic woman and her partner:

> 'My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> 'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
> 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> 'I never know what you are thinking. Think.'

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones.

'What is that noise?'
The wind under the door.
'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'
Nothing again nothing. (Eliot 2015, 59)

Although the dramatic features of *The Waste Land* analysed so far were obviously not adopted by Eliot with performance or the stage in mind, they are indicative of an inclination –indeed, the poem's "striving"– towards theatrical conventions. As we will see, other writings by Eliot from the 1920s confirm both his theoretical and practical interest in drama.

THOUGHTS ON/OF DRAMA, AND AN UNFINISHED PLAY

Eliot did not employ dramatic elements (scenes, voices and quasi-dramatic characters, pseudo-dialogue) only in his early poetry, including *The Waste Land*. In several reviews and essays from those years, he also reflects on aspects of drama and its potential modernisation through verse. He first makes a theoretical distinction between lyrical and dramatic voices in "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama" (1919): "if a writer wishes to give the effect of speech he must positively give the effect of himself talking in his own person or in one of his rôles [*sic*]" (Eliot 2014d, 84). In "The Poetic Drama" (1920), he relies on a chemical metaphor to posit Browning's dramatic poetry as a model for successors: "to distil the dramatic essences, if we can, and instil them into some other liquor" (Eliot 2014b, 240). Finally, in "The Possibility of a Poetic Drama" (1920), Eliot presents theatre as the artistic expression that can best represent society and argues that dramatic language should aspire to the highest level of achievement, without mistaking its purpose: "the majority of attempts to confect a poetic drama have begun at the wrong end; they have aimed at the small public which wants 'poetry'" (Eliot 2014c, 278, 282, 283).

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It seems clear that the "possibility" of verse drama in the heyday of modernism was very much in Eliot's mind; as Hammond puts it, "long before he began writing plays ... Eliot was planning his escape from poetry" (n.d.) –paradoxically, even before he wrote the poetry that would bring him fame in the 1920s. Apart from experimenting with the dramatic mode in these poems, Eliot also attempted to write an actual play in a creative context, featuring Bertolt Brecht, Eugene O'Neill and Luigi Pirandello as successful modernist playwrights. He started work on *Sweeney Agonistes*, his first play, shortly after the publication of *The Waste Land*. Several continuities linking the works can be identified: the urban London setting, the symbolism of card reading, the lack of sentiment in human relationships, the threat of physical violence to women, the remoteness of spirituality in a materialistic world, and the presence of literary tradition (in *Sweeney Agonistes*, the two opening epigraphs, quoting St. John of the Cross and Aeschylus, and the adaptation of the structure of Aristophanes' comedies). Grover Smith also noted a connection between

Eliot's original conception of Sweeney as having multiple personalities, and that of Tiresias as a superordinate character in *The Waste Land* (quoted in Ricks and McCue 2015, 787). Furthermore, as he was still working on *The Waste Land*, Eliot read with admiring wonder the manuscript of "Circe," the dramatic episode of *Ulysses*; the impact of its "gestural theatricality" on Eliot's poem (Levenson 2015, 98) should be extended to *Sweeney Agonistes*.

Eliot's first play reflects his interest in the ancient coexistence of drama and ritual, his vindication of the music hall as a truly popular form and a model for modern drama, and his fascination with the rhythms of jazz, which, as can be observed in the dialogue below, he attempted to reproduce through repetition and call and response patterns. Sweeney (an incongruous combination of brutality and sensibility, appearing in Eliot's 1920 *Poems* and briefly in *The Waste Land*), and Doris (a prostitute, associated with Sweeney in *Poems*, and here able to read the cards) indulge in a cannibalistic fantasy, a travesty of romance:

> SWEENEY: I'll carry you off
> To a cannibal isle.
> DORIS: You'll be the cannibal!
> SWEENEY: You'll be the missionary!
> You'll be my little seven stone missionary!
> I'll gobble you up. I'll be the cannibal.
> DORIS: You'll carry me off? To a cannibal isle?
> SWEENEY: I'll be the cannibal.
> DORIS: I'll be the missionary.
> I'll convert you!
> SWEENEY: I'll convert *you*!
> Into a stew.
> A nice little, white little, missionary stew. (Eliot 2015, 121)

Despite *Sweeney Agonistes*' promise as a project of theatrical innovation, Eliot was unable to complete it. It appeared as two separate scenes in *The Criterion* in 1926 and 1927, coinciding with Eliot becoming an Anglo-Catholic. After conversion, faith became the axis of his poetry, causing Eliot to distance himself from his earlier production. Later in his life, the poet would refer to *Sweeney Agonistes* as "in a sense, pre-Christian fragments" (qouted in Ricks and McCue 2015, 784). Faber and Faber first published these "fragments" together as *Sweeney Agonistes. Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama* in 1932. They were eventually included in *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (1936) –as an "unfinished poem" rather than an "unfinished play," probably indicating Eliot's reluctance to present himself, at this stage and with only a fragmentary text, as a dramatist. It was performed on rare occasions in minority venues.[4]

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[4] From the few productions of *Sweeney Agonistes*, the jazz version by Stage Sixty Theatre Club, directed by Peter Wood and with music by John Dankworth, is especially interesting. It was

Eliot's most comprehensive essay on poetic drama followed the first publication of the *Sweeney* fragments, and his adoption of a new religious identity. "A Dialogue on Dramatic Poetry" (1928) is written in dramatic form, resembling a Socratic dialogue in which a group of speakers discuss their views. Interestingly, in the preface, Eliot clarifies that these speakers –each identified with a capital letter instead of a proper name– "are not even fictions" but "merely voices" (Eliot 2014a, 397), which recalls the polyphony and loose characterisation of *The Waste Land*.

One of Eliot's speakers argues for the presence of dramatic elements as distinctive of good poetry; the most important of these –which, as we have seen, Eliot also associated in "Three Voices"– are action and character:

> What great poetry is not dramatic? Even the minor writers of the Greek Anthology, even Martial, are dramatic. Who is more dramatic than Homer or Dante? We are human beings, and in what are we more interested than in human action and human attitudes? (Eliot 2014a, 403)

Another speaker assertively makes the case for the suitability of verse in dramatic texts –indeed, for its expressive superiority over prose:

> prose drama is merely a slight by-product of verse drama. The human soul, in intense emotion, strives to express itself in verse ... The tendency, at any rate, of prose drama is to emphasise the ephemeral and superficial; if we want to get at the permanent and universal we tend to express ourselves in verse. (Eliot 2014a, 399-400)

Yet a different speaker claims that verse drama should be revived as a modern equivalent of Elizabethan drama in its power to appeal to a wide cross-section of society, and the versatility of its language: "We must find a new form of verse which shall be as satisfactory a vehicle for us as blank verse was for the Elizabethans" (Eliot 2014a, 407).

The main thesis of Eliot's "Dialogue" is formulated as the chiasmatic statement that "all poetry tends towards drama, and all drama towards poetry" (Eliot 2014a, 404). The poet's generalisation applies to the evolution of his work, first as a poet and later as a dramatist. His early poetry, and particularly *The Waste Land*, "strived toward the condition of drama," at a time when he was considering the feasibility of modern dramatic poetry and went on to write his first play. On the other hand, Eliot's finished plays contain echoes of *The Waste Land*, the poem where he most effectively imagined the reality of despair and the possibility of hope.

performed as part of a "Homage to T.S. Eliot" on 13 June 1965, shortly after the poet's death. It can be listened to on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_yaqANQDt4.

THE WASTE LAND, A BACKDROP IN ELIOT'S PLAYS

In his new life as a pious Anglo-Catholic, Eliot would mostly devote himself to poems of religious affirmation: *Ash Wednesday* (1930), *Ariel Poems* (1927-1954), and *Four Quartets* (1936-1941). However, he would gradually feel constrained as a meditative poet, and –despite the relative failure of *Sweeney Agonistes*– increasingly drawn to drama as an enticing alternative. As regards *The Waste Land*, Eliot famously belittled its social and historical relevance in those years, defining it as "the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life" and "a piece of rhythmical grumbling" (Eliot 2010, 1).

Despite Eliot's dismissive attitude towards his most emblematic poem, *The Waste Land* is unquestionably a referent when we examine his subsequent work, and more so if we consider how this work evolved. As has been shown, *The Waste Land* gravitates towards the dramatic, but it is equally true that Eliot's properly dramatic texts hark back to the poem in significant ways. With extraordinary humility, Eliot "spent the second half of his career retraining himself as a playwright" (Chinitz 2014, 68). He did so under the guidance of E. Martin Browne, a genuine man of the theatre who had established his reputation as a specialist in religious drama. When Eliot writes for the stage, over a decade after *The Waste Land*, scenes contribute to the development of a unified dramatic action, voices must become full-fledged characters, and dialogues effectively present human interactions. But, as a persistent archetypal image of hopelessness and devastation, the Waste Land is still there.

Eliot's first complete play was *The Rock* (1934), a pageant commissioned by the Forty-Five Churches Fund, which aimed to raise money for the building of churches in new residential areas of London. Its scenic structure, interspersed with first-person passages (individual or choral), may vaguely remind us of *The Waste Land*, but scenes in *The Rock* are purposefully developed and arranged to trace the ecclesiastical history of London. Yet, the pageant's depiction of modernity evokes the Unreal City –its motorcars driving for daytrips on the Sabbath, or the dull pastimes of its dwellers:

> I journeyed to the suburbs, and there I was told:
> We toil for six days, on the seventh we must motor
> To Hindhead, or Maidenhead.
> If the weather is foul we stay at home and read the papers. (Eliot 1934, 8)

These lines, spoken by the Chorus, echo the prophetic voices of *The Waste Land*. So does the response given by the allegorical character of the Rock, where he equates the Unreal City, including its impersonal mass of commuters in tube trains, with a desert –a desert of the soul:

> The desert is not remote in southern tropics,
> The desert is not only around the corner,
> The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you,
> The desert is in the heart of your brother. (Eliot 1934, 9)

Murder in the Cathedral (1935) followed *The Rock*. It was also a commissioned play, written for the Canterbury Festival. It dramatizes Archbishop Becket's return from exile to Canterbury, where he faces a martyrdom that is both feared and witnessed by a chorus of women. In these lines, their grim premonitions are translated into images of hostile, disturbed seasons, such as the "ruinous spring" that, like "the cruellest month" of April, with its "dull roots" (Eliot 2015, 55), brings neither regeneration nor hope:

> Now I fear disturbance of the quiet seasons:
> Winter shall come bringing death from the sea,
> Ruinous spring shall beat at our doors,
> Root and shoot shall eat our eyes and our ears,
> Disastrous summer burn up the beds of our streams
> And the poor shall wait for another decaying October. (Eliot 2004, 240)

We find similar imagery in *The Family Reunion* (1939), where Eliot faced the twin challenges of using verse and of transposing Aeschylus's *The Furies* to a contemporary setting. The play is set on a country estate (Wishwood), shrouded in a Gothic atmosphere, which we might think of as the aristocratic, rural counterpart of the Unreal City. Harry, the oldest son, is received by his family after years of absence, but he surprises them with a confession of murder. His cousin, Mary, represents the promise of love, symbolised as a garden. Harry might love and marry Mary, but his present situation is a "cold spring," an "evil time, that excites us with lying voices" (Eliot 2004, 309). Mary, in turn, responds with a negative picture of tortured natural growth:

> The cold spring now is the time
> For the ache in the moving root
> The agony in the dark
> The slow flow throbbing the trunk
> The pain of the breaking bud
> These are the ones that suffer least:
> The aconite under the snow
> And the snowdrop crying for a moment in the wood. (Eliot 2004, 310)

A special closeness brings Harry and Mary together, but his deranged confusion creates an insurmountable gap. Harry ends up rejecting Mary, and the poignant frustration of their love connects them with the hyacinth lovers in "The Burial of the Dead."

Eliot's dissatisfaction with *The Family Reunion*, which was coldly received, together with his belief in drama as a popular art, led him to comedy –specifically, to the drawing-room comedy of the London West End. Eliot adapted to this commercial genre without forgetting the goal of a natural and supple verse, nor relinquishing the religious orientation of his post-conversion work. In the first of his comedies, *The Cocktail Party* (1949), Edward and Lavinia face a marital crisis; he feels they are "in the trap," "each taking the corner of the cage" (Eliot 2004, 310) –curiously, "A Game of Chess," where the male voice thinks that he and his wife "are in rat's alley"

(Eliot 2015, 59), was initially called "In the cage." Another character in the play, Celia, a young woman living a glamourous life in London, is in fact disenchanted with an existence that avoids spiritual commitment. The description of this veritable –and dreadful– Waste Land of the soul almost quotes "The Burial of the Dead":

> ...the final desolation
> Of solitude in the phantasmal world
> Of imagination, shuffling memories and desires. (Eliot 2004, 419)

In Eliot's second comedy, *The Confidential Clerk* (1953), Colby's symbolic garden of spiritual fulfilment is set against the squalid urban wasteland where Lucasta grew up, and which still undermines her self-esteem. The metaphor that she chooses for herself, after admitting that she has still not found her garden, is evocative of the imagery with which "The Fire Sermon" opens:

> If I could find it!
> No, my only garden is... a dirty public square
> In a shabby part of London –like the one where I lived
> For a time, with my mother. I've no garden.
> I hardly feel that I'm even a person:
> Nothing but a bit of living matter
> Floating on the surface of the Regent's Canal. (Eliot 2004, 473)

These lines belong to a key dialogue between Lucasta and Colby. In contrast with the communicatively ineffective dialogues of *The Waste Land*, the first two acts of *The Confidential Clerk* are masterly structured as a succession of dialogues between two characters, or duologues (Jones 1960, 173).

Finally, in *The Elder Statesman* (1958), Lord Claverton faces the last stage of his life dreading the emptiness ahead. Like Petronius' Sybil of Cumae in the epigraph to *The Waste Land*, he longs for death in his old age. Both the sense of aimlessness that he experiences (even if more articulately expressed in the mystical paradoxical language of *Four Quartets*), as well as the chilling metaphor of the empty waiting-room, evoke the Waste Land of empty souls and suburban alienation:

> How gladly would I face death! But waiting, simply waiting,
> With no desire to act, yet a loathing of inaction.
> A fear of the vacuum, and no desire to fill it.
> It's just like sitting in an empty waiting-room,
> In a railway station on a branch line,
> After the last train, after all the other passengers
> Have left, and the booking office is closed
> And the porters have gone... (Eliot 2004, 530)

The reverse image is the garden of the convalescent home where Lord Claverton will peacefully die, having made the life-changing discovery of selfless love –also a contrast to the hyacinth garden of ill-fated love in "The Burial of the Dead." But unlike the voices in *The Waste Land*, the characters in Eliot's plays can hope for, and attain, the garden of a fulfilled Christian life.

CONCLUSION

With *The Elder Statesman*, we are back where we started. As a backdrop, *The Waste Land* is there in Eliot's last play, as it is in those that came before it: in evocations of spatial settings, images of physical and emotional barrenness suggesting despair, or similarities between voices/characters and the situations in which they find themselves. The dramatic qualities of Eliot's poem prefigure its author's commitment to the theatre –to echo the opening lines of "Burnt Norton," the "time future" of drama is "contained in [the] time past" of poetry. The projection of *The Waste Land* onto the plays is combined with the ways they retrospectively connect with it.

A number of dramatized readings of *The Waste Land*, both by highly regarded actors (Alec Guinness, Eileen Atkins, Michael Gough, Edward Fox, Jeremy Irons, Harriet Walter) and by Eliot himself, illustrate and attest to the text's dramaticism. Notable stage productions include Deborah Warner's, featuring Fiona Shaw (1995-2010), and Daniel and Christopher Domig's (2015). Both are one-actor performances, relying on various resources: lighting and sound effects, use of stage space, movable props, music-hall conventions, pauses or simulated reading –most of which effectively reproducing the poem's scenic structure. Its variety of voices and their frustrated dialogue is conveyed through role-play, impersonation, and ventriloquism, with the actors' physical presence as an amalgamating principle: "The actor's body obtrudes in the gaps between the voices and, far more insistently than any textual Tiresias, binds them into one... Eliot's assertion that all the personages of the poem are in fact one is made relentlessly manifest in the plain fact of the actor's body" (Query 2015, 13). This is lost in radio drama, which can alternatively emphasise the poem's polyphony –with a cast of different actors– and soundscape, as in the recent BBC Radio 3 dramatization "He Do *The Waste Land* in Different Voices."

In a recent interview, Deborah Warner refers to Samuel Beckett as the last great renovator of contemporary drama (Allfree). When her production of *The Waste Land* was presented in Madrid in 2010, she stressed the dramatic potential and currency of Eliot's poem, which had provided her with "exciting material for the stage" (Perales). Although Eliot sought renovation while counterproductively evolving towards the theatrical establishment, the bold experimentalism of *The Waste Land* and *Sweeney Agonistes* –the drama that might have been– predates Beckett's theatre of the absurd or Osborne's kitchen-sink drama by several decades. Although, despite their continuities with his canonical poetry, Eliot's plays are stigmatised as failed or regressive, *The Waste Land* continues to enjoy its reputation as the quintessentially modern poem. We may think of it as a foundational text that caused Eliot's cohesive imagination to crystallise, and from which he evolved to become first a meditative poet, and then a modern verse dramatist.

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THE WASTE LAND: HOPE AND SPIRITUALITY / *LA TIERRA BALDÍA*: ESPERANZA Y ESPIRITUALIDAD

THE

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THE WASTE LAND
AND THE ROAD TO EMMAUS

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Abstract

The game-changing status afforded to *The Waste Land* complicates any evaluation of the poem's quality, since it broke most of the old formal rules. To equate the poem with "Modernism" does not help. Some difficulties with reception can be removed (e.g. calling it *The Wasteland* makes readers think it is about the 1914-18 war, which it is not). The Notes can be demystified. This article spells out the Christian focus of Part V, which is often overlooked.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, voice, passion, Christianity.

LA TIERRA BALDÍA
Y EL CAMINO A EMAÚS

Resumen

El hecho de que se reconozca un antes y un después en poesía respecto a *La tierra baldía* (*The Waste Land*) dificulta la evaluación de la calidad del poema, ya que hizo pedazos la mayoría de las antiguas reglas formales. Tampoco ayuda su equiparación con el "Modernismo". Se pueden eliminar ciertos problemas en la recepción (por ejemplo, el hecho de titularlo como "The Wasteland" hace pensar a los lectores que se trata de la Gran Guerra de 1914-18, lo cual no es así). Se pueden desmitificar las Notas. Este artículo hace hincapié en el enfoque cristiano de la Parte V, que a menudo se pasa por alto.

Palabras clave: T.S. Eliot, *La tierra baldía*, voz, pasión, cristianismo.

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The publication of *The Waste Land* in October 1922 met with bemusement, outrage, acclaim. Would it make a permanent impact or was it a passing phenomenon? Eliot himself rapidly achieved a remarkable ascendancy. In my schooldays, Eliot was still *the* modern poet. It was a school bus which took our class to East Coker in 1958, some years before Eliot was buried there; my *Four Quartets* contains the imprint of rose petals I picked there. We schoolboys had read *The Waste Land*, and been told to look up the references in Eliot's Notes to the poem. My teachers, I think, preferred the *Quartets* to *The Waste Land*, perhaps because the *Quartets* had appeared during the war which they had experienced; they may also have valued the Christian elements, which are far more explicit in the *Quartets* than in the earlier poem. If *The Waste Land* was a call to prayer from the ruins of the Tower of Babel, the *Quartets* show a poet simplifying, clearing his throat, attempting responses in varying levels of speech. Eliot's critical writing was also commended to us at school. His "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) taught us to mistrust Romantic afflatus, and we were led to think that there had been a "dissociation of sensibility" at the time of the Civil War.

I cannot exclude reference to my own experience of a poem I have known for sixty-five years. Many things have altered in this time, inside and outside the readership of poetry. Not many readers of this piece will share my views or experience. A revisiting is, among other things, a piece of personal reminiscence. I have read no criticism of the poem for some decades.

In February 1965, after Eliot's memorial service in Westminster Abbey, I went up to sympathise with a man standing in the cold outside the West front: Ezra Pound, to whom Eliot had dedicated *The Waste Land*. Pound had excised one third of the text Eliot had submitted to him, and Eliot had thanked him for his editing with the dedication: *il miglior fabbro*. I had visited Pound in Italy in 1962 to ask if he would accept the dedication of a book of verse translations on which I was engaged: *The Earliest English Poems* (1965).[1] I had been prompted to attempt these translations by Pound's version of the Old English poem, "The Seafarer." Pound's response to my request was "If you think it can be done without irony." I took this as conventional modesty, but it wasn't. After twelve years in a Washington mental hospital, and facing a transformed world, Pound's confidence in the merits of his writing had collapsed.

Back in 1922, *The Waste Land* had baffled older readers. Why should a poem in English have Latin, Greek and Italian on the dedication page, quote German, French and other languages in the text, and end up with a triple *Shantih* on the Ganges? The text was discontinuous, seemed incoherent, and crammed with erudite fragments from other writers. It broke the old rules.

Thanks to its polarised reception, and to the sharp distinction of his essays in the *Times Literary Supplement*, Eliot attracted attention. His cultural authority

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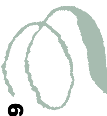
[1] Two subsequent revisions were followed by a rewritten version, *The First Poems in English,* Penguin Classics, 2008.

accumulated: editor of the *Criterion*, editor at Faber and Faber (which he made the leading poetry publisher), author of a string of critical essays. According to Hugh Kenner, Pound once said to Eliot "You let *me* throw the bricks through the front window. You go in at the back door and take out the swag" (Kenner 1985, 83). Eliot did indeed get the cultural swag, but the front door had not been closed to him, as it had to Pound. Bertrand Russell commented on his "Etonian manners" –he looked like a superior kind of Englishman. Eliot eventually became a critical arbiter, a Dr. Johnson or a Matthew Arnold, albeit in a narrower space, pronouncing from a high altitude some old truths in a drifting world. In our less reflective age, his kind of critical authority seems unrepeatable.

In 1922 Eliot must have seemed, to the ordinary reader of poetry, both bizarre and intellectual. It is easy to forget that English poetry, a hundred years ago, had a large popular readership. The reason that the First World War produced a lot of verse is not just because the trench war was terrible and interminable, but because a lot of verse was what people were used to. People in the century before 1922 did not just admire poetry: they read it, knew poems by heart, saw it in newspapers, and even paid money to buy books of it.

If Eliot can be said to have had any kind of popular reception, this took decades to arrive, hindered as well as helped by his incorporation into university English degrees, which had recently begun at Cambridge. There the critic F.R. Leavis took ideas from Eliot and taught them to generations. At Oxford, Helen Gardner became a leading commentator on his work. Frank Kermode edited Eliot's essays. Christopher Ricks jointly edited an extremely detailed commentary on Eliot's poetry. All this made Eliot seem a poet for an educated elite –which, like Sidney, Spenser, Donne, Milton, Alexander Pope and Matthew Arnold, he was. Poems engage the elite parts of the mind as well as the un-elite parts.



Though *The Waste Land*'s novelty faded, and though it held a lofty position in English teaching for two generations, its power remains undiminished. The nature of the poem means that it retains its essential unfamiliarity, its publication marking the advent of Modernism in English poetry. This is, or was, a Good Thing. But good things for academics become Subjects to be taught –whether The Rise of the Novel or Post-Colonialism. A taught Subject is not revolutionary. The bursting out of Modernism turned out not to have brought about the lasting transformation effected by the Romantic movement, though it had some effects on poetry, both positive and negative. In Britain, there are extremely few, even in universities, who get through Pound's *Cantos*, and they need a helping hand.

Tastes change: an instance is the collapse in the readership of D.H. Lawrence. A generation ago, university teachers saw their students lose interest in Lawrence. The same thing may be happening with Joyce, who has been over-sold in the Irish diaspora; after the first third of *Ulysses*, interest drops. In England, after the initial shock, Modernism was ignored, modified, absorbed, digested into older traditions. One can say that after the First World War, fewer truths were "universally acknowledged," and writing had more succinctness, more irony, fewer ideals.

Modernism did not undo what had preceded it, and non-Modernism continued alongside it. The 1920s was the time in which the poetry of Thomas Hardy,

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nearly all of which was published in the twentieth century, received full appreciation. In 1928 Hardy's ashes were buried in Westminster Abbey. The pallbearers included Housman, Shaw and Kipling, and representatives of Oxford and Cambridge. The leading pallbearer was the Prime Minister, Stanley Baldwin. Among the mourners was a representative of the King. Hardy, a survivor from a broader age of literature, was buried with greater public honour than any later writer, including T.S. Eliot. Public honour may not last, but this salute to Hardy testified to the standing in England, in 1928, of literature itself. This was also the year of Waugh's *Decline and Fall*, which features the Egdon Heath Penal Settlement, a dig at Hardy. A few years later, Waugh called his darkest novel *A Handful of Dust,* words taken from *The Waste Land*.

The high modernism of Joyce and Lawrence, of Pound and Wyndham Lewis, was hard to follow. In 1927 Eliot, five years after *The Waste Land,* became a British subject, calling himself "classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion" (Eliot 2015b, 513). When the shocks of 1922 subsided, it could be seen that Henry James, Joseph Conrad, and their European predecessors had warned of a cultural and moral disruption, but England was, generally, slow to recognise this disruption. Most of the modernists were not English. Eliot became English, yet this descendant of a long-established American family called his politics "royalist" –a term from French politics, not heard in England since the 1660s or in the USA after the 1780s.

One entirely English modernist was Virginia Woolf, whose name was known beyond the avant-garde, as were some of her works. In the 1970s, American feminists claimed that Woolf had been under-rated and neglected: my impression is that her feminism had not been neglected in England, though it is true that her academic hour was about to come. Her writing, however, her modernist fiction, had certainly not been neglected in England. Her major achievement, *To the Lighthouse,* was a set book at my boys' boarding school in the 1950s, as was her engaging critical writing.

Graham Greene once protested that the characters of Woolf and Forster "wandered like cardboard symbols through a world that was paper-thin." Greene missed in these Bloomsbury writers the religious sense which he found in Henry James. With the loss, said Greene, "of the religious sense... went the sense of the importance of the human act" (Greene 1969, 91). James had a deep sense of evil, and his urbanity does not conceal his strong moral sense, something which Bloomsbury was happy to have discarded. Lytton Strachey, mocker of eminent Victorians, found religion laughable. If religion did not bloom in Bloomsbury, neither did poetry. Virginia Woolf, who published Eliot, was baffled –outraged– to find how central religion was to his work. Like her father, Woolf had "a Victorian nonconformist conscience painfully detached from its God." This is the verdict of Penelope Fitzgerald, an admirer of Virginia Woolf, and a writer whose work, taken as a whole, constitutes, in my considered opinion, a more complete achievement than Woolf's (Fitzgerald 2003, 278).

How good a poem is *The Waste Land?* This question is not often raised, since it is hard to separate assessment from impact and reputation. There are some points to clear out of the way. Indeed, the purpose of the second half of this piece

is to remove, or lessen, one or two obstacles in the approach to the poem, with a final look at its Christianity and a glance at its formal qualities.

The title itself can pose problems. It is often printed as two words, not three. *Waste* and *Land* are two words, receiving equal stress. To call the poem *The Wasteland* raises expectations that it will be about the devastation of Europe; the ruined landscapes of Flanders are the visual frame for that war in British minds. In fact, though Eliot's poem mentions locations in Europe, and repeats that "London Bridge is falling down," there is little specific mention of the physical effects of the First World War on the European landscape. It is characteristic of Eliot's approach to give a reference a general application. The "maternal lamentation" belongs to Golgotha as much as it does to Europe, though the "endless hordes" do seem to belong to eastern Europe as well as invoking images of the end of the world. But the poem does not present trenches and broken trees. Rather we see Biblical deserts, bad sex in the city, the garden of Gethsemane and the Ganges awaiting the monsoon.

Eliot's first volume of poems, *Prufrock and other Observations*, 1917, had been dedicated to a French friend who died at the Dardanelles, but *The Waste Land* (though full of death and deathly forms of life) does not refer directly to the fatalities of the European war, unlike some of the reportage in Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*. So *The Waste Land* is not *The Wasteland*. This is a point which readers of this piece will hardly need to be reminded of, but one easily missed by those who have heard of this famous poem and know of its revolutionary status –but have not read it, and suppose it is about the war. It is not about the war, although it is shadowed by dark thoughts prompted by the war and also by wider doubts. A misunderstood title affects a work's reputation.

The title has a second, lesser problem, as it is a quotation from a medieval text, and its application may be missed by a student of the poem who reads the first of Eliot's Notes, since this note does not make it crystal clear that the words are from Sir Thomas Malory, an author more read in the century before 1922 than in the century since.

If the title can be misunderstood, the Notes can bewilder. The first publisher of the poem as a book asked Eliot to add something to fill up the pages to make the text long enough for a book. (Ezra Pound shortened the text to nineteen pages –"let us say the longest poem in the English langwidge," as he joked in his letter to Eliot of December 24, 1921 (Pound 1950, 168). The Notes that Eliot supplied have not helped the reception of the poem, though they are useful evidence of its gestation. They are not in the style common to modern notes to an older work, nor are they in a uniform style, so one does not know how to take them. Some stretch to a length which suggests that they are there to take up space. Others are mock-serious. A third kind refers the readers to the origin of Eliot's quotations, to show that he was no plagiarist but a knowing user of what he quoted. This third kind helps scholars, but for many readers it confirms the impression given by the epigraph to the poem, which mingles Latin and Greek, English and Italian. The preliminaries and the annotations to *The Waste Land* strongly suggest that this poem is for "fit audience though few" –like *Paradise Lost*. Though some readers like to feel that they are ahead of the game, the common reader's view matters in the end. Dr Johnson thought that

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if a reputation lasted a hundred years, it was probably justified, and *The Waste Land* has its readers. Like Milton's epic, Eliot's *omnium gatherum* assumes a knowledge of classical and religious literature which has become rare, yet the mixed-language epigraph and bewildering notes turn out to be less alarming than the poem itself. Indeed, its first line upsets any orthodoxy by telling us that, contrary to what a lot of poets have previously told us, April is the cruellest month.

It is my experience that the poem that comes between the puzzling epigraph and the gallimaufry of notes –the poem itself, once it is actually read or heard, communicates immediately and often overwhelmingly. The poem is not a show of arcane erudition but a dramatic performance of many voices, an alarming witness to a cultural and spiritual agony general to humanity. Its memorable phrases, its rhythms, its incantatory language can enter deeply into the mind, long before a reasonable grasp, even of the English parts of the text, can be formed. The Notes have their uses, but they are an unfortunate necessity.

The notes that call for comment are those on Jessie L Weston, on Tiresias and the introductory note to "What the Thunder Said." Eliot's note on Weston's book, and on Frazer's vegetation ceremonies, point –though in an uninviting manner– to where the title of the poem came from –the Grail legend, as it is retold in *Le Morte d'Arthur*, which Sir Thomas Malory finished in 1470. Malory supplies the poem's title. The land, in Malory, is the "dead land', the waste land, of the poem's second line.[2] Nothing grows there, nothing will grow until the King of the land dies, though this is not explained by Eliot, and the King's death (which shadows the death and resurrection of Jesus) has to be learned from further reading. If the legendary background helps, as far as it goes –making the land doubly dead– it cannot be said that the legend adds much to the poem after its opening until the final section, which deals with the Agony in the Garden of Gethsemane. Christ's Passion, announced in part V, is followed by the Journey to Emmaus, and the fruit of the Passion, held in the Grail, the chalice of Christ's blood. The Grail is in the Chapel Perilous, which (as Malory makes clear) can be approached only by a man of pure life. As Eliot's poem makes clear, there are few, if any, such men –or women, not even Queen Elizabeth I (Eliot 2015a, 75).

The note on Tiresias presents the poet, commenting on his own poem, in a voice all too close to that of a graduate seminar. We learn that Tiresias has both sexes, that he witnesses mechanical and meaningless sexual encounters, and that all the women "are one woman"; so presumably all the men are one man. The conversation overheard in the pub is about the desirability of abortion: living children enter Eliot's poem only as voices singing in a church. (Abortion, it may need to be said, was at that time regarded as, at best, unfortunate. However sad the situation of the

[2] "...and so befelle there grete pestilence, and grete harme to bothe Reallmys; for there encreced nother corne, ne grasse, nother wel-nye no fruyte, ne in the watir was found no fyssh. Therefore men callen hit –the londys of the two marchys– the Waste Land, for that dolerous stroke," 581.

expectant mother, abortion was then regarded as a moral crime, not as a moral right of the mother.) In his *Usura* canto, Pound expresses the same view as Eliot implies: Usury "slayeth the child in the womb" (Pound 1975, 230).

The note to the final section mentions "the present decay of eastern Europe," which is the nearest the Notes come to touching upon contemporary politics. "Decay" suggests the moral chaos in the former empires of eastern Europe, notably the triumph of communism in Russia.

"What the Thunder Said" was written in one sequence by Eliot; no cuts were imposed upon it by Pound. It is a more spiritual, Biblical and metaphysical sequence than its predecessors. Its first British readers must have been struck by the three late quotations from Indian spiritual writing, three divine utterances which are given a climactic position in the poem, before its final collapse into fragmentariness. Eliot is careful to translate for us the meanings of the divine commands. Indian thought had affected American writers since Whitman and Emerson, and Eliot had spent two years studying Indian metaphysics as part of his philosophy course at Harvard.

Less strikingly obvious to some readers today will be the Christian frame and underlay to this fifth part. Such a frame is announced by the first of the Notes on the Grail legend and again in the reference to Emmaus in the note introducing Part v, although "Emmaus" may mean little to a reader unfamiliar with Christianity. (In California, in 1966, I taught a student who wrote in an essay that Christ had been killed in a cavalry charge. Spelling can be important.)

Part V opens with the arrest of Christ at dawn in Gethsemane, his "agony" on "stony" Golgotha, "shouting" (*e.g.* of "Crucify him!"), the "crying" of the women of Jerusalem, imprisonment, "palace" interrogation, and "reverberation." The Latin term behind "reverberation" means beating with blows, scourging. After a line which opens out towards beats of thunder and India's distant mountains, the opening paragraph returns to the abandonment felt by the followers of the crucified Jesus.

The deserts of Old Testament prophets lie behind the next two paragraphs. Then follows the post-resurrection journey of two apostles towards the shared meal at Emmaus, which broadens out into the visions of men labouring through a wilderness, and the mystery of a visionary companion. Then visions of the end of the European war and an apocalyptic image of a heavenly city cracking, re-forming and bursting again. After a more personal nightmare vision we approach the Chapel Perilous, in terms borrowed from Malory and from Browning's Childe Roland. We hear the cock of betrayal heard by St Peter and see the lightning which accompanied Christ's death. The longed-for rain that falls in India, even as new life is to begin on the arid plain of the waste land of the world... In bringing out the preoccupation with Christianity in the last part of the poem, I do not wish to minimise the Indian metaphysics which form a permanent element in Eliot's spiritual thought. Literary critics normally see this poem as one of spiritual doubt and frustration, but it is also a poem of spiritual quest, ending ambiguously.

I will end by emphasising that *The Waste Land* is a dramatic work for international voices (Eliot nearly called the poem "He do the police in different voices" (Eliot 1971, 125) –voices from Interpol, perhaps). The "different voices" become more evident when the poem is read aloud, and indeed any such reading

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brings out by contrast the few happy moments in an often-agonised text –*les voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupôle,* the bird-song, the Ionian splendour of the church of St Magnus (a warrior-martyr who refused violence), the fishmen lounging at noon, the element of hope in the explanation of *Damyata*. The five-part arrangement of the text is musical, and the language of the text, despite its fragmentary textures, has unforgettable musical moments. Auden thought that the best definition of poetry is "memorable speech" (Auden 1935, v). *The Waste Land* meets this test. Eliot thought that the best lines in the poem were the water-dripping song, an entirely unintellectual sound. It is a poem of music as much as of ideas, and though the ideas may be important and easier for critics to discuss, I see the poem, which can at first seem like a prolonged and unintelligible scream, as a very well-edited scream, an often musical scream, one organised for orchestral performance. It is a poem of acute unhappiness seeking for a Yes: not finding it, but still seeking it.

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READING T.S. ELIOT IN OUR IDEOLOGICAL AGE: ALLUSIONS TO CHRISTIAN LITURGY IN *THE WASTE LAND*

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Abstract

Critics have long engaged in an ideological debate regarding T.S. Eliot's antisemitism, misogyny, and ethnocentrism. While his opponents attack him according to deconstructionist readings, his proponents remain unsure about how to defend his place in literary studies. Upon the centennial of *The Waste Land*, I argue that its opening and closing allusions to Christian liturgical practice in "The Burial of the Dead" and "What the Thunder Said" offer a poetic defense against deconstructionism's literary nihilism, a defense that justifies its place in the next century. Through these allusions, Eliot fashions a poetic ritual that enacts the Biblical and liturgical journey from death into new life, a journey reflected in the poem's images of a barren modernity and its resurrection of tradition.

Keywords: Allusion, Ideology, Christianity, T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*.

LEER A T.S. ELIOT EN NUESTRA ÉPOCA IDEOLÓGICA: ALUSIONES A LA LITURGIA CRISTIANA EN *LA TIERRA BALDÍA*

Resumen

Durante mucho tiempo, los críticos se han enzarzado en un debate ideológico sobre el antisemitismo, la misoginia y el etnocentrismo de T.S. Eliot. Sus detractores lo atacan según las lecturas deconstruccionistas y sus defensores no saben cómo defender su lugar en los estudios literarios. En el centenario de *La tierra baldía*, alego que sus alusiones iniciales y finales respecto a la práctica litúrgica cristiana en "El entierro de los muertos" y "Lo que dijo el trueno" ofrecen una defensa poética contra el nihilismo literario del deconstruccionismo, una defensa que justifica su lugar en el próximo siglo. A través de estas alusiones, Eliot configura un ritual poético que representa el viaje bíblico y litúrgico de la muerte a la nueva vida, un viaje que se refleja en las imágenes del poema de una modernidad estéril y su resurrección de la tradición.

Palabras clave: alusión, ideología, cristianismo, T.S. Eliot, *La tierra baldía*.

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Any treatment of T.S. Eliot seems to require scholars to engage in an ideological debate. They are either on the offensive, attacking him for antisemitism, misogyny, or ethnocentrism, or on the defensive, erecting an Eliot apologetics. To maintain their credibility, the former must still recognize Eliot's prominence because, after all, why else would they deem him worthy of attack? The latter distance themselves from his unseemly prejudices. Both sides must hedge their position.[1] Now we are commemorating the centenary of *The Waste Land* and grappling again with how to justify its enduring attention despite its author's transgressions. We are anxious and dissatisfied because ideological trends can limit our admiration of Eliot or undermine a literary canon that includes him, but they cannot account for why we still read *The Waste Land*, or why we would want to recognize its one hundredth-year anniversary.

To answer those questions, we must examine something more fundamental: the tradition underlying Eliot's work and how the poem conveys that tradition to readers. In *The Waste Land*, the primary vehicle for tradition is allusion. Allusion directly challenges ideology because it suggests that, without a tradition, literature itself would be impossible. Without allusion, no author could write anything. By extension, ideologies that deconstruct the tradition upon which allusions depend render literature impossible. Ideological reading, then, is literary nihilism, against which Eliot's highly allusive *The Waste Land* raises a bulwark. Now that we find ourselves recognizing its centennial amid a climate of battling ideologies that have escaped academia, such a study would assist us in overcoming the ideological debate in which Eliot scholars seem ceaselessly trapped. This paper will examine two allusions to Christian liturgy to demonstrate how the poem frustrates ideological attempts to deconstruct tradition.

Examples abound of the three deconstructionist strains in Eliot criticism, those dissecting his alleged antisemitism, misogyny, and ethnocentrism. Among this crowd, Robert Alter contributed "Eliot, Lawrence & the Jews," which characterizes Eliot as a "Christian conservative militantly defending an ostensibly older idea of European culture" (1970, 81). Alter contends that allusion relates directly to Eliot's "conceptions of European culture" because the "density of discontinuous allusion [in Eliot's verse] ... invoke[s] the whole range of the European cultural tradition in a way that suggests the tradition is at once universal and esoteric, impenetrable to the outsider" (i.e., the Jew) (84). On the centennial of Eliot's birth, however, Alter celebrated him as the "exemplary poetic voice" of modernism, who "succeeded in creating between 1909 and 1922 an iconoclastic poetic idiom that was ... resonant for a new historical era" (1989, 31-32). Anthony Julius revived the topic of Eliot's attitude towards Jews with *T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism, and Literary Form* (1995), as did Walter A. Strauss in "The Merchant of Venom? T.S. Eliot and Anti-Semitism" (1997). David M. Thompson carried this subject into the new millennium with

[1] Examples of this tactic appear in Brooker (2001, xiii), Freedman (2003, 420), Julius (1995, 2), and Strauss (1997, 31-32).

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"T.S. Eliot, Anti-Semitism and the Weight of Apologia" (2001, 165-176), followed in 2003 in *Modernism/modernity* with "Eliot and Anti-Semitism: The Ongoing Debate," which included essays and responses by many critics.[2]

Over the past few years, concerns about Eliot's misogyny have also escalated. Carrie Rohman accompanied the unveiling of the Eliot-Hale letters with "Severed Tongues: Silencing Intellectual Women" (2020), whereas Frances Dickey gives a balanced overview of the letters in "May the Record Speak: The Correspondence of T.S. Eliot and Emily Hale" (2020). Karen Christensen discusses Emily Hale's side of the story in "The Love of a Good Woman" (2021). Over the past seven decades, these and other treatments have contributed to understanding Eliot's life and the images of women and Jews in his verse, and while they may overall reflect the trend of reading through ideological perspectives, a greater understanding of his prosody can better justify readers' continued interest.

Previous discussions of allusion in *The Waste Land* refrain from defining the term or offering an overview of how readers interpret allusions.[3] The following analysis is based on the understanding of allusion found in Robert Alter's *The Pleasures of Reading in an Ideological Age* ([1989] 1996) and Ziva Ben-Porat's "The Poetics of Literary Allusion" (1976). First, readers must distinguish between general and literary allusion. General allusion occurs when a text merely references something outside itself, such as a historical or personal event, a painting, or a sculpture (Ben-Porat 1976, 105). Literary allusion, on the other hand, is a specific type of allusion where one text refers to another: "a device for the simultaneous activation of two texts" (7). Readers move through four stages when they encounter a literary allusion. First, they recognize an allusive marker (Alter 1996, 110). After recognizing one or more of these markers, readers then identify the source text (Ben-Porat 1976, 110). Third, if readers successfully identify the source, then they reinterpret the marker accordingly (Ben-Porat 1976, 111). Finally, readers try to find larger patterns where

[2] These included Ronald Schuchard, David Bromwich, Ronald Bush, Denis Donoghue, Anthony Julius, James Longenbach, Marjorie Perloff, Jonathan Freedman, Bryan Cheyette, and Ranen Omer-Sherman.

[3] Recent contributions include Olga Ushakova's "Wagnerian Contexts and Wagner's Codes of T.S. Eliot's Poetry, 1910-20s," which traces Wagnerian plots, "music techniques," and direct citations (2021, 267). Adrian Paterson also examines Wagner in *The Waste Land* for *The Edinburgh Companion to T.S. Eliot and the Arts* (2016). In response to Grover Smith's *Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (1956), Lawrence Rainey's *The Annotated Waste Land* (2006), and Christopher Ricks and Jim McCue's *The Poems of T.S. Eliot* (2015), Thomas Gordon-Colebrooke recommends classical sources for the "What the Thunder Said" (2019, 113-115). Dídac Llorens-Cubedo's "T.S. Eliot in the Art of R.B. Kitaj" (2019) examines how *The Waste Land* inspired R.B. Kitaj's use of allusion in his visual art, while also commenting upon how the Jewish artist dealt with antisemitism. Kate Pfeffer's "T.S. Eliot's Tea Time Allusions" compares Eliot's allusions to Carroll across his works (2014), and Han-Mook Lee has written extensively on Biblical allusions (2010; 2004). Like this study, Viorica Patea's "T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and the Poetics of the Mythical Method" refutes certain ideological tendencies, revealing instead "mythical and allusive strategies" that "attempt to enact psychological conflicts and processes of consciousness" and "bring forth the common language of Eastern and Western spirituality" (2007, 93).

the text they are reading interacts with the source (Ben-Porat 1976, 111). If the alluding text "is a reconstruction or a rewriting" of a previous text, then its allusions are metonymic (Ben-Porat 1976, 117; Alter 1996, 132). Alternatively, if the alluding text –like *The Waste Land*– is similar to a source only in certain respects, then its allusions are metaphoric (Alter 1996, 131-132).

A pair of allusions in *The Waste Land* from the Christian liturgical tradition shows how this framework offers a non-ideological understanding and appreciation of the poem, substantiating its merit as its second century begins. In the first step, readers recognize the title of the opening section as an allusive marker. Specifically, "The Burial of the Dead" cites the Christian liturgical service whose full name in the 1662 Anglican Book of Common Prayer is "The Order for the Burial of the Dead" (Eliot 2015, 55; 1762). As for the second step of identifying the source text, the Church of England used this edition from 1662 until 1928 (after *The Waste Land*'s publication), so Eliot could reasonably assume that almost all of his audience would identify the source of the allusion from their participation in the centuries-old service. Referring to such a widely-known text ensures from the outset that readers find themselves in familiar territory and that they can confidently rely upon their own "cultural literacy" to guide them through the maze of allusions to come, even if this turns out to be a false confidence (Alter 1996, 119).

Regarding the third step of interpreting the reference according to its source, readers have four options. "The Burial of the Dead" is itself a small, limited phrase. Eliot does not quote the entire liturgy. So, readers can easily eliminate at least two options: the marker is not large and extensive with limited, local significance, nor is it repeated numerous times as a refrain (Alter 1996, 124-129). Therefore, as a small marker, "The Burial of the Dead" either maintains a significance across the entire *Waste Land*, or it is only significant in its immediate vicinity. Readers' assessment of these two possibilities must be ongoing. They must interpret section one according to the allusion, and they must keep it in mind as they read the other four sections in order to determine if its significance pervades the entire work.

As for its local significance, images of the dead abound in the first section. The rather crude word "breeding" in the first line is immediately undermined with "dead land" in the second (Eliot 2015, 55). Such contradictions continue throughout the opening lines, which contrast past "memory" and future "desire," "dull roots" from below and "spring rain" from above, "winter" and "warm," "earth" and "snow," "little life" and "dried tubers" (55). This catalogue extends the idea of burial or *interment* –literally *into earth*– into the opening of the section where the once dead earth begins to sprout life in the cruel month of April. The primary perspective of this catalogue is from underground since spring arrives first at the roots. After only seven lines, then, readers begin to see the local significance of the allusion and to assess it according to the fourth stage, namely, the pattern that exists across *The Waste Land* and the Book of Common Prayer's "Order for the Burial of the Dead."

At first, readers have two choices for characterizing this pattern. If it is metonymic, then the entirety of *The Waste Land* must reproduce the liturgical service. If it is metaphoric, then only certain points of similarity must exist between the two. Since *The Waste Land* alludes to far more than "The Order for the Burial of the

Dead," readers can dismiss metonymy. In other words, the volume of allusions in the work implies that they are metaphorical. Readers assume that partial similarities and not complete congruencies exist between *The Waste Land* and its many source texts. Therefore, knowing that "The Burial of the Dead" metaphorically alludes to an Anglican service, readers need only determine what sort of consonance or dissonance operates between them. Of course, if the relationship were completely consonant, then *The Waste Land* would reproduce verbatim "The Order for the Burial of the Dead." Some degree of playfulness or tension must therefore exist between Eliot's "The Burial of the Dead" and the Anglican order.

Returning to the catalogue of contrasts in the opening verses, readers with the Anglican liturgy in mind recognize a playful consonance between this part of *The Waste Land* and the burial service. From the outset, the liturgy overwhelmingly emphasizes the body's eventual resurrection and eternal life. The priest and clerks first process before the corpse, singing Jesus' words from The Gospel According to St. John 2: 25-26: "I Am the resurrection and the life, saith the Lord: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die" (1762).[4] This emphasis on the resurrection continues throughout the service, culminating in the lesson from the First Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, 15: 20: "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (1762). First Corinthians continues with "for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (15: 52-53 [KJV]). Afterward, the liturgy concludes at the graveside with a collect (emphasis on the first syllable) that reiterates the overall purpose of the service: "O Merciful God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the resurrection and the life; in whom whosoever believeth shall live, though he die..: We meekly beseech thee, O Father, to raise us from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness..." (1762). Though called "The Order for the Burial of the Dead," then, the service defiantly emphasizes life and resurrection over death and decay.

The opening lines of *The Waste Land* playfully reverse this emphasis. Like any participant in the liturgy, Eliot must have recognized its paradox of sorrow and joy: the sorrow at a loved one's death but joy at an eventual salvation. Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians attests to this experience in a passage often used in Christian burial liturgies: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will

[4] In traditional Christianity, the terms "body" and "corpse" are not synonymous. "Body" refers to the entirety of a person, not just some material aspect (i.e., a "corpse"). The clergy process before the material corpse only, not the body, which Christians believe will be resurrected.

God bring with him" (4: 13-14 [KJV]).[5] Like Paul's admonition not to wallow in sorrow, *The Waste Land* explores the possibility of life's renewal despite extending the imagery of "the burial" and "the dead" across the opening lines. Eliot borrows this insistence on the necessity of death for resurrection from another of Paul's epistles: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6: 4 [KJV]). Here Paul refers to a death "unto sin" to accomplish a life "unto God" (Romans 6: 11 [KJV]). Therefore, the consonance between *The Waste Land*'s opening section and the Anglican liturgy invites readers to consider the relationship between Eliot's work and the epistles of Paul. Accordingly, they can interpret "The Burial of the Dead" as an exploration of the death "unto sin" that prepares the saved for eventual resurrection.

Because death is required for new life, the speaker fears the "cruellest month" of April when Easter commemorates Christ's triumph over death (Eliot 2015, 55). This month breeds "[l]ilacs out of the dead land" (55). In Eastern Christianity, lilacs commemorate Christ's resurrection, since their Greek name "paschalia" refers to the feast of Passover ("Pascha") during which Christ's crucifixion and resurrection occurred ("Easter" is called "Pascha" in Eastern Christianity.). However, with its attention to death, the more operative image in "The Burial of Dead" is Christ's Good Friday crucifixion rather than his Easter Sunday resurrection. The opening speaker fondly remembers winter as a time for "forgetful snow," as opposed to a spring full of dreadful "[m]emory" (55). Here the word "[m]emory" prompts readers who recognize the "Burial of the Dead" allusion to recall that the most important event memorialized in April is Christ's crucifixion and resurrection. Unlike Eliot's poem, the liturgy recalls this event as joyous rather than cruel.

In addition, at the center of the Christian liturgy lies the Eucharist, the sacrifice of bread and wine that Jesus commanded his disciples to make "in remembrance" of him (Luke 22: 10; 1 Corinthians 11: 24-25 [KJV]). As the quintessential memory of Christianity, this sacrifice must occur to any reader who has participated in the Anglican rite. However, Eliot's opening speaker fears the cruelty of April, that is, the pain of a death "unto sin," even though this death is necessary for new life. This section thus emphasizes the loss and suffering that precedes the Eucharist's eventual promise of joy, salvation, and thanksgiving ("Eucharist" is usually translated from Greek as "thanksgiving;" more literally, "good grace"). By exploring the death requisite for renewal, this section enhances readers' understanding of the sacrifice at the heart of Christian worship, an understanding established by the "Burial of the Dead" allusion.

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[5] Following Paul, the death of a Christian is often referred to as "falling asleep in the Lord," implying that the resurrection is a kind of waking up. 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4 does not appear in the Anglican "Order for the Burial of the Dead," but it does appear in Roman Catholic and Western Rite Orthodox requiem masses and in the Greek Orthodox funeral service.

This allusion primes readers to notice additional references to death in the section, including those to Ezekiel (Eliot 2015, 55). Eliot's notes only cite Ezekiel 2: 1 for the term "Son of Man": "And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me... And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation" (2: 1-3 [KJV]). However, Eliot's "What are the roots that clutch" alludes to Ezekiel 17:

> Say thou, Thus saith the Lord God; Shall it prosper? shall he not pull up the roots thereof, and cut off the fruit thereof, that it wither? it shall wither in all the leaves of her spring, even without great power or many people to pluck it up by the roots thereof. Yea, behold, being planted, shall it prosper? shall it not utterly wither, when the east wind toucheth it? it shall wither in the furrows where it grew. (17: 9-10 [KJV])

In addition, Ezekiel 37 reads,

> And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest. Again he said unto me, Prophesy upon these bones, and say unto them, O ye dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus said the Lord God unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. (37: 3-5 [KJV])

Taken together, these allusions demonstrate how *The Waste Land* reflects the narrative arc of the Book of Ezekiel. First, at 2: 1-3, God inspires Ezekiel with prophetic vision. In section one's Ezekiel allusions, readers initially recognize a voice presaging death. Next, in chapter seventeen, Ezekiel prophesies Israel's destruction and Babylonian captivity as punishment for disobeying God. This punishment instantiates the death "unto sin" mentioned in the Anglican "Order for the Burial of the Dead" and Paul's letters. Finally, while this opening section of *The Waste Land* emphasizes death in contrast to the Anglican rite's insistence on resurrection, the promise of new life appears in Ezekiel 37, which describes the kind of resurrection declared by the liturgy. In a playful treatment of the Christian burial ritual, Eliot's verse expresses the hesitancy and fear of approaching the death that is necessary for new life, though the assurance of that life lies hidden in the allusions themselves.

These images culminate in the final verses with "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many / I had not thought death had undone so many," a citation from Dante's *Inferno*, book 3, 55-57 (Eliot, 2015, 57). Again, the allusion playfully departs from its source text, since the crowd refers to living London commuters, not to shades in Limbo. In fact, some readers –the very same who grew up occasionally attending liturgies for the burial of the dead– might themselves be commuters in a modern Western city. In other words, this allusion describes the living as dead, a group with whom at least some readers may identify. Associating this Dantescan imagery with "The Order for the Burial of the Dead," Eliot then delivers another liturgical allusion: "That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?" (57). Ricks and McCue suggest that these lines

may allude to Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: "Thou fool, that which thou sowest, is not quickened except it die. And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain…" (15: 36-37 [KJV]). The Anglican "Order for the Burial of the Dead" includes this passage, which resonates with the prophecy of resurrection in Ezekiel 37. In conjunction with both the "Burial of the Dead" and Ezekiel allusions, then, the Dante imagery places readers not in the position of living mourners attending a funeral, but in the position of the dead.

Given the way in which section one plays with its opening allusion, readers may realize that "The Burial of the Dead" does not merely allude to another literary text, but that it references a ritual. The Book of Common Prayer's liturgical services are not meant to be read. They are meant to be performed and enacted. Section one inverts the reader's typical role in this ritual. On the one hand, it is a ritual that makes its participants fearful and anxious because they must abandon their comfortable existence within a winter that "kept [them] warm" under a cozy blanket of "forgetful snow" (Eliot 2015, 55). On the other, after facing the kind of death "unto sin" at the forefront of the "Burial of the Dead" ritual, participants will receive new life. This life eventually reaches the "dried tubers" under the "dead land" or the "crowd [flowing] over London Bridge," a crowd whom Eliot identifies with both himself and his readers in the Baudelaire allusion "mon sembable –mon frère!" (57). As in the Anglican rite, *The Waste Land*'s allusions suggest that readers are not participating as mere spectators, but as the dead themselves.

Instead of finding comfort in an easy, lifeless winter, "The Burial of the Dead" thrusts readers' frightening death upon them. After all, Christians perform "The Order for the Burial of the Dead" primarily for the sake of the deceased. Like Donne's "never send to know for whom the bell tolls; it tolls for thee," Eliot's "The Burial of the Dead" reflects the ritual back upon his readers (1975, 87). In this section, they repeatedly find references to life and resurrection alongside weightier images of death. Those who recognize "The Burial of the Dead" as an allusion detect that the first section does not omit the liturgical theme of life and resurrection, but they may notice how Eliot emphasizes the fact that death is required for this new life by placing his audience in the role of those being buried.

Readers may conclude that the small "Burial of the Dead" allusion maintains its significance across section one and that it playfully accords with the source text without simply repeating it. Whether such significance emerges throughout the entire poem readers will only learn after they have read all five sections, but a tentative resolution lies in *The Waste Land*'s closing words, "Shantih shantih shantih," along with Eliot's corresponding note (Eliot 2015, 71). This allusion is certainly more difficult for Eliot's Anglican, Christian readers to recognize than "The Burial of the Dead," but Eliot's note explains it as "a formal ending to an Upanishad" (77). In their source context, these words constitute a prayer of peace at the end of a ritual or lesson. Eliot further mentions that "'The Peace which passeth understanding' is our equivalent to this word" (77). Christian liturgies use these words in their closing benediction, borrowed from St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians: "And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (4: 7 [KJV]). Therefore, "Shantih shantih shantih" alludes directly to

the ending of an Upanishad and indirectly to both Christian liturgy and another of Paul's letters.

Interestingly, Eliot's phrase "our equivalent" reveals that he is confident in his readers' knowledge of the liturgy. The significance of Eliot's note to "Shantih shantih shantih" and his allusion to "The Order for the Burial of the Dead" depend upon this confidence. The simple pronoun "our" betrays the fact that people who have participated in the Christian rituals referred to in *The Waste Land* are its immediate audience, and Eliot includes himself in this group. Again, in recognizing allusions to its religious rituals, such an audience may understand the poem itself as a ritual. As yet another liturgical allusion, "Shantih shantih shantih" certainly resonates with "The Burial of the Dead." Since they connect the beginning and end of *The Waste Land*, readers may safely assume that this closing has a global significance within the work. In fact, what Eliot's note omits is the fact that the "Shantih shantih shantih" prayer may also be recited in preparation at the beginning of a ritual. *The Waste Land*'s concluding allusion, therefore, marks both the beginning and end of something, harkening back to the beginning of the poem itself. In the same way, the Anglican liturgy closes with a benediction that alludes to yet another of Paul's letters, Second Corinthians: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and fellowship of the Holy Ghost, be with us all evermore. Amen" (1762; cf. 13: 14 [KJV]). Both this allusion and "Shantih shantih shantih" imply that the end of *The Waste Land* dismisses its readers into a new life of peace and unity with the divine.[6]

Considering this liturgical connection, "Shantih shantih shantih" emits the same consonant tone as the "Burial of the Dead" allusion. As dead as the modernity depicted in the poem may be, it still insists on renewal and closes with the resolution of peace. Given that "Shantih shantih shantih" and "The Peace which passeth understanding" both appear in performed liturgies, readers may conclude that they are not merely reading a work of literature, nor are these allusions merely literary: they are participants in a ritual wherein the author is a kind of priest or prayer leader. As with the Christian priest in "The Order of the Burial of the Dead," the author is not the source of peace, but he points the way to the source. Like a liturgical service, Eliot's *The Waste Land* is not merely the product of an individual personality. It is a rite aimed at a peace that "passes all understanding." Mere human understanding cannot encompass or create such a peace. In other words, the peace that "Shantih" denotes cannot be discursively contained. It can only be poetically and ritually experienced.

This ritualization of poetry accords well with Eliot's insistence on its impersonality in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" ([1919] 1975). While the author alone can undertake the "great labour" necessary to "obtain" tradition

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[6] The Latin term "mass" refers to such a dismissal, though of course the Anglican *Book of Common Prayer* does not include this remnant from Roman Catholicism. The term does, however, appear in the Western Rite masses of Eastern Orthodoxy (the liturgies of Tikhon and Gregory) but not in its Eastern divine liturgies of John Chrysostom, Basil, and James.

and “sweat for it,” he “[continually surrenders] himself” in an “extinction of personality” (38-40). To use the term Eliot borrows from Aristotle, this “process of depersonalization” belongs to the author’s mind (νοῦς; nous) (40-43). The artistic creation comes after the non-deliberative “receptacle ... [of the mind seizes and stores] up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together” (41-43). Despite the activity necessary for developing a “historical sense” out of tradition, because the mind is a “receptacle,” the author is a “medium” or “catalyst” of the “emotions and feelings” that result in the art. This catalyst –the author– remains absent from the final product (38-41). This product is a “concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation” (43). In other words, the poem is not the expression of a single consciousness or personality. It is also not the result of deliberation or reason, though conscious deliberation may be necessary for crafting a poem (43). In offering an “escape from emotion” and “personality,” the poem is a practice in self-denial belonging to the mind, the location of the divine (θειότερόν from Greek θεός or *theos*, meaning *god*) in the human (43).

Read in this way, *The Waste Land*’s allusions emanate from a process of self-denial with its seat in the poet’s mind. Being inalienable from the poet, this mind does not belong to the poem. As the part of the poet responsible for the poem, the mind remains with the author and is not transmitted to the reader. Lacking the poet’s mind, the poem must be “impersonal,” its “emotion [must] have its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet” (44). These allusions are the very combinations, the new substances, of the “feelings, phrases, images” that the author’s mind received. In constituting the poem, they are the active agents that must “[readjust] the relations, proportions, values of each [new and preceding] work of art toward the whole” (38). And they enable the receiving mind of the reader to participate in such a tradition.[7]

In ritualizing the tradition at the source of its allusions, *The Waste Land* initiates readers in a practice or rite. By contrast, deconstructive readings that undermine this tradition desecrate this ritual and repudiate on divisive, partisan grounds the possibility of renewal alluded to at the close of the poem. It is this very modern destruction that *The Waste Land* guards against. Allusion, therefore, counterbalances deconstructionism since they serve contrary purposes. On the one hand, allusion enables literature itself since “[a]ll that we have of literature builds on literature that precedes it” (Alter 1996, 113). If we admit this premise, then we must also accept that literature is fundamentally allusive. On the other hand, in rejecting tradition on the grounds that it is inherently prejudiced, deconstructionists undermine the very thing that makes literature possible.

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[7] Ezekiel’s mind or Greek νοῦς is what receives “the spirit” responsible for his prophetic visions in 2: 1-2, the section Eliot cites. That Eliot understood Ezekiel’s prophetic gift as akin to his poetic gift is a topic for another occasion, a topic suggested by his reticence in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”: “This essay proposes to halt at the frontiers of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry” ([1919] 1975, 43).

In *The Waste Land*'s first century, some critics have enjoyed discovering what they themselves have projected onto the tradition behind its allusions. They have assumed that this tradition is inherently bigoted and then congratulated themselves when they have confirmed their bias. Their literary nihilism has said much about why we should not read Eliot and about the demerits of his life and work. But they have subverted what *The Waste Land* emerged from –the literature underlying its allusions. They have ignored why and how it came to be: as an imitation, adaptation, and response to other works. They have ignored why readers admire it: as a novel and exciting response to texts, events, and rituals that readers recognize from their own experiences. In the poem's second century, we need not sustain this ideological debate by defending Eliot. Traditions can be both ideologically problematic and artistically significant. To combat ideological reading, we should not erect ideological defenses. Rather, we ought to do what the poem asks of us: to gain an understanding of the tradition behind it.

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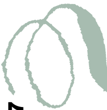

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"WITH INVIOLABLE VOICE": ELIOT'S REDEEMING WORD IN *THE WASTE LAND**

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the notions of despair and selfhood in *The Waste Land* through the prism of Soren Kierkegaard's *Sickness unto Death* (1849). It contends that despite the sense of loss and meaninglessness of existence, *The Waste Land* traces the journey of the self from ignorance and suffering, from being bound to temporality and sensual thirst, through "the dark night of the soul" to a vantage point from where it can see into "the heart of light." Furthermore, it claims that Eliot is a twentieth century Dante who goes beyond European frontiers and attempts to reconcile Christianity, Buddhism and the Vedanta with an existentialist discourse.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, Soren Kierkegaard, *Sickness unto Death*, despair.

"CON VOZ INVIOLABLE": LA PALABRA REDENTORA DE ELIOT EN *LA TIERRA BALDÍA*

Resumen

Este artículo analiza la desesperación y la noción de identidad en *La tierra baldía* a la luz del libro *La enfermedad mortal* (1849) de Soren Kierkegaard. Argumenta que, a pesar de la sensación de pérdida y falta de sentido de la existencia, *La tierra baldía* traza el viaje del ser desde la ignorancia y el sufrimiento, desde la sujeción a la temporalidad y la sed de lo sensual, a través de la noche oscura del alma hasta una perspectiva desde la cual se puede acceder al "corazón de la luz". Se afirma que Eliot es un Dante del siglo xx que va más allá de las fronteras europeas e intenta reconciliar el cristianismo, el budismo y la filosofía vedanta con un discurso existencialista.

Palabras clave: T.S. Eliot, *La tierra baldía*, Soren Kierkegaard, *Enfermedad mortal*, desesperación.

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The Waste Land has become an icon for a civilization on the edge of disaster, a poem documenting the collapse of its values. It has inaugurated a new poetic language as well as a new *Weltanschauung*, valid even in our postmodern age, a continuation of what Soren Kierkegaard called "the age of despair" in 1836 (ix), and which Auden termed "the age of anxiety" a century later. The poem became a relentless experiment with form, style, meter and voice, and in the process, it shaped new paradigms of poetic expression and systems of belief. Eliot's quest for a new form created poetic equivalents for the new techniques with which nonrepresentational avant-garde arts did away with mimetic principles (Altieri 2015).

From the beginning, *The Waste Land* was recognized as a cultural icon of modern pessimism and post-war desolation. We still read *The Waste Land* as a post-apocalyptic howl, the poetic equivalent of Munch's cry, yet this modernist revolutionary poem is also a document of faith, and an affirmation of spiritual values. In fact, the poem's "despair" when considered in the light of Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism[1] can be read in a way that is congenial with the philosophy of the Vedanta and Buddhism in which Eliot grounds the poem.[2] Although *The Waste Land* is a poem about people who experience a sense of loss and despair, for whom life is meaningless, the poem gradually awakens to the reality of the transcendent. In defiance of the frequent tableaux of failed intimacy, dysfunctional relationships, lovelessness, and scenes of "falling towers" of "unreal" cities, the poem's sense of an ending is not final; rather, it constantly seeks a strategy of perseverance, conceived to override the wreckage. Beyond its apparent pessimism, the poem manages to fill "all the desert with inviolable voice" (Eliot 2015, 58).[3] As a poem of "fragments ... shored against my ruins" (71), Eliot's epic finally serves to save the self and the world from collapse. Despite the desolation it portrays, it makes an apology for ultimate love and ends with the revelation of the Word, a resolution to act, and a benediction in a strange language: "shantih shantih shantih" (71). It stages a quest for a forgotten language that gives voice to a buried life in which the self recovers its spiritual identity and defeats the void that lies at the core of existence. *The Waste Land* traces the journey of the self from ignorance and suffering, from being bound to temporality and sensual thirst, through the dark night of the soul to a vantage point from where it can see into "the heart of light" (56).

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[1] For studies of the Eliot's poems in the light of Kierkegaard's philosophy see Paul Murray (1991), Aaron Graham (2013).

[2] On Eliot and Hinduism, see Kearns (1987), Rao (1977), Sri (1985), Jain (1992). On Eliot and Anglo-Catholicism, see especially Spurr (2010) and Spurr (2015).

[3] All quotations from Eliot's poetry in this essay are from Eliot 2015, edited by Ricks and McCue.

Eliot poeticizes this quest within a secularized anthropocentric world that has lost its vital relationship, in an age in which traditional religious forms of thought have lost their currency, with those symbols that once formed part of its cultural heritage. His poetics derives primarily from the memory of a lost language, of "conscience and consciousness" (Donoghue 2000, 128). The poem facilitates the possibility of salvation from the drudgery and emptiness of ordinary life, drawing on the eastern and western metaphysics that lie at its foundations. Their spirituality is in consonance with Kierkegaard's existentialism.

THE SELF BETWEEN TIME AND ETERNITY

Like Jacques Maritain, Nikolai Berdyaev and Simone Weil, Eliot believed that man's existence unfolds in time, yet belongs equally to a reality that transcends time. Eliot's notion of selfhood is better understood in the light of Soren Kierkegaard's Christian existentialism: that "[a] human being is a synthesis of the infinite and the finite, of the temporal and the eternal, of freedom and necessity" (1980, 13).[4] In *Sickness unto Death* (1849), Kierkegaard defined the human condition as an essential tension between the temporal and spiritual aspect of the self: "A human being is spirit" and "Spirit is the self." The self is composed of opposites and operates through their tensions: "The self is a relation that relates itself to itself or is the relation's relating itself to itself in the relation; the self is not the relation but is the relation's relating itself to itself" (13). However, "[a] synthesis is a relation between two. Considered in this way a human being is still not a self" (13). A synthesis of these tensions is not the result of a thesis and an antithesis, as in Hegel, but is rather the activity of their interaction, which Kierkegaard calls the "relation's relating," and which is contained by a third "as a negative unity." The human self is a "derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating to itself relates itself to another" (13-14). The self has a pluralistic nature, which comprises the infinite and the finite, the eternal and the temporal, and is not static; the self relates back to the infinite that has created it and establishes an inner dialogue. The physical and the spiritual form a relation that relates "in the relation to the relation. If, however, the relation relates itself to itself, this relation is the positive third, and this is the self" (13). To become a self, one must be conscious that the ground of the self is the power that

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[4] Eliot held Kierkegaard in high esteem: he believed he was the first among a number of the theologians, such as "Maritain, Niebuhr, Buber, Tillich, Berdyaev, Simone Weil," who had "increased the intellectual prestige" of religion (Eliot 2019b, 400). Most probably he did not read him before 1922 yet the similarity of their beliefs is striking. Kierkegaard's works were reviewed in *The Criterion* as early as 1936, and Eliot expressed interest in the publication of his *Journals* in 1938 (Murray 110). He believed that theologians like Karl Barth and Kierkegaard had a great influence on the younger theologians of his time (Eliot 2015a, 46), and considered that Kierkegaard and Ibsen were proof of how "a single man of genius in one of the smaller nations," can exercise "immense power over minds everywhere" (Eliot 2019a, 813).

created and sustains it. However, the conflicting relations within the self can cause despair, which arises from a misrelation between the eternal and temporal aspects of the self. The incapacity to harmonize the physical and the spiritual aspects of the self leads to a violent desire to get rid of one of them. Denial of one of these constituents implies loss or denial of the self, causes the inability to reconcile the spiritual and physical aspects of the self and, hence, creates despair and anxiety resulting in a sickness unto death. When one aspect of the self is eliminated, selfhood is at stake, and not accepting one's self, for Kierkegaard, leads to spiritual death. The self is a relationship between both selves, inserted into a larger relationship with the power that has constituted it and which is the loving God. One of the forms of despair, he contends, is being unconscious of having a self, "not to will to be oneself, to will to do away with oneself" (14) or, on the contrary, to affirm oneself against God (the sin of pride). Despair is the attribute of the spirit "that is related to the eternal in man" (17). Despair disappears once the self stops rejecting its eternal dimension, as Kierkegaard asserts "the opposite of sin is faith" (82).

By itself, despair is neither good nor bad: it can take the form of a sickness unto death that leads to perdition, yet it can also spurn the self's awakening to its own spirituality, and in this case, it becomes "an infinite advantage." Thus, despair is "man's advantage over the animal" that "distinguishes him in quite another way than does his erect walk, for it indicates infinite erectness or sublimity, that he is a spirit." (15). And to be aware of this is the spiritual man's advantage "over the natural man" (15). Moreover, despair is a generalized form of living, not a rarity, even though the majority of people live without being aware that they have a spiritual destiny.

In effect, despair is a paradox that may seem gloomy and depressing; however, at the same time it can be uplifting, since it produces an awakening, and leads the self to the highest demands made upon it, that it be spirit (32). Most people who enjoy fictitious health are unaware of being in despair, except for those few cases in which people have found a balanced relationship between their finitude and their infinitude, while a very small number have conquered despair and won real peace. This is the "peace," moreover, with which *The Waste Land* ends, "shantih," "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata," or in Eliot's equivalencies "the peace which passeth understanding" (Eliot's note to line 433, 77).

THE DESPAIR OF THE LIVING DEAD

The Waste Land is a poem steeped in despair, yet like Kierkegaard's book subtitled "A Christian Psychological Exposition of Upbuilding and Awakening," it traces a process of inner awakening to eternity's claim over the self while it stages the self's quest to become itself and become conscious of itself as spirit. The drama of Eliot's wastelanders is that they are unconscious of having a self, because they are ignorant of the transcendent dimension of existence. They perceive themselves only on the horizontal dimension of temporality and accept only their immediate, finite nature.

For Kierkegaard, the formula of all despair is "To despair over oneself, in despair to will to be rid of oneself" (1980, 20). This is the predicament of the wastelanders, who are in strife with their condition as spirit. Since they ignore this, they are destined to the spirituality they experience being a muted form of despair:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire, stirring
> Dull roots with spring rain.
> Winter kept us warm, covering
> Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
> A little life with dried tubers. (Eliot 2015, 55)

The poem begins with a title that significantly characterizes the wastelanders' condition: "The Burial of the Dead." Their lives have retreated to the level of "dull roots" leading "a little life with dried tubers." They have withdrawn to a vegetative level, "winter kept [them]warm" "covering / Earth in forgetful snow." Life has receded underground and is merely a form of survival. "April is the cruellest month" because it reawakens longings of "memory and desire" that disturb their unproblematic nonbeing and disrupt the self's spiritual lethargy. Spring is not a joyful month of rebirth, it does not come to trees and birds, to men and women who fall in love, or to people who as in Chaucer start a pilgrimage for spiritual renewal, but to the living dead. We do not get Wordsworth's romantic bird's eye view, as in "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud" or "Tintern Abbey." Instead, Eliot's perspective is from below, from the point of view of roots, seeds, and corpses. Significantly, the poetic persona has retreated to the level of latencies, to what Kierkegaard calls the "basement" (1980, 43) of consciousness. It is to them that Kierkegaard addresses the words of the Gospels in reference to Lazarus who died "This sickness is not unto death" (John 11: 4; Kierkegaard 1980, xi). The wastelanders inhabit this realm of the sub-human and merely vegetative existence. Sometimes they descend to animal level, as the silent interlocutor in "A Game of Chess" confesses: "I think we are in rats' alley / Where dead men lost their bones" (Eliot 2015, 59). When he seals his thoughts off from the aristocratic lady, he conjures images of death: "Nothing again nothing" (59). Later, the bodies lie "naked on the wet damp ground / ... Rattled by a rat's foot only" (62). The characters' spiritual demise triggers recurrent images of death and nothingness: one of the modern Thames nymphs laments her sad story of abandonment: "I can connect / Nothing with nothing" (66). Quite frequently, the speakers perceive themselves as dead: "I was neither / Living nor dead, I knew nothing" (56). Furthermore, they often ask themselves an existential question: "Are you alive, or not?" (59). The poem builds an answer to this overwhelming question.

The poem is prefaced by the Sybil's desire to die. The epigraph introduces the tension between mortality and eternal life that provides the backbone for the whole poem. As prophetess to Apollo, the Sybil is granted a wish and asked to live for as many years as there are grains in a handful of sand; yet as she has forgotten to ask for eternal life, she becomes old and weary of life. In Petronius's

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Satyricon (1 A.D.) Trimalchio, given to scoffing, meets the Sybil, decrepit, hanging in a bottle, and when he repeats Apollo's question, this time the Sybil responds that she wants to die. By wishing for a long life, the Sybil is concerned only with temporality, not with the fount of life, and henceforth she is doomed to hopeless finitude. She, like the wastelanders, dwells in death in life, to which she seeks an end; however, the Sybil cannot die, nor can the wastelanders. The torment of their despair derives from this inability to die that Kierkegaard calls the "sickness unto death" and identifies as "the hopelessness … that there is not even the ultimate hope of death" (18). Despair results from this inability to die; this conflicting relationship within the self, the self's unwillingness to accept one of its constitutive components, causes despair which becomes "a sickness unto death." Kierkegaard explains this paradox:

> [D]espair is the sickness unto death, is this tormenting contradiction, the sickness of the self, perpetually to be dying, to die and yet not to die, to die death. For to die signifies all is over, but to die death means to experience dying, and if this is experienced for a single moment, one thereby experiences it forever. If a person were to die of despair as one dies of a sickness, then the eternal in him, the self, must be able to die in the same sense as the body dies of sickness. But this is impossible; the dying of despair continually converts itself into a living. The person in despair cannot die; "no more than the dagger can slaughter thoughts" can despair consume the eternal, the self at the root of despair, whose worm does not and whose fire is not quenched. (1980, 18)

As a "gnawing canker" that delves deeper and deeper, despair causes self-consumption yet still cannot rid the self of the spiritual inherent in it.

The cruelty of April underlines the spiritual apathy of the wastelanders, who cannot rouse themselves from the torpor in which they waste their lives. Safe forgetfulness seems to be preferable to any psychic turmoil that might awaken them from their cosy lassitude, therefore, making winter "warm." Death in life is attractive and comfortable, a security blanket against problems of conscience. For Kierkegaard, this sense of security, deriving from the unconsciousness of being in despair, is the moment furthest away from an awareness of one's own spiritual potential: "not to be conscious of oneself as spirit –is despair, which is spiritlessness, whether the state is a thoroughgoing moribundity, a merely vegetative life or an intense, energetic life, the secret of which is still despair … This form of despair (the ignorance of it) is the most common in the world" (44-45). Yet this form of escape in the immediate that allows an unproblematic existence, one exempt from complications of consciousness, is fictitious, proving to be a renewed form of despair, since unconsciousness only fuels further despair. Paradoxically, those who are aware of despair and have experienced it are closer to becoming aware of the spirit.

According to Kierkegaard's categorization of despair, by ignoring their spiritual calling Eliot's characters do not will to be themselves as they are called to. Sometimes they wish to do away with the self, and thus become enchained to temporality, fastened to the revolutions of the wheel that drags them in incessant rotations. They are all bound to circumstance, to the contingent and the particular, dooming them to the same rounds, that make them less and less human, more and more ghostlike, an amorphous mass of beings with no identity:

> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet. (Eliot 2015, 57)

Eliot's note to lines 63 and 64 identifies them with the ghosts in Dante's Limbo (*Inferno* 3: 55-57), those who lived beyond the notion of good and evil, the neutrals "with no blame and with no praise" (*Inferno* 3: 36), "who made, through cowardice, the great refusal" (*Inferno* 3: 59-60). Their plight is to have been ignorant of the Word, and hence of life itself.

Eliot's characters do not perceive themselves to be a synthesis of infinitude and finitude whose task is to become a self in the Kierkegaardian sense of the word. Since they live in a constant denial of their infinite spiritual potential, they do not recognize themselves as a fusion of body and spirit so that, due to the lack of infinitude, they dwell in despair over their finitude.

The universe of *The Waste Land* consists of a world of merchants, soldiers, typists, clerks, fishermen, aristocrats and plebeians, pawns and queens, bartenders, villains, "loitering heirs of City directors" (62), on one hand, and prophets, rain and thunder gods, on the other. Often faceless, nameless, sometimes they are defined only by the instrument of their jobs. Isolated, cut off from the natural and spiritual sources of life, they "think of the key, each in his prison" (70). They are conscious to a greater or lesser degree of their rootlessness and isolation as modern exiles, dispossessed: "the hooded hoards swarming / Over endless plains, stumbling in the cracked earth / Ringed by the flat horizon only" (69). Existence for them unfolds "only" along the immediate horizontal plane; there is no vertical axis. The poetic persona identifies himself as an exile adapting the Psalm (13[5]: 1) to a modern Babylonia: "By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept" (62). Not whole beings, they are but mere fragments cut out of a cubist canvas, such as indicated by Lil's missing teeth or the "broken fingernails of dirty hands" (66) of the modern Thames

[5] "By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion." (Psalm 137: 1).

nymphs. Sometimes the wastelanders are even invisible, defined only by the objects of their surroundings, like the aristocratic woman in the boudoir in "A Game of Chess."

Tortured by this sense of vacancy, they all experience a similar emptiness at the core of being, which is "the substance of the poem" (Eliot's note to line 218), a vacuity they remain unaware of, but one observed by, Tiresias, the blind prophet, the personification of a timeless universal consciousness, who bears witness to their loveless encounters "[e]nacted on this same divan or bed" (64). Yet as, the central subject of the poem, this sense of despair, isolation, and loss is not the hallmark of modernity but something pervasive throughout history.

For the most part, the wastelanders are incapable of communication with each other. "Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak" (59) is a common grievance. Their greatest failure is a failure of love, a love debased by the absence of love and degraded to mechanical sexuality. Eliot portrays a denial of the tradition of romantic passion as represented by Shakespeare's Cleopatra, Virgil's Dido, and Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* (Moody 1980, 85-87; Kenner 1989, 132-133). Whether the rich or the poor, the typist and the young man carbuncular, Lil's friend, Lil and Albert (their *menage à trois*), the aristocratic woman in her boudoir and her neurasthenic lover, the Thames daughters or Elizabeth and Leicester, all fail to love. Theirs is not an existential encounter, but a mere sexual drive that instrumentalizes the other for the sake of vanity (the young man carbuncular), self-gratification of appetites, power, political intrigues (Elizabeth and Leicester), or merely as an attempt to eschew boredom (the typist). Sexuality is devoid of an infinite yearning for the other or of the desire to give. It is a failed attempt to escape from *ennui*. For the young man carbuncular, love is a question of power, a game of strategy that obeys the rules of military tactics: a matter of finding the "propitious" moments, once "the meal is ended, she is bored and tired," so as to catch the typist off guard and be sure of the triumph of his conquest: "Flushed and decided, he assaults at once" while "exploring hands encounter no defense." This type of "lovemaking" makes "a welcome of indifference" (64). Similarly, in "A Game of Chess," "love" is ruled by the laws of the marketplace, of supply and demand, of good looks, enticing appearances and sexual gratification. The other is not the beloved, but an instrument that fulfils a goal, an object to be possessed:

> Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
> He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
> To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
> You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
> He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
> And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
> He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
> And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
> Oh is there, she said. Something o' that, I said.
> Then I'll know who to thank, she said, and give me a straight look.
> HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
> If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said.

Others can pick and choose if you can't.
But if Albert makes off, it won't be for lack of telling. (Eliot 2015, 60)

As in the conversation reported by Lil's friend concerning her husband returning from the war, the *personae poeticae* act blindly, remaining for the most part ignorant of the cause of their despair and also of what would set them free. Futility and sterility strike equally the upper classes in the luxurious boudoir and the lower classes in the pub, despite their biological prolificacy.

Their secular mentality attributes infinite value to the trivial and the banal. Eliot's personages lose their selves because they are entirely finitized, sunk into matter, in commonness and dailiness. Instead of becoming selves, they become quantifiable machines and numbers, living robots, without personality or identity, a "man in the crowd," a programed device: "the human engine waits / Like a taxi throbbing waiting" (63). As the sexual performance becomes automatic and mechanical, they are given over to pure immediacy, to sensuousness, and to finitude, and they succumb to the pressure of outward circumstance.

There is inauthenticity in being that blocks bringing being into being. The wastelanders do not will to be complete selves; they fill their lives with meaningless routines and live in set patterns and set phrases. They blindly and unknowingly enact a predetermined script. The poem is haunted by anguished questions: "What shall I do now? "What shall I do? / ... / What shall we do tomorrow? / What shall we ever do?" (59) that echo through the poem. The question refers to the immediate present, yet its repetition strives towards a muted yet larger meaning. It expands from "now" to the more general "What shall I do?" then it reaches into the future "What shall we do tomorrow?" and grows into an existential question "What shall we ever do?" which, though articulated, is only half understood by the lyric "I," who is unaware of the wider implications. The answer comes from the sphere of commonness and dailiness: "I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street / With my hair down, so" (59). It is a banal way of filling time and life: "The hot water at ten. / And if it rains, a closed car at four. / And we shall play a game of chess, / Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door" (59-60). These second meanings of the ordinary are hidden, never to enter the character's consciousness. Nor is she aware that, despite their banality, her gestures repeat ancient scripts (Dido roaming distressed through the streets of Carthage after Aeneas's departure before she commits suicide) nor that "the hot water at ten" suggests an ancient ritual of purification, a mystical washing away of sin. The ominous "knock upon the door" (*Macbeth* II, iii), announcing imminent death in Shakespeare's tragedy, sounds like a fatal death knell muted in the speaker's consciousness. Unable to realize their suffering or verbalize it, the wastelanders don't know how to cope with their own emptiness.

Like pawns on a chessboard, enmeshed in insignificant and trivial activities, they conform to established patterns of everyday life assigned to them. Not understanding their own potential spirituality, they lead an inauthentic existence, dominated by banal routines and subservience to what others think of them: "What did you get married for if you do not want children?" (60). When not banal, their

talk is superficial, whether the chit chat of rootless cosmopolitan tourists in a café, lamenting past and contemporary upheavals of history, or the vulgar pub gossip of seduction and sexual infidelity, as recounted by a false friend. Either way, their comments are insensitive, anguished, and disloyal.

INTIMATIONS OF "THE HEART OF LIGHT"

Despite the preponderance of despair, the universe of *The Waste Land* is neither closed nor opaque. Rather, it is full of hints of something beyond the devastation, intimating that the immediate and temporal world is not the "only" reality. The transcendent remains a constant axis of the poem. As Kierkegaard suggests, anxiety and anguish make inroads into the self's potential being. Thus Eliot's characters cannot withstand April's stirrings of "memory and desire," which activate a process of awakening and agonizing soul-searching through various luminous moments: the encounter in the hyacinth garden, an ecstatic moment of erotic and mystical intensity, one that offers a glimpse into "the heart of light" (Eliot 2015, 56), the memory of which makes the lyrical "I" survive, whose retrieval dramatizes the journey or "plot" of *The Waste Land* (Langbaum 1973, 112) and whose meaning is fully realized in the Fable of the Thunder; the moment of communal life at Saint Magnus Martyr, in the shadow of its "Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold" (64), a counterpoint to the mass of flowing zombies over London Bridge. And finally, Philomel's and Ariel's song, which announces a spiritual transmutation: a drowning that is not death but a metamorphosis, a "sea-change into something rich and strange" (Shakespeare *The Tempest* I. ii: 402), while Philomel's "Twit twit twit" (62), transforms inner waste into lyrical utterance in consonance with Rilke for whom "Gesang ist Dasein" (1922), in Sonnet III of his *Sonnets to Orpheus* (Rilke 1977, 88; Moody 1974, 61). A symbol of regeneration, Philomel recovers the ability to feel and gives meaning to her tragedy in song while affirming the fundamental powers of being. Like Orpheus, she brings the dead back to life. These luminous moments covert a subtle a system of values, tracing an ideal dimension that counteracts the pervasive sordidness of existence. Moreover, they offer guidance for piercing the lethargy of the wastelanders and shaking them out of their present state of inauthenticity.

THE PROPHETS: "I WILL SHOW YOU SOMETHING DIFFERENT"

Of the plethora of voices of prophets, sages and rain and thunder gods who try to awaken the wastelanders out of their torpor, the first is Ezekiel, a prophet of the sixth century B.C. He addresses the wastelanders in terms of doom and berates their ignorance and fragmentary knowledge: "Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images" (Eliot 2015, 55). "Son of man," a phrase from the Old and New Testaments (appearing in the latter more

than 80 times) alludes to Christ. But Eliot's first note to the poem concerns Ezekiel 2: 1, summoning the precise moment when he received the divine vocation to be a prophet during his and his people's Babylonian captivity. The fact that Eliot brings to mind precisely the passage when the spirit of God enters Ezekiel and addresses him as "son of man" proves a telling moment that sets up a parallel with the revivifying knowledge that his poem is about to disclose, at the same time it introduces the themes of exile and bondage.

Ezequiel predicted the fall of the Temple of Jerusalem which occurred in 587 B.C. and later prophesied both its reconstruction and God's help with the return of the people of Israel. To those who know only "a heap of broken images," the prophet reveals a superior knowledge, one not confined to mere temporality and the Cartesian categories of time and space, an apprehension capable of redeeming the wastelanders from their monotonous empty rounds: "And I will show you something different from either / Your shadow at morning striding behind you / Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you" (55). To pursue this wisdom, he extends an invitation to enter "the shadow of this great rock." Indeed, superior comprehension starts with an awareness: "I will show you fear in a handful of dust." Moreover, in the desert a shadow is a lifesaving refuge, and this is how Isaiah foretells the coming of the savior: "And a man shall be as an hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as rivers of water in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (Isaiah 32: 2). The invitation to enter "the shadow of this red rock" is also a reference to Peter, Petrus in Latin, the rock, on which the church is built: "And I say also unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16: 18).

Following the prophet's cryptic invitation and promise, he enquires into the possibility of new life in the waste land, which Eliot describes in his second note in the words from Ecclesiastes (12: 5): "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish?" This is a recasting of Ezequiel's Biblical question, when God asks him if he believes that the valley of bones with the remains of the people of Israel will come back to life: "And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord GOD, thou knowest. ... Thus saith the Lord GOD unto these bones; Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live" (Ezekiel 37: 1-6). At the end of "Burial of the Dead," the same question into the possibility of rebirth and metamorphosis is taken up again in the conversation on gardening across ages: "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?" (57). Since corpses are endowed with the possibility of new life like plants, there are no stable frontiers between life and death.

The answer to this question, provided obliquely by the title of this section, derives from "The Order of the Burial of Dead" from the Book of Common Prayer, the liturgical book of the Church of England. It suggests that in this section we have been watching a ritual of resurrection. The hallucinatory question regarding the blooming of a corpse sends us back to the motif of the annual return of the spring of the first lines of the poem and to the prophet's inquiry about the possibility of life in the wasteland: "What are the roots that clutch?" But now death is reinforced

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by Saint Paul's words at the burial rite: "the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed" (I Corinthians 15: 52).

The revelation "I will show you fear in a handful of dust," reminiscent of "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Genesis 3: 19), leads us to the Biblical assertion that awareness of human finitude is the beginning of wisdom, which is also an essential first step in the existentialist quest for authenticity. The prophet warns that there is no escape from the limitations of the human condition, and not perceiving them as real and eschewing the cycle of life and death –like Marie, who "reads[s], much of the night, and go[es] south in the winter" (55)– only plunges existence into a death in life. The wastelanders will have to come to terms with the limitations of the human predicament and confront their despair, a necessary step in the quest for a spiritual identity.

In "A Game of Chess," another prophet insistently warns the pubgoers to "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME," a phrase which he repeats five times (60, 61). The bartender's impersonal call announcing closing time urges the pubgoers to change their lives before it is too late, and so avoid Ophelia's tragic fate –her last farewell words are heard in the poem: "Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night" (61). Furthermore, they must do so before death checkmates all, as in another fateful game of chess, that of Thomas Middleton's play *Women Beware Women*.

Ezekiel anticipates Tiresias, the prophet of Thebes, who is "the most important personage in the poem" and who, Eliot tells us, "*sees* the substance of the poem." He unites all characters "all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias" (74). He is the universal consciousness that perceives the void at the heart of life that persists through history in men and women, rich and poor.

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THE QUEST FOR WATER

The Waste Land is a poem about drought and the quest for water, signifying a search for a life-giving force. For Eliot, drought aligns with man's failure to observe his relationship to the transcendent, as the poem stages the drama of a tortured consciousness flung between hope and despair, flung between hope and despair across a nightmarish desert, "dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit" (68), among hostile figures, "bats and baby faces" (69) amidst the falling towers of crumbling citadels. In its quest for water, which translates into a search for origins and beginnings, the poem moves eastward, tracing a metaphorical journey from London to Carthage to Palestine –which includes references to the Trial, Passion and Death of Christ on Mount Golgotha– and eventually ends high on the mountaintops of Himavant. Like the romantic philosophers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Eliot considered India the cradle of human knowledge, and Sanskrit the Ursprache, the common source of all languages. Eliot's poem thus also incorporates multiple allusions to Hindu rain and thunder gods from the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
Waited for rain while the black clouds
Gathered far distant, over Himavant. (Eliot 2015, 70)

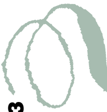
If the sterility and impotence of *The Waste Land* are rooted in the loss of metaphysical and spiritual awareness, which transforms man into a dispossessed fragmentary being, an unidentifiable nonentity, then Ganga, the divine consort of the God Shiva and the generic name of sacred water, remains "sunken" even at the heights of Himavant, the sacred abode of the divine couple (Rao 1976, 64). Yet, Indra, "the thunder god, liberator of waters by slaying the demon of the drought" in the *Rig Veda* (*Rig Veda* 1.32; Rao 1976, 52), defeats Vritra, the gigantic dragon who held captive the seven rivers of India in a black cloud. His victory is equivalent to the triumph of life over sterility and death. Metaphorically, Indra releases the waters of knowledge from the den of ignorance; he forces them to come into being by the realization of their imprisoned potentialities, which Kierkegaard finds rooted in despair. Indra's feat is an oblique model as well as a summons to the wastelanders to put an end to their spiritless life.

ON BECOMING A SELF: THE FIRE SERMON AND WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

The Waste Land's many prophetic voices and luminous moments prepare the awakening of the self to its spiritual dimension which culminates with the teachings of Buddha and the commandments of the Thunder from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad,* two non-European texts that mark the cardinal turning point and the resolution of the poem. The philosophy of the Masters of Life, Christ, Buddha, and the rain and thunder gods that appear in the poem –Indra, Varuna, Prajapati– show the way out of despair towards "the heart of light." They concur that ascetic discipline and detachment from worldly aspirations and the insatiable cravings of the self enable deliverance from endless suffering or despair, a belief in keeping with the Christian message of renunciation as well as with Kierkegaard's existentialism.

Buddha's "Fire Sermon," which gives the eponymous title to the third section of *The Waste Land*, lays bare the source of depravity: the fire of the appetites. Buddha coincides with St. Augustine, who laments in his *Confessions*: "To Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about my ears" (3: 1). The reference to the "cauldron of unholy loves" sums up all the passionless couples of Eliot's poem. Both Buddha and St. Augustine ground the cause of human misery in the all-consuming fire of the appetites. Burning is a central motif, in which all the world is on fire with its own thirst for sensual gratification.

Eliot advocates the need for ascetic discipline and fuses the trends of eastern and western mysticism. He considered that Buddha's Fire Sermon was analogous in importance to Christ's Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7; Eliot 2015, 75, note to line 308). Freedom from the snare of senses and craving is reached by "blowing out of the fire." Buddhist and Christian mysticism propound a burning of the self's



forms of identity, rooted in the immediate and the phenomenal world in an attempt to awaken its spiritual consciousness. "All is transitory, all is suffering" is Buddha's theme and the leitmotif of post-Upanishadic thought. Moreover, identification of suffering with the ephemerality of life and its resulting illusory quality is also congenial with the Christian outlook that advocates the need for the spiritual. For Buddha "All things are on fire," they burn "with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation, with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation misery, grief, and despair are they on fire." Hence Buddha believes that "the learned and noble disciple conceives an aversion for" the senses, "[a]nd in conceiving this aversion, he becomes divested of passion, and by the absence of passion he becomes free..." (Warren 1963, 351-353). Buddha preaches detachment from the sensual as a way of liberation from the chains of the phenomenal and a requirement to root existence in the spiritual. Consequently, the Hindu outlook akin to, if not entirely aligned with, Kierkegaard's existentialism, which argues that people waste their lives, deceived by its joys and sorrows and "never became decisively and eternally conscious as spirit, as self ... so that each individual may gain the highest, the only thing worth living for and enough to live in for an eternity" (1980, 26-27). Eternity for Kierkegaard means the eternal God, Christ's father, and Jesus himself.

Buddha's Fire Sermon is not without consequences. Detachment, the renouncing of the natural man, makes possible a process of regeneration in "Death by Water," which is an elegy for the death of Phlebas, the prototype of everyman and the protagonist's card. This section fulfils the death wish of the Sybil as well as the promise of Ariel's song, in which drowning is a metamorphosis "into something rich and strange." The "current under sea" that "Picked his bones in whispers" (67) puts an end to despair and dissolves his old life in a process of metempsychosis: "He passed the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool" (67), while the "I" gives up the natural self, forgets the sensual world, "the cry of gulls," renounces "the profit and the loss," and finally frees iyself from attachments and from seeing life in terms of youth and personal attraction: of being "once handsome and tall as you" (67).

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The descent into water, meanwhile, is a voyage into the unknown realities of the psyche. Death by water is not a drowning, but a moment of catharsis and a baptism. Phlebas puts an end to his death in life. From a Christian perspective this is "the dark night of the soul," the moment of total surrender, in which the "I" gives up individual will in order to achieve union with God; the loss of the empirical self is the path towards a spiritual life. From an existential point of view, the "I" gives up the philosophy of "to have" for a philosophy of "to be," an attitude substantiated by the fable of the Thunder and close to the tenets of Kierkegaard's existentialism (Patea 2007, 91-110). The mystical meaning of this passage is reconfirmed by the Biblical invocation "Gentile or Jew"[6] (Romans 2: 9-11; Eliot 2015, 67) which affirms

[6] "Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; But glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: For there is no respect of persons with God" (Romans 2: 9-11).

that the new life in Christ is open to both Jews and Gentiles. In the same Epistle, Saint Paul affirms the inseparability of death and life in the process of rebirth and regeneration: "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? (Romans 6: 3). Phlebas' life is judged by "Oh you who turn the wheel and look to windward" (67), and it is Buddha, who in Hindu iconography is represented as the Lord of the wheel, who presides over this circular bondage of temporality. There is also a Biblical plea (Romans 2: 1)[7] not to be harsh in our judgements on him "who was once handsome and tall as you" (67).

In *The Waste Land*, the life-giving rain falls in the form of the revelation of the Word which, Prajapati, the Lord of creation, discloses to his disciples in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, (the oldest Upanishad dating back to 800 BC). An Upanishad is an utterance pronounced by one who has "seen" –a *drasta*, a visionary sage; it is a statement "spoken in a wilderness, 'a great desert', the waste land, what life is without faith." *Aranyaka* means "as being spoken in a desert, and *Brihad* (great) from its extent" (Rao 1976, 22). An Upanishad, Nageswara Rao explains, is "a secret message delivered in the waste land for those who wish to liberate themselves" (1976, 22). Similarly, *The Waste Land* is also a poem that delivers a secret message. In the fable of the Thunder, Prajapati reveals to his disciples his ultimate nature, the Word, DA, the non-manifested unity beyond, which is the universal law, the *dharma*, fundamental to existence. DA contains ideals that make life meaningful. The disciples' understanding of the Word is fragmentary, they –men, demons and gods– perceive only one aspect of the Word. These three declensions of the Word are the practical means to root out ignorance and the self's thirst for the sensual. The self attains wholesomeness by adjusting his impulses to the commandments of the eternal and by orienting its life to the pursuit of the spiritual: through self-surrender to the higher demands of love ("the awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract" [70]), through universal compassion for the other ("the key" [70]) that breaks the isolation of the self); and through submission to the eternal by restraining the impulses of the self in accordance with the laws of the absolute (Sri 1985, 91-92; Rao 1976, 55-84).

The fable of the Thunder underscores Kierkegaard's notion that the self has an eternal and spiritual destiny and illustrates the Danish philosopher's thesis of eternity's claim over the self. Eliot's thesis reconciles Christianity, Buddhism and the Vedanta[8] by way of an existentialist discourse. Specifically, *Datta* defines existence as a matter of irrevocable choices that have to be lived out and actualized in time, as is summed up in the final question "What have we given?" (Brooker and Bentley 1990, 191):

[7] "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things" (Romans 2: 1).

[8] Vedanta is applied to the teachings of the *Upanishad*, the *Brahma-Sutra* and the *Baghavad Gita* (which is assumed to have reached its present form by 400 AD) and the commentaries of the mystic Shankara (788-820 AD).

DA
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
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
Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
In our empty rooms (Eliot 2015, 70)

The "I" is not defined by that which it possesses, the gains accumulated over the years to be found in legacies consigned "under seals broken by the lean solicitor" nor by external factors such as the worldly honours and recognitions mentioned in obituaries or in other "memories draped by the beneficent spider." Christianity and Hinduism conceive life as a form of being not of having, and these ethico-religious principles are in accord with existential tenets. To have is not the premise of to be, despite the tangible values celebrated by "an age of prudence." To live a safe life is to live an inessential one. Human value is not a function of "I am what I have" but of "I am what I give." As *The Waste Land* turns in Part v, it conveys the idea that man does not exist in virtue of the material evidence of his possessions, but through love, which becomes real in the act of giving: "The awful daring of a moment's surrender / Which an age of prudence can never retract" (Eliot 2015, 70).

Datta is the final balance of one's life before the Absolute, when in Kierkegaard's words "the hourglass of temporality" has run out (1980, 27). It is an examination of life in the light of existential ideals of authenticity and love. In Kierkegaardian terms, it is the scrutiny of the relationship of the self with itself reflected in the relationship with the Power which constituted it. By following the Thunder's command, the self accepts eternity's claim over the self, which represents the highest challenge made upon it to be spirit (22). It exemplifies the way in which the human being can be "conscious of itself as spirit, or conscious of itself before God as spirit" (44).

The ending of *The Waste Land,* "Datta, Davadhvam, Damyata / Shanti shanti shanti" (71) indicates the way in which despair can be completely overcome once the self accepts its infinitude, in congruence with Kierkegaardian thought. The self achieves composure in willing to be itself and "in relating itself to that which has established the entire relation" (14). Kierkegaard concludes "in relating itself to itself the self rests transparently in the power that established it" (14). The power in which the self is grounded is God whom Kierkegaard conceives of as "the third," the relation that contains the self and relates to its opposing constituents:

> If the relation that relates itself to itself has been established by another, then the relation is indeed *the third*, but this relation, *the third*, is yet again a relation and relates itself to that which established the entire relation. The human self is such a derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another. (13-14) (my italics)

"The Third" for Kierkegaard is the eternal, that which established the authentic relation within the self. Eliot also denotes a missing third, and a third realm which maps out the transcendent:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> –But who is that on the other side of you? (Eliot 2015, 69)

He refers to the transcendent as "the third who walks always beside you." The third is both the resurrected Christ whom the disciples do not recognize on their way to Emmaus, as well as the ghostlike companion of the Antarctic explorers, as Eliot indicates in two different apparently contradictory notes to lines 46 and 359 (72, 76). Eliot's "third" sounds strikingly similar to Kierkegaard's "third," "a relation" that "relates itself to that which established the entire relation" (1980, 13) and which is the power that grounds the self. The spiritual dimension is inseparable from the self: it is "that on the other side of you," the ever present other "who walks always beside you."

The "other" is the self's spiritual projection, its inherent yet hidden, "hooded" aspect, which does not conform to Cartesian categories nor lends itself to physical, logical-empirical explanations or differences of gender: "When I count, there are only you and I together / ... / I do not know whether a man or a woman" (69). Because the third is "das ganz Andere" *–mysterium tremendum et fascinans* in Rudolf Otto's definition of the numinous– the wholly other, the Creator and not the creature He has created, that cannot be reduced to creaturely categories. The third is that which shatters the objectifying structures of human understanding. Eliot's God, invoked later as "He who was living is now dead," is fused with the Vedic thunder god Varuna, the god of righteousness, referred to in the *Rig Veda* as "the third whenever two plot in silence" (Rao 1976, 59). In the same way, Eliot's Word is not only the Christian Logos, but also DA, the revelation of Buddhist and Hindu texts that discloses ethical religious mandates allied with the Christian existentialism of Kierkegaard, which also conceives life in terms of giving, grace, and love.

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CONCLUSION

Although explication and exegesis have tamed its spirit, *The Waste Land* still strikes us in a way similar to that which impressed readers in 1922. Its novelty may have faded, yet its power remains. *The Waste Land* is a poem full of despair, offering an x-ray of the aridity and vacuity of modern life, as it mourns a collapsing civilization. However, despite the desolation it portrays, *The Waste Land* is essentially a spiritual text that traces the path out of the self's inner emptiness. In his treatment of the causes of despair, Eliot keeps close in spirit to Kierkegaard's existentialism.

The poem shores fragments against ruins and ends with the revelation of the Word which is the affirmation of ultimate love that alone vanquishes despair. This vantage point will be the starting point of Eliot's pilgrimage to *Ash-Wednesday* and the *Four Quartets*, his "epic of the soul."

Eliot admired Dante as he did no other writer, considering him "the most *universal* of poets in the modern languages" (Eliot 1972, 238). Dante, he believed, "tended to concentrate on what men of various races and lands could think together" (239). Eliot especially applauded the fact that "The culture of Dante was not of one European country but of Europe," and that his "lucid, or rather translucent" style cut across "the modern division of nationality" (239). In the twentieth century, in the era of logical positivism, Eliot is a twentieth century Dante who has gone beyond European frontiers and attempted to bring together the metaphysical tradition of the West with that of the East –specifically, Buddhism and Vedanta– whilst respecting the particularity of each. Eliot grounds *The Waste Land* in a web of culturally diverse sources which enables him to articulate the common language of Eastern and Western spirituality which he translates in Christian existential terms. The reason why Eliot conjoins the Orient with the Occident is that he wishes to underscore how the self's call to the transcendent is ubiquitous, regardless of the religion one has been born into. His goal is not to pursue a form of syncretism, but to strive for the universal.

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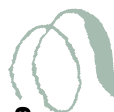

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ELIOT AND POSTMODERNISM / ELIOT Y EL POSMODERNISMO

THE WASTE LAND

BY

T. S. ELIOT

"NAM Sibyllam quidem Cumis ego ipse oculis meis vidi in ampulla pendere, et cum illi pueri dicerent: Σίβυλλα τί θέλεις; respondebat illa: ἀποθανεῖν θέλω."

NEW YORK
BONI AND LIVERIGHT
1922

READING THE MORE-THAN-HUMAN WORLD IN T.S. ELIOT'S *THE WASTE LAND*

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Abstract

This article offers an ecocritical reading of *The Waste Land*, arguing that Eliot's *magnum opus* can be read as an ecopoem that anticipates the woes of the Anthropocene, finding evidence for this in the many references to the human-induced environmental degradation and anthropogenic detritus that are scattered throughout the poem. In the aftermath of the Great War, amidst the disintegration of the mind of Europe in an increasingly secularised world, Eliot strives to find solace not only in the spirit, but also in the more-than-human world as represented by mountains, water and birdsong that emulates the sound of dripping water. Yet in Eliot's conceptualisation, the more-than-human world is tinged with the transcendent and the divine, as his ecologism is deeply ethical and spiritual.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ecopoetry, more-than-human, Anthropocene.

LEER EL MUNDO MÁS QUE HUMANO
EN *LA TIERRA BALDÍA* DE T.S. ELIOT

Resumen

El presente artículo ofrece una lectura ecocrítica de *La tierra baldía* y sostiene que la obra magna de Eliot puede ser interpretada como un ecopoema que anticipa los males del Antropoceno, como ponen de manifiesto las múltiples referencias a la degradación medioambiental provocada por el ser humano y al detrito generado por nuestra especie. Tras la Gran Guerra, en medio de la desintegración de la mente de Europa en un mundo cada vez más secularizado, Eliot trata de encontrar solaz no solo en el espíritu, sino también en el mundo más que humano que encarnan las montañas, el agua y el canto de un ave que emula el sonido del agua que cae. Con todo, tal y como lo concibe Eliot, el mundo más que humano está teñido de lo transcendente y divino, pues su ecologismo es de una naturaleza profundamente ética y espiritual.

Palabras clave: T.S. Eliot, *La tierra baldía*, ecopoesía, más que humano, Antropoceno.

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A WHOLE MADE OF FRAGMENTS & RUINS

The Waste Land is the Modernist poetic manifesto par excellence, as well as the very embodiment of the ideas put forward by T.S. Eliot in his landmark essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919): an organised view of "the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer" (Eliot 2014d, 106). As such, it has been variously interpreted as a sociological document mourning the disintegration of Europe after the Great War (Rabaté 2015), an intensely multivocal and allusive text marked by parody and pastiche (Longenbach 1994; Coyle 2015; Levenson 2015), a map of the changing geographies of postwar London (Morrison 2015), an exploration of violence, trauma and thwarted desire (Badenhausen 2015; Davidson 1994), a psychological, autobiographical poem informed by lived experiences (Sorum 2015; Gordon 2015), a philosophical and profoundly religious poem (Shusterman 2015; Spurr 2015) juxtaposing Western and Eastern ways of knowing, and an ecopoem exposing anthropogenic detritus in an increasingly industrialised world (McIntire 2015). That *The Waste Land* should have prompted such varied exegeses comes as no surprise, given its dense allusiveness, breaking down clear meanings and interpretations. Yet Eliot's poem is much more than the extremely allusive, densely layered and complex poem made of fragments from myriad sources that Eliot's own notes would suggest. In its form and deeply dense texture, interweaving textual threads from different literary and philosophical traditions, the poem enacts Eliot's own attempt to make sense of his *self* amid a complex world in the aftermath of World War I, where people had become progressively alienated from reality, from each other and from the nonhuman world. In fact, like Pound's *Mauberley* (1920), Eliot's poem is "one of the first canonical works of modern Anglo-American literature to envision a dying society in the aftermath of world war" (Buell 1995, 288). In this regard, this article argues that, throughout the poem, Eliot deploys elements of the more-than-human world –to borrow ecophilosopher David Abram's term (1996)– to shed light on aspects of existence that deeply matter to him. Most critical interpretations of Eliot's poem to date have focused on its anthropocentric dimension, but an ecocritical (and posthuman) reading of *The Waste Land* is of particular relevance to the unprecedented current climate crisis facing humanity.

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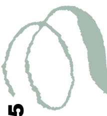
This article argues that *The Waste Land* mourns the state of exhaustion of Western civilisation and that it registers the first alarming signs of environmental degradation visible in nature. Through "collage-like juxtaposition of spaces that are geographically distinct but temporally simultaneous," Eliot maps London and other "diverse geographies (desert, alpine, and jungle)" (Morrison 2015, 27) with an enhanced awareness of how human lives are inextricably situated in material space and enmeshed with the more-than-human world. The iconic Modernist poem is also possibly Eliot's most explicit attempt at composing a polyphonic work mimicking the plurality, mutability and protean reality of what-is through the medium of conscious and subliminal allusions, the apparently random juxtaposition of fragments, musical and thematic self-echoes, the blurring of boundaries between texts, and a deft use of voice in different registers, with "the overlapping reverberations

and interpenetrating echoes [displaying] the indeterminacy of boundaries around persons" (Levenson 2015, 90).

Most interpretations of Eliot's inexhaustible verbal artefact to date have emphasised the role of the human world –social and private behaviour, emotions, ideas, affects– and largely ignored the nonhuman. In this regard, such interpretations have tacitly acknowledged that the Modernist poem embodies the quintessence of the epistemology that has been prevalent in the West for the last five centuries: an epistemology of control, a style of thought stemming from Baconian science that seeks to understand, anatomise, and systematise its object of knowledge. The origins of this way of thinking can be traced back to Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where the Greek philosopher argued that all human beings desire to know and understand the world.[1] Like the pursuit of happiness, common to all humans from different cultures and civilisations, Aristotle conceived of the hunger for knowledge as a *cupiditas naturalis* that could not be easily appeased. In this connection, Barry Spurr has noted how the philosophical and religious concept of "the quest for the fullness of understanding" and of "the formidable obstacles confronting the undertaking, particularly in an increasingly secularized, anthropocentric world" (2015, 54) is a central theme in Eliot's poetry. A quest for order and meaning and a desire for salvation are discernible near the close of the poem, as evoked by "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (Eliot 2015, 71). To Eliot's mind, "[l]oss of unity of feeling and thought accounts for the larger rupture of unity of being, which he believed to be the major cause of our divided culture" (Patea 2011, 15) and "the ills of the isolated, fragmented and alienated contemporary self" (17). As a point of fact, what he calls *dissociation of sensibility* "dates back to the development of scientific thought and its materialistic ethos" (17) in the cradle of modernity. A turning point in the history of humankind, the emergence of modern scientific thought "divests reality of its transcendent dimension and dangerously undermines its spiritual values, which remain relegated to the limited sphere of the ego" (17), whilst it "erodes the magico-religious structures of the Medieval and Renaissance imagination and gives way to disillusionment and ontological insecurity" (17).

In Lawrence Buell's well-known definition, ecocriticism is the "study of the relation between literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (1995, 430), and "environmentally oriented" writing is that which is primarily concerned with the representation of the nonhuman environment and the relations between human and nonhuman beings (1995, 7-8). Environmentally sensitive texts –as *The Waste Land* appears to be– are marked by a deep sense of commitment and denunciation of practices that are damaging to the more-than-human world. Yet culture and nature have come to be so deeply intertwined and enmeshed that scholars like Donna Haraway (2003; 2008) have posited the notion of *natureculture* to signify the entanglements of natural entities and humanmade artefacts in a vast network of material-semiotic relationships. In

[1] Aristotle's *Metaphysics* opens like this: "All men by nature desire to know" (1552).



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this gigantic "Commonwealth of Breath" (Abram 2014, 313), mutually constitutive and coevolving entities are intertwined and interact with each other, and the physical environment is "increasingly refashioned by capital, technology, and geopolitics" (Buell 2001, 5), to such an extent that the "'natural' and 'human-built' dimensions of the palpable world" have become "increasingly indistinguishable" (Buell 2001, 3). As Cheryll Glotfelty lucidly puts it, "literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather, plays a part in an immensely complex global system in which energy, matter, and ideas interact" (1996, xix).

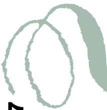
The Waste Land, this essay argues, is punctuated by the subterranean epiphany that this happens to be the case: that human beings cannot be separated from the land, that the land and the spirit are what we ultimately come from, that our bodies and minds are sensuously immersed in that larger more-than-human world we are a part *of*, not apart *from*. Eliot must have sensed the power inherent in poetry to impact the world and remind humans of their unbreakable bond with the nonhuman. Owing to "the capacity of environmental texts to model ecocentric thinking" (Buell 1995, 143), poetry can act as a powerful catalyst for action and ecological commitment, so badly needed in the face of today's alarming environmental crisis. In this respect, Huggan and Tiffin have highlighted "the capacity of poetry to counteract the instrumentalism of hyper-rationalist and materialistic values and to celebrate 'the totality of nature' by engaging with human feelings and sympathies in a broadly intersubjective, mutually beneficial way" (2015, 104). Put succinctly, eco-writing has the "capacity to set out symbolic guidelines for the material transformation of the world" (Huggan and Tiffin 2015, 14), thus ensuring social justice by cultivating ecological justice. It follows that environmentally sensitive writing has an ethical mission of the greatest importance. Given the massive anthropogenic impacts on the Earth our times are witnessing, what is in order is "a stronger ethic of care for the nonhuman environment" (Buell 2001, 6), which will result in a more livable *oikos* for human and nonhuman beings alike.

This article suggests, in the first place, that *The Waste Land* is a polyphonic poem that interweaves human and nonhuman voices into the living fabric of what has proved to be an inexhaustible artefact, open to a mind-boggling array of critical interpretations over time following its publication a century ago; second, that *The Waste Land* is an ecopoem that unconsciously anticipates the woes of the Anthropocene, as evidenced by multiple references to human-induced environmental degradation and anthropogenic detritus in the poem (e.g., littered streets, vitiated air, industrially polluted rivers, arid landscapes and water scarcity); and, third, that Eliot strives to find solace in the spirit and the more-than-human world as represented by mountains, water and birdsong that emulates the sound of dripping water, in his attempt to set his lands –emotional and cultural alike– in order. Eliot's more-than-human world includes the transcendent, the divine, "the third," as his ecological postulates are of a deeply ethical and spiritual nature. In sum, this essay offers an ecocritical reading of *The Waste Land*, with a special focus on section v, "What the Thunder Said," where the presence of the nonhuman world asserts itself more powerfully than in all the four preceding sections.

CITYSCAPES, HUMAN DETRITUS AND TOXICITY

The term 'Anthropocene' was first proposed by Crutzen and Stoermer to refer to the current human-dominated geological epoch in the face of the growing "impacts of human activities on earth and atmosphere" (2000, 17). Since the onset of the Industrial Revolution, human activities have become so pervasive and profound that our species has become "a major geological force" (18), likely to remain so "for many millennia, maybe millions of years, to come" (18). In 2007, pondering the kinds of anthropogenic impacts "pushing [Earth] into planetary *terra incognita*" (614), Steffen, Crutzen and McNeill noted that "[t]he Earth is rapidly moving into a less biologically diverse, less forested, much warmer, and probably wetter and stormier state" (614). As Robert Bringhurst has perceptively noted, the Anthropocene is "a geological *event*: a momentary though possibly momentous blip in the earth's biography" (2018, 17) that is expressive of humankind's hubris and its concerted attempt to destroy the biosphere as the home that life has patiently built for itself. The present course of Western civilisation is simply self-suicidal, argues Bringhurst. Reflecting on the interdependence of *homo sapiens* with the nonhuman and the moral imperative to radically rethink how we as a species relate to the biosphere, he writes: "The earth's life is much larger than our own lives, but our lives are part of it. If we take that life, we take our own" (Bringhurst 2018, 12).

The biosphere is a vast space where meaning flourishes unaided. The central insight of biosemiotics is indeed that "*all* life –from the cell all the way up to us– is characterized by communication, or semiosis" (Wheeler 2011, 270). In *The Waste Land*, Eliot is confronted with a living, communicative world that *means* –a universe where meaning-making processes are not the sole prerogative of human beings, but rather seem to be ubiquitous. Such processes are palpable not only in the cityscapes populated by humans adrift in the apathy and death-in-life that came in the aftermath of the Great War, but also in glimpses of the green world. Ezra Pound, *il miglior fabbro*, who "performed the caesarean Operation" (quoted in Eliot 2015, 551) and played such a decisive role in excising parts of the original draft of *The Waste Land*, was also sensitive to the fragility and beauty of the biosphere as the *oikos* of life. In Canto LXXXI, he writes memorably on Earth as being the guiding principle of a human life that comes into full bloom in conformity with the larger scheme of things: "Pull down thy vanity, I say pull down / Learn of the green world what can be thy place / In scaled invention or true artistry" (Pound 1996, 521). Being a tree-lover, Pound writes in Canto XC apropos arboreal existence: "Trees die & the dream remains" (609), as if anticipating the large-scale deforestation that is one of the woes attending the Anthropocene. In "Notes for CXVII et seq," Pound writes of animals as being his guides to a transcendental world, whilst gesturing to humans' Heideggerian responsibility to be guardians of being: "Two mice and a moth my guides– / To have heard the farfalla gasping / as toward a bridge over worlds [...] / To be men not destroyers" (Pound 1996, 802). An eminent ancestor of Eliot and Pound, John Ruskin claimed that "a maximum of woodland was needed in order to keep the air pure, that the growth of industrial manufacturing was not the answer to the problems of world poverty, and that the quality of human life



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is not dependent on economic growth alone" (Bate 93). In the fifth letter of *Fors Clavigera*, which sums up the core of his ecological thinking, Ruskin dwells in prescient terms on "the dangers of pollution" and "the importance of trees for their effect on the atmosphere" (Bate 2015, 93):

> The first three [principles of political economy] [...] are Pure Air, Water, and Earth. [...] You can vitiate the air by your manner of life, and of death, to any extent. You might easily vitiate it so as to bring such a pestilence on the globe as would end all of you. [...] [E]verywhere, and all day long, you are vitiating it with foul chemical exhalations; and the horrible nests, which you call towns, are little more than laboratories for the distillation into heaven of venomous smokes and smells, mixed with effluvia from decaying animal matter, and infectious miasmata from purulent disease. [...]
> Secondly, your power over the rain and river-waters of the earth is infinite. [...] You might have the rivers of England as pure as the crystal of the rock; [...]. Or you may do always as you have done now, turn every river of England into a common sewer... (Ruskin 1890, 93-94)

The Waste Land is peppered with references to alarming indicators of environmental degradation, brought about by the increasing industrialisation of urban spaces in early twentieth-century England. Death-in-life is a central theme in the poem, and "the first death" the poem registers in its opening lines is that of "the death of nature" (Spurr 2015, 57). Ruskin's air, water and earth are all subject to anthropogenic action in an ecosystem –that of the city– that is out of balance. As Gabrielle McIntire has perceptively noted, Eliot's poem is extremely sensitive to "fragile or degraded environments" (2015, 178) and invites readers to "consider the analogies between compromised environmental exteriors and a complex range of similarly polluted interior states" (178). While gesturing towards myths of fertility and renewal, the very title of the poem points to Eliot's central concern with land/Gaia as the fundamental principle of life –an Earth that is being mercilessly and shamelessly overexploited in capitalist societies in the name of progress, profit, and comfort. The major myth informing the poem is that of "the impotent Fisher King of fertility stories, whose land is under curse and has been laid waste" (Spurr 2015, 56). Eliot is thus registering in *The Waste Land* "a barren, postwar land [...] marked by pollutants, vulnerable to smog, littered with trash, and, in a sense, dying, while [...] offering symbolic and metaphorical commentary on our own wasted (and wasteful) existences" (McIntire 2015, 178). Evidence of human detritus, waste and pollution is pervasive throughout the poem: a polluted river (Thames), littered streets, vitiated air, arid landscapes or deserts, and desolate cityscapes are all expressive of an incipient climate crisis.

Eliot's fascination with pollution and debris in urban settings like London can be traced back to earlier poems, where the focus is on "the very *air* of the city and its diminished quality, an air that marks a fluid exchange between an uncannily porous and proximate interior and exterior –between self and what is Other" (McIntire 2015, 183), in ways that anticipate Nancy Tuana's notion of *viscous porosity*. Because of the porous borders of our bodies and the permeability "between

our flesh and the flesh of the world" (Tuana 2008, 188), "the corporeal substance of the human is ultimately inseparable from 'the environment'" (Alaimo, 2008, 238), an insight that seems to inform the Eliotic treatment of *natureculture* in his poem. In *The Waste Land*, outward landscapes and cityscapes reveal themselves to be metaphors of emotional and spiritual scapes.

To evoke the correspondence between the inner geographies of the human soul and the outer physical world, Eliot resorts in his poem to what could be termed an *enactive form*: the fragmentation, pastiche, parody and allusiveness deployed in his poem *enact* the environmental degradation without and the spiritual desolation within, given the alarming signs of pollution in cities and the disintegration of Europe after World War I. Detritus and polluted cityscapes are thus expressive of a post-pastoral world where nature is no longer pure or intact, but fallen, degraded, "vulnerable to wasting away" (McIntire 2015, 184). In brief, Eliot depicts a fallen green world that appears to have lost its healing powers for humankind. Because humans have lost touch with the land, "with the rhythms and the psychic nourishment of nature, a spiritual meaning [has been] lost" (Lehan 1998, 134). Eliot restores such spiritual meaning in rare moments of *The Waste Land*, offering, as will be discussed below, fleeting glimpses of an untainted, unmarred natural world.

Signs of environmental degradation are scattered here and there in *The Waste Land*. "The Burial of the Dead" opens with explicit references to a land that has lost all potential to bear fruit. The return of springtime defeats all expectations concerning the renewal of life on Earth, with April "breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land" and "stirring / Dull roots with spring rain" (Eliot 2015, 55). The natural cycle associated with the succession of the seasons holds no promise of renewal for Earth dwellers, and the green world has ceased to heal and restore. What the first part of the poem offers next is an eloquent description of a Biblical desertscape where the land is barren and desolate. Faced with this arid landscape, the lyrical subject wonders "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish" (Eliot 2015, 55), in words that evoke the prophetic voice in Ezequiel 2: 1: "And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee." The reader is then confronted with an apocalyptic view of the world stripped of awareness of the transcendent, one devastated by environmental catastrophe:

> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,[2]
> And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
> There is shadow under this red rock,[3] (Eliot 2015, 55)

[2] In Ecclesiastes 12: 5 we read: "when people are afraid of heights and of dangers in the streets; when the almond tree blossoms and the grasshopper drags itself along and desire no longer is stirred. Then people go to their eternal home and mourners go about the streets."

[3] Eliot's words recall Isaiah's (32: 2) tidings concerning the Messiah's arrival: "And a man shall be as a hiding place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; *as rivers of water in a dry*

The London cityscape described in the closing lines of "The Burial of the Dead" suggests that air pollution and decay are pervasive in the "Unreal City," as a "brown fog of a winter dawn" –which reappears as "the brown fog of a winter noon" in "The Fire Sermon" (Eliot 2015, 56, 63)– persistently lingers over the crowd of commuters flowing over Tower Bridge on their way to the financial district of the city, "so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many" (Eliot 2015, 57), which evokes scenes of dead crowds in Dante's *Inferno* –people in limbo, those who "have made through cowardice the great refusal" (*Inferno* 3.60). A real experience informs this view of the workaday crowd, as in 1911-12 Eliot used to carry "a copy of Dante in his pocket and learned passages by heart on long train journeys" (Gordon 2015, 43) which must have persisted in his mind for over a decade. Air pollution is alluded to by the "short and infrequent" (Eliot 2015, 57) sighs of the commuters crossing Tower Bridge, as if they had serious difficulty coping with polluted air (McIntire 2015, 179) and existential *Angst*. The wasted cityscapes through which they walk as if they were dead in life constitute an objective correlative for their sense of spiritual barrenness.

Whereas the first part of *The Waste Land* concerns a land that is under ecological threat on account of the "irreversible damages left in the wake of warfare and pollution" (McIntire 2015, 179), "The Fire Sermon" dwells on water and river pollution. The section opens with the nostalgic evocation of an idyllic pastoral landscape where the lyrical subject "appeals to nature for solace, as if insisting that the healing powers" of a prelapsarian pastoral world "could still be active amidst a desolate modernity" (179), in a depersonalised metropolis like London. However, the lyrical voice tells us: "The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf / Clutch and sink into the wet bank" (Eliot 2015, 62). What is more, "The nymphs are departed" and the nonhuman world keeps on speaking a language of its own that has become unintelligible to us: "The wind / Crosses the brown land, unheard" (Eliot 2015, 62), lost to human perception (McIntire 2015, 179). Addressing the personified Thames in words borrowed from Edmund Spenser's *Prothalamion*, the lyrical 'I' asks it to "run softly, till I end my song" (Eliot 2015, 62). In contrasting contemporary London with Spenser's London, Eliot's description suggests that Renaissance pastoral is perceived as though it were still real. While Spenser sought "to ease [his] payne" in the presence of the river waters, walking by the "shoare of silver streaming *Themmes*" (1989, 761), the current Thames reveals itself to be unpolluted just for the fraction of a second, "temporarily free of the signs of human detritus" (McIntire 2015, 180):

> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
> Or other testimony of summer nights. (Eliot 2015, 62)

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place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land" (our italics). *The Rock* (1934) is also a play by Eliot marked by clear ecological concerns.

These lines are expressive of the vitality intrinsic to the world, for, according to Jane Bennett, matter is not "raw, brute, or inert" (2010, vii). Rather, humans are part of a material-semiotic whole that comprises bodily natures, (in)animate creatures and (non)human beings, all of them partaking of a universal substratum of vibrant and communicative matter, with the proviso that, in Eliot's mindset, the nonhuman always includes the supernatural, the transcendent, the divine. In this regard, the detritus marring the beauty of the river –even if it appears to be temporarily absent from the picture– forms an assemblage of agentive matter, which, Bennett argues, has its own trajectory and the power to impact the world. The garbage items momentarily absent from the river are all signs of modern debris and pollution; they gesture towards a consumerist society that conceives of the wild as "a portfolio of resources for us or our species to buy and sell or manage or squander as we please" (Bringhurst 2018, 12), not as what it truly is, "earth living its life to the full" (12). The crystalline waters of the Thames are only so because of the temporary absence of detritus that is otherwise conspicuous in urban landscapes where nature and culture become inseparable.

At a later point in "The Fire Sermon," the Thames "sweats / Oil and tar" and "The barges wash / Drifting logs / Down Greenwich reach / Past the Isle of Dogs" (Eliot 2015, 65), which are clear indicators of pollution and deforestation (McIntire 2015, 180). The Thames ultimately reveals itself to be what Ruskin termed "a common sewer" (1890, 94) where filth reigns supreme. Despite Ruskin's and other nineteenth-century intellectuals' concern with pollution, industrial debris, noise and crowds in urban spaces became the norm for city denizens in the early decades of the twentieth century. Sensitive to the "massive upheavals in urban infrastructure" (Morrison 2015, 25) of his time, Eliot himself wrote in a 1921 "London Letter" to the *Dial* of the "barbaric cries of modern life" (Eliot 2014b, 370) and, in his Introduction to Charlotte Eliot's *Savonarola: A Dramatic Poem* (1926), of how "perhaps the conditions of modern life (think how large a part is now played in our sensory life by the internal combustion engine) have altered our rhythms" (Eliot 2014a, 773). In this historical context, Eliot's poem can be read both as "a memorial for what had already been lost or destroyed [a pastoral world of untainted nature], and as a harbinger for the ecological crises we are experiencing today [in the Anthropocene]" (McIntire 2015, 190).

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ONLY ROCK & NO WATER

After a reading at Bryn Mawr in October 1948, Eliot observed, apropos the composition of *The Waste Land*, that whereas the first four parts were the fruit of hard labour, "What the Thunder Said" was "written down in one afternoon, and no corrections have been made" (Lehmann, quoted in Eliot 2015, 686). To Kenneth Allott he had confessed on 12 November 1935 that "the whole section was written at one sitting, and never altered" (Eliot 2015, 686), as if it had been the result of "almost automatic writing" (Spender, quoted in Eliot 2015, 686). Years later, in 1971, Valerie Eliot confirmed that in "The "*Pensées*" of Pascal" (1931) the poet had had in

mind "What the Thunder Said" as he pondered upon the kind of writing that, after undergoing a long incubation, "may suddenly take shape and word" requiring "little or no retouch" (Eliot 2015, 686). Under such circumstances, the poet was "a vehicle rather than a maker" and the resulting text was but "a temporary crystallization of the mind" (687). In much the same way Coleridge composed "Kubla Khan" in a state of enhanced sensitivity, "What the Thunder Said," like "Death by Water," was composed as if in a state of spiritual trance at a sanatorium near Lausanne on Lake Geneva, in the care of Doctor Roger Vittoz. It is, therefore, no wonder that Eliot should consider the last part of his poem the strongest, as betrayed by the confession to Ford Madox Ford, dated 14 August 1923, that there were "about thirty *good* lines in *The Waste Land*. [...] The rest is ephemeral" (Eliot 2011b, 188) –by which he meant the twenty-nine lines of the water-dripping song of the hermit thrush. About three months later, in a letter dated 15 October 1923, he admitted to Bertrand Russell that "What the Thunder Said" was "not only the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole" (257).

As Ricks and McCue explain in their annotated edition of Eliot's poems, the title of the closing section of *The Waste Land* is an allusion to John 12: 28-29, where the voice descending from heaven "thundered" (Eliot 2015, 687) to the people who heard it, and possibly also an allusion to Jane Ellen Harrison's "The Rite of the 'Thunders'," chapter 12 in *Themis* (1912), "on the association of thunder with the voice of God and with purification in initiation and fertility rites" (Eliot 2015, 687). "What the Thunder Said" is gnomic poetry that captures a moment of revelation with the texture of transcendence; that the revelation comes by way of a nonhuman voice, that of the Thunder, is not a negligible fact. As such, it shows Eliot responding to the agency of matter and the vibrancy of the more-than-human world with enhanced sensitivity, and yet transcending it in search of an ultimate epiphany. In other words, the poet seems to be intellectually and sensuously alert to what Abram calls 'the more-than-human world' (1996) and a 'Commonwealth of Breath' (2014, 313). In the way of thinking dominant in the West, nature has been conceptualised as an external reality to be measured and conquered, a commodity to be exploited, and a set of potentially infinite resources. The root cause of such an attitude may be traced back to the Cartesian division between *res cogitans* (mind, soul, spirit) and *res extensa* (body, world, matter), or even further back in time to God's injunction in Genesis for humankind to take dominion over the fowls of the air, the beasts of the land, and the fish of the sea. Christianity is possibly the most anthropocentric religion in the world, as it "not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends" (White 1996, 9-10). For his part, Abram notes that this has been the prevalent style of thought in the West ever since the birth of Baconian science:

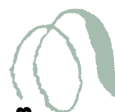
> After three and a half centuries spent charting and measuring material nature as though it were a pure exterior, we've at last begun to notice that the world we inhabit [...] is alive. [...] With the other animals [...] we're all implicated within this intimate and curiously infinite world. (2010, 158)

“What the Thunder Said” opens with the episode of Jesus spending the night in prayer next to his disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, as related in John 18: 1-3, shortly before he is captured by a band of men led by Judas carrying lanterns and torches and taken to Caiaphas’ palace. What comes next is the beginning of the 29 lines Eliot considered the most accomplished of *The Waste Land*: the description of a desiccated landscape that anticipates the environmental woes of the Anthropocene – drought, desertification, barren lands, water scarcity. The incantatory lines read thus:

> Here is no water but only rock
> Rock and no water and the sandy road
> The road winding above among the mountains
> Which are mountains of rock without water
> If there were water we should stop and drink
> Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
> . . . .
> There is not even silence in the mountains
> But dry sterile thunder without rain (Eliot 2015, 68)

The passage recalls the Biblical landscapes of the desert envisioned by Christianity as a space of self-knowledge, sacrifice and trial “on the outspots of existence, courting death” (Gordon 2015, 42). A retreat to a place where “there is only rock and sand and (literally) no water” is expressive of “the possibility of spiritual renewal” through a radical stripping of “worldly connections” (Spurr 2015, 65). All four classical elements –earth, water, air and fire– are present in these lines. Notice how the whole litany –which seems to mourn the exhaustion of the land and the depletion of such essential resources as water– is articulated around the repetition of simple words signifying fundamental constituent elements of nature: *rock* (evoking the “red rock” or Christian Church from l. 25), *mountains* (a place of revelation, close to the divine), *water* (associated with nourishing or life-giving values) and *dry* (repeated twice here, in lines 337 and 342, and also in line 354). The sense of dryness and water scarcity is inspired by Psalm 63: 1: “my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is” (Eliot 2015, 689), where physical exhaustion (of the flesh) correlates to spiritual longing (of the soul) for union with the divine. The insistent “call for water” is “a cry for both the element itself and its symbolic, sacramental function of purification” (Spurr 2015, 65). The lines might have also been inspired by a real drought, as recounted by Charlotte Eliot in *Reminiscences of a Trip to London* (1924): “When we were in England in 1921, there was a drouth. Not only were the fields in the country parched and dry, but also the City Parks” (quoted in Eliot 2015, 689). Very much like the Metaphysical poets, the Eliotic syncretic literary imagination would have woven into the living fabric of his poem a heterogeneous range of sources, lifted from both his readings and lived experiences.

Water scarcity, possibly the most worrying threat of the Anthropocene, is further alluded to later by the “empty cisterns and exhausted wells” (Eliot 2015, 70) (inspired by Ecclesiastes 12: 6 and Jeremiah 2: 13 and 14: 2-4: “they come to the cisterns, they find no water... Because of the ground which is dismayed, since there is no rain on the land” (quoted in Eliot 2015, 697)) and “the arid plain” that evokes



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the Fisher King sitting upon the shore amidst a devastated (almost apocalyptic) landscape, striving to set his lands in order (Eliot 2015, 71). The effects of drought and water scarcity are also felt in the lines "Who are those hooded hordes swarming / Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth" (Eliot 2015, 69), which, according to Eliot, were inspired by Hermann Hesse's *Blick ins Chaos*, which "regarded as prophetic Kaiser Wilhelm's "fear of the Eastern hordes, which ... might be enrolled against Europe," *In Sight of Chaos* 23" (quoted in Eliot 2015, 694). But a land of rock and no water will give way to an entrancing songbird.

A SOUND LIKE WATER DRIPPING

References to animals are ubiquitous in *The Waste Land*. An exhaustive catalogue includes a cricket (l. 23), a Dog (l. 74), a (mock) dolphin (l. 96), a nightingale (l. 100), rats (ll. 115, 187, 195), gulls (l. 313), the cicada (l. 353), the hermit-thrush (356), bats (l. 379), a cock, (l. 390), a spider (l. 407), and the swallow (l. 428). Such biodiversity suggests Eliot's sensitivity to the wild –a sensitivity that is inevitably mediated by culture, for "his crickets are Biblical" and "his nightingale sings like Ovid's bird" (McIntire 2015, 188). Wilderness is thus inextricably bound to the human-built habitats of polluted cityscapes (as epitomised by London) and to Biblical desertscapes, the main ecosystems that the poet explores in *The Waste Land* alongside that of the sea in fleeting moments of "The Burial of the Dead" ("*Oed' und leer das Meer*," Eliot 2015, 56) and "Death by Water" ("the deep sea swell," Eliot 2015, 67). Some of these wild animals are deployed for their symbolical or allegorical value in their respective contexts, for Eliot tends to give us a nonhuman world that is always "inextricably bound to culture, myth, and meaning-making" (McIntire 2015, 188). But there is at least one exception: the hermit-thrush (l. 357), which occupies a central position in "What the Thunder Said" and represents more "a signifier of pure (and purifying) experience than a metonym, metaphor or symbol" (McIntire 2015, 189) directing our attention somewhere else.[4] Real birdsong enters the poem at this point, based on an experience that Eliot relates in one of his notes: "This is *Turdus aonalaschkae pallasii*, the hermit-thrush which I have heard in Quebec Province. Chapman says (*Handbook of Birds of Eastern North America*) 'it is most at home in secluded woodland and thicket retreats. ... Its notes are not remarkable for variety or volume, but in purity and sweetness of tone and exquisite modulation they are unequalled.' Its 'water-dripping song' is justly celebrated" (Eliot 2015, 76). Eleanor Cook notes that the young Eliot "may have heard the bird sing in 1904" (quoted in Eliot 2015, 691) in the Quebec woods, where exquisite thrush-song may have attracted tourists from May to mid-July. As Longenbach has pointed out, Eliot

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[4] Incidentally, trees are mentioned only twice in *The Waste Land*: the "dead tree" (l. 21) in "The Burial of the Dead" and "the pine trees" (l. 356) in "What the Thunder Said," the only species alluded to in the poem.

"exercised a natural propensity to think through allusion" (1994, 181) in his poetry, prose and letters, a propensity which became "a structural principle" (181) in his poetry. Thus, folded in the lines related to the hermit thrush, there is also an allusion to Whitman's "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloom'd" (Longenbach 1994, 179). In Eliot's rendering, the explicit bookish allusion to Chapman's ornithological knowledge, the subliminal allusion to Whitman, and the episode from his youth are all metamorphosed into lines of crystal clarity and onomatopoeic musicality:

> If there were the sound of water only
> Not the cicada
> And dry grass singing
> But sound of water over a rock
> Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
> Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
> But there is no water (Eliot 2015, 69)

Curiously, Ricks and McCue inform readers that Eliot's scientific reference is inaccurate, for "neither Chapman's *Handbook* nor other standard works mention a "water-dripping song," but the phrase is found in relation to a different bird in Ernest Seton-Thompson's story (set in Canada), *The Springfield Fox* in *Wild Animals I Have Known* (1898)" (Eliot 2015, 691). The "water-dripping" song was that of the saw-whet owl instead. According to the new materialisms, the nonhuman world is communicative and so nature is vocal and polyphonic. Eliot listens to nature speaking, to real birdsong, finding lasting beauty in it; and despite much time having elapsed, he manages to weave it into the allusive tissue of his poem. His intimation must have been that humans inhabit a many-voiced Earth where all beings have communicative capacities, and that both human and nonhuman beings share a richly communicative biosphere. As Abram puts it, "[a]ll things have the capacity for speech –all beings have the ability to communicate something of themselves to other beings" (2010, 172).

Like the secluded places (riverscapes, fleetingly evoked gardens, and the jungle near Himavant) described in *The Waste Land*, "sheltered from the city's dysfunctions, haste, and noise" and from "the trials of the desert" (McIntire 2015, 187), the thrush song offers a glimpse of "a few remaining vestiges of the pastoral" as well as "respite from the poem's existential bleakness" (187), while gesturing to an "almost epiphanic breakthrough to another order of things" (187), driven by some intimation of desire as spiritual thirst. The longing to transcend and escape the chaotic life of the barren waste suggests that "a world of [...] stability, order, and beauty must exist somewhere" (Davidson 1994, 123), perhaps out of reach. As Gordon claims, Eliot's poem is, in fact, punctuated by "hints and guesses of something that is *not* waste, [...] a visionary alternative we cannot quite grasp before it fades and eludes" (2015, 49), and by "longings for places or symbols of natural purity" and desires for "places of respite and peace" (McIntire 2015, 188) sheltered from the persistent pollution and chaos of urban spaces, such as those evoked by lines as varied as "Looking into the heart of light, the silence," "Filled all the desert with inviolable voice," "those are pearls that were his eyes," and the "Inexplicable

splendour of Ionian white and gold" in the awe-inspiring interior of St. Magnus Martyr (Eliot 2015, 56, 58, 59, 64).

After the recurrent imagery relating to dryness and barren desertscapes, life-giving rain does come, near the end of "What the Thunder Said," to alleviate a thirsty, parched land that is dying and longs for reviving water, which is to say that there might be room for life-nourishing values and hope amidst acute spiritual barrenness and environmental crisis. In Eliot's ecopoetics, after his sojourn in the desert, in an arid landscape consisting of only rocks and mountains, the lyrical subject appears to find solace in the green world, first in the song of the hermit-thrush and then in the life-giving rain that falls on the Ganges. Geographically speaking, the reader is now transported from a desert replete with Biblical associations to an exotic jungle in the East:

> Ganga was sunken, and the limp leaves
> Waited for rain, while the black clouds
> Gathered far distant, over Himavant.
> The jungle crouched, humped in silence. (Eliot 2015, 70)

Life-giving rain falls on the sacred Ganges (or Ganga, meaning 'sacred water') as the Thunder speaks the three short lyrics that elaborate on the wisdom condensed in the Sanskrit words *Datta*, *Dayadhvam* and *Damyata* (give, sympathise, control). It falls "metaphorically in the form of the revelation of the Word which Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, discloses to his disciples" (Patea 2007, 107), where "DA is the essence of the Ultimate Being and the universal law fundamental to existence" (107). Far in the distance, in Himavant, which is the Sanskrit word meaning 'snowy' for the Himalayan (meaning 'snow-abode') mountains, black clouds gather with the promise of rain and the whole world is hushed in silence, "[l]ooking into the heart of light, the silence" (Eliot 2015, 56) anticipated in "The Burial of the Dead." It is no coincidence that the revelation of the Thunder should come with falling rain that brings back life to a barren land. "The fable of the meaning of the Thunder is found in the *Brihadaranyaka–Upanishad*, 5, 1. A translation is found in Deussen's *Sechzig Upanishads des Veda*, p. 489" (Eliot 2015, 76). The wisdom contained in this Upanishad, a superb example of lyric philosophy and philosophical lyric, amounts to three ethical principles that are to be learnt and actively cultivated: giving, compassion and self-control, which are an antidote to the positivist, materialistic and individualistic way of thinking prevalent in the modern world. The promises of environmental regeneration and wisdom are thus hand in hand near the end of Eliot's poem: the rain falls as the Thunder (Indra or Prajapati, the Creator and Lord of the universe) speaks its words of wisdom, reveals the dharma or the law of the universe, and the thirst for revelation is quenched. Ultimately, "Eliot's Word transcends the scope of the Christian Logos and reconciles the tenets of Christianity, Buddhism and Vedanta" (Patea 2007, 107). What is more, after the DA-DA-DA lyrics, the poet resorts to another bird and voices the wish to be like the swallow: "*Quando fiam uti chelidon*" (Eliot 2015, 71), a line lifted from *Pervigilium Veneris* XXII: "She sings, we are mute: when is my spring coming? When shall I be as the swallow, that I may cease to be voiceless?" (Anonymous 1921, 362).

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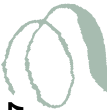
The endless fascinations that Sanskrit, the *Upanishads* and Indic Philosophy held for Eliot have been well documented (Kearns 1987; Jain 1992). After a year in Paris (1910-1911), Eliot returned to Harvard University and took a course in Sanskrit and Eastern Philosophy, where he studied "the sacred books of Buddhism" (Spurr 2015, 56), central to "The Fire Sermon," which alludes to "the Buddha's homily against sin" (Spurr 2015, 60) lifted from the *Maha-Vagga*, and to "What the Thunder Said." At Harvard, he read "selected portions of the Vedas and Upanishads in the original... and more in translation" (Kearns 1987, 31). An editorial note to Eliot's *Letters* reveals that, on 6 May 1912, professor Charles Rockwell Lanman, with whom the poet studied Pali and Sanskrit in 1911-1913, gave him "a Sanskrit edition of *The Twenty-Eight Upanishads* (Bombay, 1906), now at King's. Tipped in is Lanman's hand-written key including 'Bṛhadāraṇyaka, 220 (v. 1, 2, 3), Da-da-da = dmyata datta dayadhvam'" (Eliot 2011a, 117). According to Gordon, these words "remained lodged in Eliot's memory until he wrote them down in December 1921 as the finale to *The Waste Land*" (2015, 42). In a letter addressed to Marco Pallis on 28 November 1939, the poet wrote: "At one time I had even conceived the ambition of studying the language in order to be able to read certain Buddhist texts which are not otherwise available" (quoted in Eliot 2015, 699). In the closing part of *The Waste Land*, a poem marked by cultural syncretism, poetry and philosophy reveal themselves clearly as forms of apprehending reality. In an essay titled "Vietnamese New Year in the Polish Friendship Centre," Bringhurst writes:

> The arts and the sciences are in their origin one pursuit. Biology, physics, mathematics, the painting of paintings, the telling of myths, metaphysical reasoning –all these are ways of listening to and speaking with the world. They are aspects of intelligence. What else is poetry for? (1986, 111)



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Along similar lines, in "The Relativity of the Moral Judgement" (1915), Eliot argues that "there are all sorts of ways of setting the world in order; from the relative precision of physics to the relative confusion of theology" (Eliot 2014c, 198). It is surprising that he should have omitted poetry as a form of setting the world in order, but still Eliot draws on a curious syncretism of Western and Eastern philosophy in the composition of his *magnum opus*. In a letter to Egon Vietta dated 23 February 1947, he observed: "some of my poetry is peculiar in a kind of poetic fusion of Eastern and Western currents of feeling" (quoted in Eliot 2015, 556). As Spurr suggests, the poet's "search for a spiritual explanation of the 'overwhelming question[s]' of human existence developed from his study of Western and Eastern philosophy as a student at Harvard" (2015, 55) and left an indelible mark on his work and thinking.

Whereas in all four previous sections of *The Waste Land* Western philosophy prevails, the closing part goes beyond Eurocentric references and embraces Eastern metaphysics and style of thinking, "thereby accentuating the sense of the fragmentation and exhaustion of Occidental civilization" (Spurr 2015, 64). Such allusions to Eastern thought are "striking because of their rarity, providing different perspectives [...] in relation to the Western philosophical, spiritual and religious

sources and ideas that [...] dominate Eliot's poetry, his thought and his life" (Spurr 2015, 56). What is more, the thought contained in the *Upanishads* as invoked by Eliot in "What the Thunder Said" seems to counteract the epistemology of control, prevalent in the West, which has been voiced in previous sections. The visionary alternative that the poem appears to point to may thus reside in the Indian scriptures. The Thunder's final revelation closes with the Sanskrit words "Shantih shantih shantih," which are, as Eliot explains in a note, "a formal ending to an Upanishad. 'The Peace which passeth understanding' is our equivalent to this word" (Eliot 2015, 77), whose Christian source is to be found in St. Paul's words to the early Christians in Philippians 4: 7 (Eliot 2015, 709). Thus, *The Waste Land* represents "an attempt to articulate the universal language of the common spirituality of East and West, Hinduism, Platonism and Christianity" (Patea 2016, 11). It closes in "incantatory language common to the spirituality" (Spurr 2015, 67) of both Western and Eastern religious traditions and in a harmonious mixture of languages, as befits a plurilingual poem.

The Waste Land might be interpreted as both a metaphysical elegy lamenting the loss of the divine and an eco-elegy or, more generally, as a poem about loss, which is "perhaps the ultimate philosophical problem" (Zwicky 2011, L89). According to Levenson, voicing in the poem is distributed across a wide range of speech acts including interrogation, demand and apology, but the central one is testimony. Throughout the poem, "characters turn back to their past, distant or near, and testify to loss, glimpsed possibility, and failure" (Levenson 2015, 91). But there is also room in the poem for the testimony of nonhuman voices, like that of Philomel, crying as the nightingale, that of the hermit-thrush heard sometime in Quebec, and that of the Thunder, which offers glimpses of another order, beyond the moral degradation, death-in-life and spiritual barrenness surrounding modern life.

As Edmund Wilson perceptively noted in his review of the poem in the *Dial* in December 1922, readers sometimes feel that the voice in *The Waste Land* "is speaking not only for a personal distress, but for the starvation of a whole civilization" (2004, 86). Eliot confessed that he did not intend his poem to express the postwar disillusion of his contemporaries; it was meant, he said to Otto Heller in a letter dated 5 October 1923, as "simply a struggle" (Eliot 2011b, 242) and a "personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life" (quoted in Eliot 2015, 577) to relieve his own feelings. But it does seem that 'The peace which passeth understanding' with which the poem ends points to reconciliation, to hope and to what, for lack of a better word, might be called *phronesis*, the intellectual virtue identified by Aristotle by which he meant the cultivation of natural intelligence informed by moral virtue to achieve true wisdom – the wisdom to understand that humans can cultivate other styles of thought and manners of relating to the nonhuman; the wisdom to broaden our mindsets and embrace ways of thinking about the biosphere as true *oikos* that are not epistemologies of control of the other; the wisdom, in brief, to relate to the more-than-human world with a sense of duty and responsibility.

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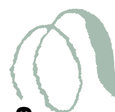

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THE WASTE LAND: MEANING AND MULTIPLICITY

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Abstract

T.S. Eliot's "stony rubbish ... / A heap of broken images" is often characterised as both *The Waste Land*'s theme, and the technique it employs to "connect" aspects of modernity. To read the poem from within the British twenty first century lyric tradition is to admire the way that such tessellation creates a literary whole. What lessons can be learnt for contemporary poetics, in an era characterised arguably less by a breakdown in meaning than by a multiplication of meanings: in the multiplying sources of authority offered by identity politics, or citizen journalism; in competing public discourses; in the ramifying identities one individual may acquire as they occupy a number of social or emotional roles? If the impulse of lyric poetry is to "sing" these into a kind of coherence, a unifying voice too often creates unifying perspective, is it possible that *The Waste Land* offers a counterexample?

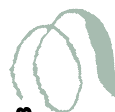
Keywords: tessellation, authority, disruption, British, contemporary.

LA TIERRA BALDÍA: SIGNIFICADO Y MULTIPLICIDAD

Resumen

La "basura pétrea ... / un montón de imágenes rotas" de T.S. Eliot se caracteriza a menudo tanto por ser el tema de *La tierra baldía* como por la técnica que "conecta" aspectos de la modernidad. Al leer el poema desde la tradición lírica inglesa del siglo xxi admiramos el modo en que dicha teselación crea un conjunto literario. ¿Qué lecciones se pueden extraer para la poética contemporánea, en una época caracterizada posiblemente menos por la ruptura de significados que por la multiplicación de los mismos: en las múltiples fuentes de autoridad que ofrecen las políticas de identidad o el periodismo ciudadano; en los discursos públicos que compiten entre sí; en las identidades ramificadas que un individuo puede adquirir al ocupar una serie de roles sociales o emocionales? Si el impulso de la poesía lírica es unir todos estos aspectos buscando cierta coherencia, una voz unificadora crea con demasiada frecuencia una perspectiva unificadora. ¿Es posible que *La tierra baldía* ofrezca un contraejemplo?

Palabras clave: mosaico, autoridad, disrupción, británico, contemporáneo.



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Famously, it makes almost no sense to discuss *The Waste Land* as if it were either a singular textual entity or a text which had the kind of integrity that the realist contract and its variants generally propose. We can advance no unifying "vision" or unified intention lying behind Eliot's poem, published in 1922: at least, not in any chronological, authorial sense. Because the preceding drafts, with Ezra Pound's interventions, are freely available in the edition edited by Valerie Eliot (1971), we cannot create the usual readerly contract with *The Waste Land*, in which we "believe" what the authorial voice has to tell us. Or at least, believe in its relationship to authorial intention. There is no sense, in other words, of the poem as having sprung from T.S. Eliot's mind (to use that loose umbrella term) in a way that has primacy over its detailed, line by line, instantiation. And this disturbs our usual reading (or listening) experience of the work.

Roland Barthes would not propose "The Death of the Author" for another forty-five years after *The Waste Land* was published (1967), though his essay's influential appearance did predate Valerie Eliot's edition of facsimile drafts. Barthes belongs, though, to another moment in modernism's complicated relationship with itself and with such traditional literary givens as truth and intention. This matters, certainly for the exploration I want to undertake here. It's important to separate the emerging postmodernism of the Sixties –whose validation of each reader's interpretation above the tradition of writerly authority has clear links with the anti-authoritarian *évènements* of 1968– from the ultimately more conservative way that the interwar modernism of which both Eliot and Pound were a part was, on the contrary, struggling to refresh faith in the authority of literary texts and other cultural forms, including music, art and architecture. In Britain, 1922 was the year in which L.S. Lowry painted one of his first works to receive recognition, *A Manufacturing Town*; Eric Gill was carving and engraving at the neo-mediaeval community he had created at Ditchling; Edith Sitwell published *Façade,* with William Walton setting some of it to music; and Ralph Vaughan Williams's *Pastoral Symphony No. 3*. in remembrance of the dead of the first world war, was premiered.

Eliot and Pound were both, of course, American. But Eliot had been living in Britain since 1914, and Pound for much of the time between 1908 and 1921. The context of *The Waste Land* is British: it is indeed the great poem of London. Thus it is not a postmodern work, attempting to kill off its author(s). Its lament for an order that seems to have become disordered is just that –a lament for discontinuity. Can the traditional forms of authority, with their mythic force, be resurrected to fruitfulness?

> There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson!
> 'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!
> 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
> 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? ['] (Eliot 2015, 57)

All of this gives the public story of the poem's creation a disruptive force. A work which makes the modernist appeal to refresh traditional author/ity itself emerge from a textual hinterland which is all about the contestation of authority. Valerie

Eliot's edition has allowed us to become intimate with Pound's interjections. The waspish aside: of "cautious critics," "surely as you are writing of London this adj. is tauto" (1971, 27). The impatient: "verse [double underline] not interesting enough as verse to warrant so much of it" (1971, 45). The witty: "qui dira les gaffers de la rime," of a stanza contorted for the sake of end-rhymes (1971, 45). And, of course, the acute: encountering yet another qualifier, this time in a passage spoken by that blind seer, "make up yr. mind / you Tiresias if you know damn well or else you don't" (1971, 47). This display, this *conversazione*, is addressed not to future scholars but to the author of the manuscript on which they're written.

So it's not that Pound as editor/collaborator emerges from the manuscript pages as a destructive force in the appearance of the closest thing we have to what we might call "the original poem." Rather, the Eliot/Pound practice of revision *itself* disrupts the reader's traditional reliance on a kind of transparent relationship between authorial intent (conscious or no: better, perhaps, to call it "authorial action") and the finished text. This is different from our knowledge of Marcel Proust's precursor to *À la recherche du temps perdu* (1913-1927), his posthumously published *Jean Santeuil* (1952), or of D.H. Lawrence's earlier versions of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (1928), *John Thomas and Lady Jane* (1927, first published posthumously, in Italian translation, in 1954) and his first attempt, *The First Lady Chatterley* (eventually published in 1972) –although it's perhaps revealing to note these overlaps with the publication dates of *The Waste Land* and of its drafts. The differences are two-fold: for the final versions of the Proust and Lawrence novels, there is no change either in authorial personnel or in overall scope. Though Proust's technique, and with it de facto his scope, developed almost beyond recognition from the rehearsal work to its successor.

All of this means that, in thinking about *The Waste Land*, it's important to remember both to mistrust any implied authorial intent, and that what unified form the poem does achieve should be read as a textual occurrence, not a trace of such intent. This poem is a particular event in language, created by language; and while this is true of all texts, it is peculiarly true of *The Waste Land*, which as a poem retains the marks of a discursive form which is characterised in English as the exercise of subjectivity; a form against which this event occurs. That has been particularly true since the end of the eighteenth century, when the early Romanticism of Helen Maria Williams (1782), or of the *Lyrical Ballads* of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth (1798), developed a poetics of sensibility: one which requires that individual personhood which used to be called a "subject" to have that sensibility. But it's also true more generally, and over a much longer historical period, of poetic composition by named individuals –rather than within the anonymous epic or folk oral traditions. Though a sonnet by John Donne, or a mock-epic by Alexander Pope, is not confessional even in the milder, non-technical sense of seeming to be an utterance about the poet's self, it still "confesses" the workings of an individual mind.

The Waste Land disrupts this relationship between poem and its author, not least by relegating one contributor to the dedication, that famous "*il miglior fabbro*" which perhaps ever so slightly backhandedly quotes Dante's praise of that other constantly receding authorial figure, the twelfth century Occitan troubadour Arnault Daniel, about whom relatively little is known:

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Ieu sui Arnaut qu'amas l'aura
E chatz le lebre ab lo bou
E nadi contra suberna (Pound 1910, 36)

I am Arnaut who harvests the dawn
And chases the hare with the ox
And swims against the stream

Though then again, in his *The Spirit of Romance* (1910, 13), Pound had praised Daniel as the greatest of poets.

We are left with a text whose own prehistory mimics its famous message about the difficulty of making meaning out of the exhausted cultural fragments that follow destruction such as the world war. That message is iterated many times:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, (Eliot 2015, 55)

I think we are in rats' alley
Where the dead men lost their bones. (Eliot 2015, 59)

The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
Departed, have left no addresses. (Eliot 2015, 62)

'On Margate Sands.
I can connect
Nothing with nothing.['] (Eliot 2015, 66)

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
    If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think (Eliot 2015, 68)

London Bridge is falling down, falling down, falling down (Eliot 2015, 71)

Sostenuto iteration like this runs its theme and tone through the whole of the poem, the way the sustaining pedal on a piano keeps notes sounding through what comes next. There is no escaping the message, even in passages which seem to honour the way London's history remains present (58), record the speech

rhythms of cockneys in a London pub (60-61), play with the tarot (67) or return to Gethsemane and the Passion (68). No escaping the message, either, which underlines its ubiquity by threading through a similar variety of contexts and sources. Eliot's own, notoriously oblique, Notes reference for these passages Ezekiel II, i, Ovid's *Metamorphoses* III, 195 and Edmund Spenser's *Prothalamion* (1595). But the reader can add to these the Blues (2015, 59) alongside the upcoming ragtime (2015, 59); the seaside resort of Margate, which has long been, in the British idiom, "no better than it ought to be" and frequented not by royalty but by working people (2015, 66); a complex of Christian allusions to the living rock, the water of baptism and the Flight out of Egypt (2015, 68); and the children's nursery rhyme whose next line is "My fair lady" (2015, 71).

These multiple sources are themselves from among the "heap of broken images" from which the poem will "connect" its meaning. Technique is thus held up to the light as a palimpsest of meaning itself. But perhaps it would be better to call this a strategy than a technique, since *technique* surely means the execution, which is carried out at a micro, often almost at a grammatical, level, but a *strategy of juxtaposition* creates the poem as a whole.

For example, in the passage I quoted above (2015, 62), which owes much to Spenser, the sentence "The nymphs are departed" is repeated. But this sentence does not occur in the Spenser poem itself, whose "nymphs" are on the contrary very much present, making garlands for themselves and travelling to London to be married. In fact, so much do they advance to the foreground of the *Prothalamion* that the poem's viewpoint resembles a camera they come towards until, by its ending, it is over their shoulders and they are out of frame:

> Against their bridal day, which is not long:
> Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.

Spenser ends each stanza with a couplet that rhymes, "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song" with variations on "Against the bridal day, which is not long': variations which, finally, twitch the curtain, allowing a glimpse of the naughty second sense of a wedding day foreshortened by the hurry to bed.

Eliot, too, writes with a certain leer:

> And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;
> Departed, have left no addresses. (2015, 62)

But where Spenser celebrates the legitimacy of two dynastic weddings –his subjects, Elizabeth and Katherine Somerset, the daughters of Edward Somerset, the 4th Earl of Worcester, were of royal descent through John of Gaunt– Eliot indicates non-aristocratic "new money" made in the companies and banks of the City of London. His use of the word "friends," then a euphemism for lovers, also suggests not marriage but dalliance.

This is carefully done, a tessellation of nuance within the larger pattern of tessellation with which *The Waste Land* is laid out. But the distinction between technique and strategy, in a poem which after all helped set the terms for a certain

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kind of modernist culture, must be more than a question of scale. It's important to preserve the distinction in order to prevent the work's poetic strategy itself being relegated to a question of successful execution.

What I metaphorically call tessellation –the acknowledgment, first, and then the utilisation, of the fragmentary, multiple and often pre-existing nature of what this text has to say– is distinctively different from citation, homage or quotation, which respect and indeed reify the character of the original. In literal tessellation, the pre-existing redness, say, of a ceramic piece "becomes" bloodiness, for example, within the mosaic picture. Analogously, their re-use in *The Waste Land* turns pre-existing phrases and ideas into new material with new meanings.

One of these new meanings is, simply, the resonance of historicity. It's true this is the case of much quotation and homage, for example in the contemporary British fashion for using quotations as book titles. Aldous Huxley's *Antic Hay* (1923), for example, takes its title from Christopher Marlowe. *The Waste Land*, though, uses the sense of historic perspective such allusions create not as if it were a retrospective shadow, colouring in "depth," but to create its vertiginous sense of temporal and cultural instability. We don't know whether the poem's "here and now" is our own, and so we cannot quite know where we ourselves "stand." There is a discomforting sense not so much of a rich silt of history under our feet as of silt's susceptibility to erosion, meaning we keep shifting our conceptual position.

We don't, for example, encounter any sympathetic characters in *The Waste Land*; this creates a sense that psychic integration is absent from the world of the poem. In Part II, Eliot's queen is mute as Philomel until she starts her nervous nagging:

> My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> 'Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.
> 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> I never know what you are thinking. Think.' (Eliot 2015, 59)

Later in the same section, the cockneys drinking up at closing time cruelly bitch:

> When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said–
> I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
> HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
> Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
> He'll want to know what you done with that money he gave you
> To get yourself some teeth...
> . . . .
> He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.
> And no more can't I, I said, and think of poor Albert,
> He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
> And if you don't give it him, there's others will, I said.
> Oh is there, she said. Something o" that, I said.
> . . . .
> Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said,
> What you get married for if you don't want children? (Eliot 2015, 60)

As a woman reading *The Waste Land* I experience these passages as particularly destabilising, because they speak to a "truth" –one which disparages women– that I don't experience as "true." However, this is a *literary* effect, not a matter for political comment, because it troubles my experience of narrative omniscience. If I cannot "trust" the text that speaks to me, how can I spend time with it?

On the other hand, what, beyond the old realist contract, would such readerly "trust" mean? The reader does not have to be a postmodernist, prioritising their private experience of reading over the agreed public territory of the well-known text itself, to acknowledge that this experience, of falling out of enchantment with the narrative position of *The Waste Land,* can be at work in a reading of the poem. For the work takes the breakdown of all relationships, of the marriage contract as much as of the social contract, as part of its theme: and so the struggle for understanding across gender's multiple divides is part of precisely the experience it is designed to evoke.

The poem's third section sees a third well-known passage addressing women and their intimate relationships. While the daughters of the aristocracy flirt with the heirs to City empires –"The nymphs are departed./And their friends, the loitering heirs of City directors;/ Departed, have left no addresses" (2015, 62)– "The typist home at teatime" (2015, 63) lets herself sleep with "the young man carbuncular [...] / A small house agent's clerk," (2015, 62) merely because she is bored:

> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
> [He] Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> . . . .
> Exploring hands encounter no defence;
> His vanity requires no response,
> And makes a welcome of indifference. (Eliot 2015, 64)

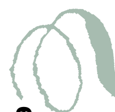
This is not love across the barricades of a new generation's mores, but boredom and ("one final patronising kiss," (2015, 62)) contempt; an abusive relationship compounded by self-disgust:

> 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'
> When lovely woman stoops to folly and
> Paces about her room again, alone,
> She smoothes her hair with automatic hand,
> And puts a record on the gramophone. (Eliot 2015, 62)

The flicker of allusion to the song Olivia sings, in Oliver [*sic*] Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield*: *A Tale, Supposed to be written by Himself* (1766), when she finds herself abandoned by her seducer, Squire Thornhill, is quickly extinguished by this double automation, of hand and musical machine.

Goldsmith's original gives us art –and, crucially, redemption:

> When lovely woman stoops to folly,
> And finds too late that men betray,
> What charm can sooth her melancholy,
> What art can wash her guilt away? (1766, II, 78.)



But there is no readily completed redemption in *The Waste Land*, no Christian pathfinding in which sin is both readily identifiable and, accordingly, "washed in the blood of the lamb." Even the ending of the poem, in which the thunder offers its remote consolatory advice, is a commandment to the long task of self-improvement. "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata" (2015, 71) means, roughly, "Give. Sympathise. Direct." These actions are turned outward: they push aside what might be characterised in comparison as Western navel-gazing and face towards a good society. But that society is not London. For this truth, whose Hindu source is the second Brahmana –if "truth" it indeed is, in the world of the poem– breaks through the increasingly fragmented Western cultural references that populate the poem's last fifty lines. It is a breakthrough the poem stages as a thunderstorm: and in so doing it runs the risk of reducing the Hindi terms to mere aural effect. All those rumbling *Da*, *Daya* and *am* sounds, and their arrival with the Freudian thunderclap of DA (in *fort-da*, *da* is the child's triumphant return), make it tempting to ignore source and meaning and visualise instead some conclusive storm sweeping through "the arid plain" (2015, 71). "DA": that full stop, which is not repeated, and not retained, in fact stands at the head of the first manuscript draft Valerie Eliot presents (1971, 78) like a title.

"Shall I at least set my lands in order?" asks line 425 (71); but "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down," the next line responds. The poem ends by bringing together that tripartite injunction, which has so far been introduced term by term: "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata." (71). Perhaps there is a trace in this construction of the triune Christian god (Christ giving, Spirit sympathising, Father directing, even)? Either way, the line follows after a stanza space, and it is indented even though that indent does not follow on from a half line above, as occurs elsewhere in the poem lines 422-423 (71) for example:

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> To controlling hands
>   I sat upon the shore
>
> Now the tripartite has become a triple repetition:
>   Shantih shantih shantih (71)

We know "shantih" means, roughly, "peace'; and that it too has a source in Hindu scripture. As Eliot's own note informs us: "Shantih. Repeated as here, a formal ending to an Upanishad. "The Peace which passeth understanding" is our equivalent to this word" (77).

As the conclusion to a poem which eschews resolution it seems insistently unitary –unifying, therefore. But what does it do to leave this repetition unpunctuated, except by the space bar, and without a final full stop? It makes sense to read the line as not statement but echo: and one which is dying away at that.

It feels counterintuitive to call these particular kinds of textual arrangement and interplay (inserting spaces for example) "composition', and so it is possible to set aside the fact that both manuscript and typescript drafts of these final lines appear almost untouched by Pound (1971, 78-81, 88-89). There is no case to be

made for differentiating them from the rest of the poem in terms of the ways they circumvent the conventional notion of the author. Instead, Eliot's tessellation reaches an accelerated climax as the poem ends, racing between centuries and cultures to juxtapose the legend of the Fisher King, nursery rhyme, Dante, the *Pervigilium Veneris*, Gérard de Nerval and Thomas Kyd:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order?
>
> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
>
> *Poi sascose nel foco che gli affina*
> *Quando fiam uti chelidon –O swallow swallow*
> *Le Prince d'Aquitaine de la tour abolie* (Eliot 2015, 71)

... before it arrives at the well-known line which encapsulates the poem's whole strategy and content: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins" (71). A line which originally read (although Eliot had already changed it in the manuscript draft), in a more telling reveal of the poem's approach: "These fragments I have spelt into my ruins" (1977, 80-81). Both its position, so close to the end of the poem, and its relationship with the work's formal strategy, lend this line a summative weight. Whoever is addressing whomever, the implication of summation within a text is always that there is matter which *could be* summed up. This is true regardless of content: as demonstrated by political rhetoric which seems to lack joined up thinking, or the way we respond as reader/listener to summation as cue even in a theoretical paper we have not followed. The gesture of summation is a gesture towards meaning.

In the context of *The Waste Land*'s potential for spelling out meaning (or spelling in, as Eliot's draft had it), alongside the poem's overtly multiple materials and sources, the work continues to pose questions about meaning and multiplicity. Reading it, as I am, from the perspective of the twenty-first century British lyric tradition of which my own work forms part, means necessarily accepting it as a significant, if apparently contradictory, legacy for that tradition. Anecdotally, it is the work of Eliot's which is most cited by contemporary British poets. This is not the legacy of a national educational curriculum: T.S. Eliot is rarely taught in British schools –apart, that is, from *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats* (1939). It does however often form part of the curriculum in Higher Education.

The Waste Land seems to inspire a greater sense of intellectual ease and cultural recognition in British scholars and poets than his other large scale poetic work, the *Four Quartets* (1943). I would suggest that the reasons for this are twofold. The *Quartets*' four settings, though recognisably British, are rural, or maritime. They include a country house in the Cotswolds, a village in the West Country, the mid-Atlantic (though the Dry Salvages are clearly not British territory, the Atlantic coast and climate dominate the national meteorology and wildlife), and an East Anglian shrine. In fact, the rural settings are not only British but more narrowly

English: a point of significance in contemporary social and political culture, where "Englishness" is often appropriated by jingoistic and racist forms of nationalism, or by the political right, while "Britishness," often used by the political left, embraces not only the other countries of the union, but the diversity –of religion, race and ethnicity, and tradition– that characterises contemporary British society. In a further significant cultural marker, such diversity is still a largely urban phenomenon in Britain today. *The Waste Land* may be chock-full of Western high cultural allusions; but it is at least set in a version of London –a city of waste lands– which is still recognisable today.

It is also easier to teach *The Waste Land* than the *Four Quartets* to a lecture hall of contemporary British students because the earlier work *appears* secular –even if it in fact addresses the loss of a faith which, as traces demonstrate, is Christian– while, among the *Quartets*, *East Coker* and *Little Gidding* in particular are at the same time expressions of Christian faith and culturally Anglican. This entails a content of theological ideas, quotations and allusions which are by now as unfamiliar (without research) to teaching faculty as they are to students; and which faculty may feel squeamish about expecting students from diverse backgrounds to acquaint themselves with.

One contemporary British response is to regret this, on behalf of today's emerging poets in particular. The *Quartets* seem to integrate their sources more deeply –and more melodically– than does *The Waste Land*. They *sound* more univocal. The ending of *Little Gidding* may cite John of the Cross, Julian of Norwich and the opening of *Burnt Norton*, but by this stage the diction which has emerged over the course of the four long poems has become conclusive certainty:

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.
Through the unknown, unremembered gate
When the last of earth left to discover
Is that which was the beginning;
At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree

Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.
Quick now, here, now, always
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)
And all shall be well and
All manner of thing shall be well
When the tongues of flames are in-folded
Into the crowned knot of fire
And the fire and the rose are one. (Eliot 2015, 208-209)

An alternative response is to reconfigure this sense of literary loss and gain in terms of the advantages of a poetics which reveals, if not incoherence, then at least discontinuities between its materials. The unifying force behind the diction of Eliot's *Quartets* might, in such a reading, be as much an imperative of faith as the simple technical matter of "having a good ear." There is a great deal to be explored here which is not the purpose of this paper. What is to my purpose, however, is to see what happens if contemporary British poets look at *The Waste Land* and its tessellated approach to its materials –by which I mean not only its multiple sources, but the multiple ideas these seem to provoke. *The Waste Land* may have an overarching tone, but it does not have an overarching argument. Or, to put it the other way, it successfully avoids the temptations of creating an overarching argument. Such an argument would, after all, gainsay the incoherence and multiplicity the poem addresses.

It's not true, *pace* Plato, that all art is mimetic, and that the only way to address the experience or idea of the fragmentation of meaning is to imitate that fragmentation. But, on the other hand, it is true that to do so is one way to explore such material. The resources that *The Waste Land's* textual strategies open up for contemporary British lyric verse are considerable. British lyric verse is today often written as if against the grain of contemporary experience of the disjuncture of competing authorities. Today's Britain includes cultural moments where world news is uncovered not by professional journalists but by citizen journalists who have their mobile phone cameras at the ready; and where, in the shadow side of such developments, the scrutinised research of experts may be trumped by popular opinion (as in anti-science movements which share "news" of their opinions on social media). It is a culture where the liberating insights of identity politics can mean the individual of good will is torn between peers' competing claims to the trump card of authenticity of experience. It can mean, at the individual level, a shift from the unquestioned sense of an ungainsayable citizenship, with an equal set of rights and forms of social participation, to a struggle for self-definition according to emotional or social role, or experience, or essential qualities.

However welcome, contemporary challenges to traditional establishment authority, can, in other words, lead to uncertainty about whether any kind of authority can be trusted; and to a sense of social atomisation. These uncertainties are felt everywhere in the global North at the time of writing: their particular pertinence in Britain is that *The Waste Land*, that poem of London, *is* a poem of the British context, and as such part of the British contemporary poet's cultural inheritance. And in the way it lays out the experience of an earlier moment when traditional authority seemed uncertain –and does so by juxtaposing, rather than eliding, difference– it offers a distinct set of strategies for a poet who is so positioned.

Though a North American postmodern poetic is increasingly taking hold within the contemporary British poetic tradition, largely through a flood of transatlantic publication, the sense of polyvalence and the strategy of tessellation have made comparatively few inroads. Where such strategies appear, their closest relationship is not necessarily to *The Waste Land*. Among the northern British heirs of European modernism, Basil Bunting (1900-1985) erupted into modernist mastery

at the age of sixty-six with *Briggflatts* (1966), which owed as much to the friendships of his maturity with other regional poets, including Tom Raworth, as to his long friendship with Ezra Pound. The London-based Australian Peter Porter (1929-2010) juxtaposed a notable range of cultural allusions within a tensely wrought line of argumentation, such as the rueful, elegiac *Better than God* (2009), but acknowledged W.H. Auden as a model for intellectual, witty verse.

The leading heir to both Bunting and Porter, Sean O'Brien (b. 1952) writes verse which is unafraid of either traditional verse-forms or the feat of incorporating depth charges of resonance into a poetry which retains not only strong argumentation but a strongly distinctive narrative voice. This voice can be witty, sardonic, passionate and elegiac; it is nearly always politically or socially engaged. In particular, his collections since *Downriver* (2001) have returned repeatedly to the sense of a new waste land being created in British cities, particularly in the post-industrial north of the country, by successive right-wing governments" policies of austerity. For O'Brien, the resulting impoverishment is more than physical, and entails a clearing out of meaning from individual lives which is epitomised by the closure of much of the public library system. He titled his 2015 collection addressing, among other things, the redemptive power of culture, *The Beautiful Librarians*. In a reflexive echo another northern poet, the Scot Don Paterson, has published numbered poems called "The Alexandrian Library" in several of his collections. Most recently, "The Alexandrian Library, Part IV: Citizen Science' –which, as its title indicates, refers to both one of the great lost libraries of the world and to the erosion of the role of expert– appears in *The Arctic* (2022, 59-71).

As these examples suggest, *The Waste Land*'s resourceful strategies open discursive space for a developing poetics which addresses the instability of contemporary cultural meanings. Even if the resources of these strategies have not yet been fully exploited.

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THE WASTE LAND AND THE RELEASE OF SOCIAL ENERGY: AN ELIOTEAN READING OF THOMAS PYNCHON'S FICTION*

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Abstract

This essay discusses the striking influence of *The Waste Land* on Thomas Pynchon's oeuvre and evaluates the stylistic and thematic links connecting them. More specifically, the article centers on twin aspects of Pynchon's intertextual reframing of Eliot's representation of the waste land. The first refers to the use of certain motifs and symbols of the poem, such as the narrator's bouncy character, the living-dead condition of some personages, and the evocation of the violet hour. The second aspect concerns Pynchon's versions of the figure of Belladonna as a "lady of situations" and her relationship with the notion of waste associated with mythic thinking, ethics, and the complexity of life. These themes are developed intensely in Pynchon's oeuvre and are reflected in his complex experimental style.

Keywords: Eliot, Pynchon, Wastelands, literary influence, Lady of situations, violet hour.

LA TIERRA DESOLADA Y EL FLUJO DE LA ENERGÍA SOCIAL: UNA LECTURA ELIOTIANA DE LA NOVELÍSTICA DE THOMAS PYNCHON

Resumen

Este artículo estudia la gran influencia que *The Waste Land* ha ejercido sobre la narrativa de Thomas Pynchon a partir de vínculos tanto estilísticos como temáticos. Más específicamente, el artículo se centra en la reescritura intertextual que Pynchon efectúa de dos estrategias utilizadas por Eliot en la representación de la tierra desolada. La primera de ellas se refiere al uso de ciertos motivos y símbolos del poema, como el carácter imparable del narrador, la condición de muertos vivientes de algunos personajes o la evocación de la hora violeta. La segunda se refiere a las versiones que Pynchon construye de la figura de "Belladonna, the lady of situations" y la relación que esta figura eliotiana guarda con la noción de basura junto con su asociación al pensamiento mítico, la ética y la complejidad de la vida, nociones que adquieren gran intensidad en la narrativa de Pynchon y que se reflejan en la complejidad de su estilo experimental.

Palabras clave: Eliot, Pynchon, tierras desoladas, influencia literaria, *Lady of situations*, hora violeta.

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A close reading of Pynchon's fiction shows that, from the literal use of some well-known motifs of *The Waste Land* in his short stories, he advances to a more refined emulation of Eliot's style and themes in his longer narratives. His protagonists are frequently detective-surveyors whose mission, as in Eliot's poem, becomes an evaluation of the condition of the land, while trying to release the stagnant energy of society and ethically regenerate life. Departing from Eliot's readings on myth and vegetation ceremonies that characterized the early borrowings from the poem –as already found in Fitzgerald's, Faulkner's, and Steinbeck's fictions– Pynchon makes extensive use of *The Waste Land* to develop his own literary project. The novelist combines a symbolic consideration of double-sided female energy with a sustained denunciation of the dangers humans pose to land and life on the planet. The devastating effects of the Anthropocene is already symbolized in Eliot's poetry, and is further developed in Pynchon's works through the use of the notion of *waste*. It is the contention of this article that the poem breaks with old humanist conventions and anticipates posthumanist aesthetics. Eliot's poem thus cuts across the frontiers of Modernism to become one of the most ductile works in Anglo-American culture, here appreciated for its early description of physical and emotional stagnation, modern chaos, and complexity in its ethical quest to renew the forgotten language of religious spirituality.

As Eliot discloses in the first of his Notes, while writing *The Waste Land* he was greatly influenced by *The Golden Bough* (1915, 1922), James Frazer's study of comparative religions. Following the success of the poem, three of the best-known American novels of the period reflected Eliot's use of Frazer's ideas on fertility rituals and cyclical time. F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925), William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) are among the earliest novels to grasp the poet's representation of the ethical and historical conditions of modern societies.

Fifty years after the publication of Eliot's poem, Raymond M. Olderman published *Beyond the Waste Land* (1972), in which he analyzes work by some of the most notable American novelists of early Postmodernism: John Barth, Peter Beagle, Stanley Elkin, John Hawkes, Ken Kesey, Thomas Pynchon, and Kurt Vonnegut. In his selection, Olderman searches for a Grail knight that may restore the health of the dying king and bring water to the thirsty land, finding multiple connections with Eliot's work in these fictional representations of the wasteland that followed the twentieth century's second post-world war period. In the second part of his book, Olderman becomes attracted to the notion of conspiracy and its representation in Pynchon's first novel *V.* (1963), whose method, he affirms, is similar to Eliot's. In

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line with Olderman, the following pages evaluate how Eliot's powerful shadow extended much further into the future, to cover Pynchon's extensive literary project into the twenty-first century.

Echoing ancient religious beliefs collected in *The Golden Bough*, Eliot's poem provides readers with a representation of life as a circular pattern of death and resurrection, a "natural" course of action that, nevertheless, becomes disrupted due to the increasing spread of moral and physical waste, mostly generated by war and human greed. In Frazer's interpretation of the archaic mentality, deities and their priests symbolically die and resurrect, thus bringing about a similar regeneration of life and vegetation. In Eliot's poem the prophetic voice, in its multiple representations, seeks to awaken the "son of man" (Eliot 2015, 55) from the condition of being "neither / Living nor dead" (56). As this voice soon laments, April is the cruellest month, anticipating that the cycle of death and regeneration has stopped at the "violet hour" (63), reminiscent of Dante's *Purgatorio* VIII: 1-6.[1] Throughout his oeuvre, Pynchon progresses from a literal copy of Eliot's mythic symbolism in his first short stories to sharing the poet's realization that the cycle of life has stopped at different historical epochs, and especially during the period that extends from the 1960s to the 2010s. Despite Frazer's reiterative comments in *The Golden Bough* (1922, 824-26), at the beginning of the twentieth century the new faith in science and technology did not bring about an ethical renewal. In Eliot's greatest poem, fragmentation and wastage offer bleak prospects for the future of humanity. In the first part, the poet hints at the main reasons that brought about the decline of modern societies: pathetic leaders, lack of human emotions, a non-protective Church, the voices of false prophets, and an ever-present economic greed that can only result in war and a devastated land. About forty years later Pynchon, in his own fiction, adheres to Eliot's poetic perception of western culture.

One of the most obvious links between the two writers is in their understanding and use of complexity. Both resort to a difficult style as the only way to comprehend the multiple manifestations of contemporary life and the manifold circumstances that have brought it to a moral halt. In his celebrated essay "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921), Eliot proclaims the complexity of life and the obligation of poets to write a type of difficult poetry that avoids either/or certainties in favor of amalgamation, collage and indirectness, which makes his ideas look rather postmodern (Eliot 1966, 289). Decades later, Pynchon defends a similar poetics by means of a difficult style and of symbolic characters who live in a reality as complex as the poet understood it to be. Eliot grounded his poem in the cultivation of difficulty and uncertainty, and these attributes exist in Pynchon's representations of reality in different historical periods that reach out to the new posthuman paradigm of the turn of the millennium.

As Pynchon openly recognizes in *Slow Learner* (1984), at the outset of his literary project Eliot's symbolism of the wasteland looms obsessively. In the

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[1] See Collado-Rodríguez 1994, 57-64.

Introduction to this collection of short stories, Pynchon discloses his own poetics while expounding on the impressions that rereading his early stories have on him. With his characteristic irony, here centered on his younger self as an inexperienced writer, the author reflects on his most important intertextual source. He believes that his story "The Small Rain" represents his greatest literary mistake:

> Most of what I dislike about my writing is present here in embryo, as well as in more advanced forms. I failed to recognize, just for openers, that the main character's problem was real and interesting enough to generate a story on its own. Apparently I felt I had to put on a whole extra overlay of rain images and references to "The Waste Land" ... I was operating on the motto "Make it literary." (1984, 6)

The mischievous author seems to play with his readers at the end of the Introduction when, by stressing his apparent anxiety of influence, he ironizes again with the help of another Eliotean notion:

> Displacing my personal experience off into other environments went back at least as far as "The Small Rain." Part of this was an unkind impatience with fiction I felt then to be "too autobiographical." Somewhere I had come up with the notion that one's personal life had nothing to do with fiction, when the truth, as everyone knows, is nearly the direct opposite. (1984, 23)

Most likely, the idea that "one's personal life had nothing to do with fiction" has its source in Eliot's famous contention that "the emotion of art is impersonal" (1966, 22) from his influential essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). Accordingly, most of the early stories Pynchon collected in *Slow Learner* reveal close links to Eliot's poetry, links that combine his early rejection of binary choices to understand reality with specific motifs taken from *The Waste Land*. Thus, "The Small Rain," the first story in the collection, shows Eliot's pervasive influence. Its heterodiegetic narrator describes life as a categorical space where, despite the protagonist's aversion to them, social hierarchies cannot be avoided. In this story of a group of soldiers who go to the rescue of civilians after a natural flood, there is a strong separation between the regular soldiers and their officers. Pynchon's first protagonist, a Jewish-American private called Levine, anticipates the writer's use of other schlemihls in his later fiction. Despite his university education, which could have granted him an officer's commission, Levine wants only to be left alone. He is the first in a list of Pynchonian characters who replicate Eliot's living-dead inhabitants of the waste land who cross London Bridge, or the passive reader whom the narrator addresses at the end of "The Burial of the Dead." "'You! hypocrite lecteur! –mon semblable, –mon frère!'" (Eliot 2015, 57). They suffer from acedia and are a perfect example of death in life. Eliot likens them to Dante's ghosts in the Limbo: "A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had not thought death had undone so many" (Eliot 2015, 57).

The military camp where the soldiers are stationed is comically called Fort Roach, a name that inaugurates Pynchon's interest in the motif of wastage, and a primary symbol of everything and everybody that has become a residue in the

thermodynamic representation of life that the writer devises in his fiction. Levine "had quietly and unobtrusively gone native" (28), he had become a straw man, an entropic character devoid of energy. As one of his fellow soldiers defines him, the protagonist "doesn't want to work and therefore he is afraid to let down roots. He is a seed that casts himself on stony places, with no deepness of earth" (39).

First published in 1960, "Low-lands" is the second story in *Slow Learner* and the first to feature what will become some of the most persistent motifs in Pynchon's fiction. The most significant of these, again offering a clear link to *The Waste Land*, is the theme of wastage. The setting is represented as an actual dump. Protagonist Dennis Flange is a version of Eliot's neurasthenic woman's silent interlocutor in "A Game of Chess":

> 'My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak.
> What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> I never know what you are thinking. Think.'
>
> I think we are in rats' alley
> Where the dead men lost their bones. (Eliot 2015, 59)

Pynchon describes Flange as a communications officer in the Navy who is unable to communicate with his wife. He sees the sea as a woman and ultimately as the "Low-lands" that he imagines as a "gray or glaucous desert, a waste land which stretches away to the horizon" (63). His marital disgust makes him finally go with a friend to an actual dump, where he falls asleep. When he seems to wake up, he hears the voice of a gipsy girl who invites him to follow her along a labyrinth that leads to her bed, where he finds a rat that the girl calls "Hyacinth." He explains that an old fortune teller, Violetta, read her fortune years ago. In Eliot's poem, the modern fortune teller is Madame Sosostris, whose voice is muffled and whose prophecy, like her vision, fails. Such Eliotean symbolism marks the beginning of Pynchon's obsession with depicting contemporary western civilization as a growing heap of rubbish where the cycle of life is stalled and the land cannot overcome the uncertain "violet hour":

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> The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
> Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
> Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
> Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed. (Eliot 2015, 62)

The reality portrayed in Pynchon's fiction becomes increasingly complex and difficult to understand, his representations of western society becoming pessimistic from the third story in *Slow Learner*, "Entropy" (1960). Since then, Pynchon has partially modified Eliot's symbolism by adding thermodynamics to the contemporary

interpretation of wastage, in line with its second law: characters and topics related to entropy supplement Eliot's symbol of the waste land.

The limits of traditional binary terms are transgressed and opposites sometimes achieve a point of reconciliation in the symbolic vertex of the letter "v," which has saturated Pynchonian cartography since his first novel, *V.* (1963). However, the letter cannot get rid of the significant effects of the "violet hour," with the book offering a social analysis of the fin de siècle and modernist ethos in contrast to those of contemporary times. Here, Pynchon's ongoing literary project starts to combine the Eliotean themes of the lady of situations and wastage with the ideas of American historian Henry Adams in his autobiographical *Education*, particularly in Chapter xxv, "The Dynamo and the Virgin" (1904). When visiting the Paris World's Fair of 1900, Adams wonders about the mysterious force that was, in his imagination, the source that built the cathedrals of Europe, a "moral force" that extended from ancient times to the contemporary energy generated by the powerful dynamos and even by the "new rays" represented in the newly discovered radium (Adams 1900, 858). The different manifestations of that ancient force that Einstein was to call simply "energy" in the formulation of his Relativity Theory –and which Adams linked to morality and social energy– constitute one of the core issues in Pynchon's representations of western society. However, the ways in which such a force developed in modern history is embodied in powerful female characters who, like Belladonna, become "ladi[es] of situations" (Eliot 2015, 56). From symbols and characters related to Venus and the Virgin, throughout his work Pynchon evaluates the power of this archetypal female to transform old societies into new ones at different moments and places in western history. As I have stated elsewhere (2015, 256-57), these moments cover an ample period that goes from the Enlightenment to post-9-11 New York. Always embodied in a female character, Henry Adams's mysterious force is both the Virgin and Lady of the Rocks and the lady of situations. She may be morally right or wrong and find embodiment in housewife and metaphysical detective Oedipa Maas, in dangerous cyborgian spy Lady V., in sexualized Frenesí Gates, or in pragmatic detective Maxine Tarnow. However, she is inescapably linked to the notions of wastage, social dissolution, and entropy, with strong echoes from *The Waste Land* always discernible in the background.

In his early narratives, Pynchon's ambiguous figure of the Lady V. –she features in the short story "Under the Rose," as well as in *V.*, and *Gravity's Rainbow*– becomes the contemporary manifestation of Adams's "track of [social] energy" (Adams 1900, 863), symbolized by the Virgin in the Middle Ages. Pynchon evaluates the female manifestations of energy throughout a period that extends from the last years of the nineteenth century to the Second World War (see Tanner 1982). This first Pynchonian "lady of situations" eventually becomes an evil doer, connected to the dangerous radioactive power that Henry Adams, during his visit to the Paris World's Fair, also perceived as the newest manifestation of energy. Eventually, the Lady V. turns into the Bad Priest and, in *Gravity's Rainbow*, Pynchon's encyclopedic third novel, is destroyed by her own faction.

However, the writer has previously revealed his enormous indebtedness to Eliot in his first novel. *V.* is not only a reflection of the human process that transforms

primordial energy into a technological and fascist cyborg. In their clashes with the two male protagonists, different female characters and the Island of Malta also offer other versions of "the lady of situations." A fictional reflection of Henry Adams, the character of Herbert Stencil is a hyper-rational quester who pursues the same aim as the historian, "to follow the track of the energy." Meanwhile, on the other side of the V letter stands Benny Profane, defined as a "schlemihl and human yo-yo," who symbolically appears in the story on Christmas Eve 1955, in Virginia. Traditionally understood as a symbol of the desacralized energy of the Virgin in contemporary times (Seed 1988, Eddins 1990, Chambers 1992), Profane wanders the streets of Norfolk, Washington DC, and New York as an entropic god, incarnate with neither the power nor the wish to liberate traditional American society from its old prejudices and moral stagnation. Born in a Hooverville and frequently associated with the inanimate, this half-Catholic, half-Jewish schlemihl is very attractive to women who, like Rachel Owlglass, or the mysterious Paola (born in Malta, the Mediterranean Rock), wish to be mothers. Like Jesus Christ's disciples after the Pentecost, Paola "knew scraps it seems of all tongues" (14). She has inherited the strength of Mara, the ambiguous female deity that helped the Christian knights defeat the Turks in Malta, the island that the shining sun turns into an Eliotean red rock. However, as Astarte, she is also the powerful force that sends the big wave that kills British spy Sidney Stencil, Herbert's father, in 1919. Spirit, woman, mother, lover, cyborg, or dual Jungian anima, the force that obsesses Herbert Stencil/Henry Adams becomes in this first novel the Belladonna with multiple signifiers that the male characters can never understand nor possess.

By the time the Lady V. is killed, this female manifestation, combining Adams's social force and Eliot's Belladonna, has already reappeared in the writer's second novel, *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966). Here, she is embodied in Republican housewife Oedipa Maas, a personage of the 1960s who is on a number of occasions openly associated by the narrator with Venus and the Virgin (1966, 23, 40-41, 87, 128). The "lady of situations" has turned into a metaphysical detective whose role is to execute the will of a former lover, the rich land developer Pierce Inverarity. Morally distant from her predecessor, the unethical cyborg Lady V., Oedipa's epic internal journey takes her to survey the land and people of California in the 1960s and then to understand the necessity to fight against categorical thinking and reinstate the importance of the balancing social middle. Close to the end of her adventure, Oedipa realizes the painful existence of the many invisible dispossessed who live at the margins of society, including the mysterious Trystero gang, defined by the acronym WASTE. In a scene that calls to mind Eliot's "Lady of the Rocks," she encounters an old sailor whose pain transforms her symbolically into a contemporary Virgin of the Pietá. At that moment, Oedipa

> was overcome all at once by a need to touch him, as if she could not believe in him, or would not remember him, without it. Exhausted, hardly knowing what she was doing, she came the last three steps and sat, took the man in her arms, actually held him, gazing out of her smudged eyes down the stairs, back into the morning. She felt wetness against her breasts and saw that he was crying again. (87)

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However, Pynchon's second novel offers no clear ending. Whether Oedipa will be able to release the flow of social energy that the status quo has kept systemically stagnant, or whether the American society of the 1960s will remain ideologically motionless in their violet hour, is unclear. In any case, Pynchon's evaluation of other historical periods in his later fiction insistently points to the struggle between confining conventional values and the release of moral and vital energy.

The encyclopedic and highly praised *Gravity's Rainbow* thus offers a parodic description of devastated Germany at the end of Second World War. With a male protagonist interestingly called Tyrone Slothrop (T.S.), entropic waste rules again even if there are several female characters who try to bring about the much needed regeneration of life while escaping from the patriarchal repression that suffocates, if not actually kills them.

Thomas Pynchon traps readers in an Einsteinian reality that goes beyond our capacities. Knowledge varies according to the momentum and place of the observer. Fantasy, dreams, drugs, fairy tales or séances extend the ontological experiences of Pynchon's characters in a new Eliotean report on the more recent post-world war period. Sex and war, as frequently happened in *The Waste Land*, are linked together thanks to Slothrop, who combines his puritan lineage with sexual charm and a strange link to a specific type of plastic, Imipolex. Female energy, manifested in a number of women who have become sexual slaves of Nazi, Russian, British, and American males, has to suffer the results of the war, epitomized in the deadly V2 rockets, and its persistence in the almost indestructible plastic that will grow to become the most infectious type of waste the Anthropocene has created. Pynchon makes his narrator, already a hyper-metafictional voice, jump in time and place to different scenarios where men belonging to several political factions are creating a new world order based on the dual power of the rocket as destroyer and instrument to colonize the stars. The story takes place, as Weisenburger states, over "a nine-month period in which the novel's main action occurs, from early December 1944 to early September 1945, a nearly closed circle or partial mandala to which Pynchon attached a myriad of leaps and loops backward, forward and around in historical time" (2011, 49). The place where the narrative unfolds is mostly the London hit by the V2s and the German ruins of 1945. The different parties in the war are fighting to advance into a world order that Norbert Wiener, in his influential book *The Human Use of Human Beings* (1950), had already warned his readers about and that Weisenburger again synthesizes as follows:

> So the terminus of History's arc, and the Zone's archetypal space, is the death camp. In *V.* Pynchon had located one historical origin of it during the German campaign of extermination in South-West Africa. In *Gravity's Rainbow* he realizes the concentration camp as that uniquely modern space in which any sovereign power –or "They-system"– denationalizes and denaturalizes the subject, then turns it into a laboring machine until, its Productivity exhausted, its life is snuffed. (52)

Men like filmmaker Miklos Thanatz (from Thanatos, death), Dominus Blicero, aka Nazi Lt. Weissmann (Whiteman), or Russian Tchicherine advance in that deadly condition by always trying to dominate the females who symbolize

the primordial energy of life in the writings of Adams and Eliot. Belladonna, especially incarnated in counter-spy and dominatrix Katye aka Gretel, is trapped by the suffocating patriarchy, which announces a new Kingdom of Death on the Moon. Even Lt. Slothrop experiences in Katye's arms the contradictory power of her primordial energy:

> He lies on top of her, sweating, taking great breaths, watching her face turned ¾ away, not even a profile, but the terrible Face That is No Face, gone too abstract, unreachable: the notch of eye socket, but never the labile eye, only the anonymous curve of cheek, convexity of mouth, a noseless mask of the Other Order of Being, of Katje's being –the lifeless non-face that is the only face of hers he really knows, or will ever remember. (1973, 222)

Not surprisingly, schlemihl Slothrop ends up fragmented and dissolved in Pynchon's ontological game, as an anticipation of the failure represented by late capitalism. Although the Nazis are defeated, the alternative kingdom of plastic symbolized by younger patriarchal America is no alternative for a better world. History has taught us that death camps and industrial and technological slavery would increase in the following decades, together with new wars and intense environmental problems.

After a silence of seventeen years, in 1990 Pynchon published *Vineland*. Oedipa Maas's hopes in the 1960s, for a regenerated land where civil rights would be allotted to everybody, have failed after a sustained period of political conservatism. The narrator warns readers that, "Developers in and out of state had also discovered this shoreline in the way of the wind, with its concealed tranquilities and false passages, this surprise fish-trap in the everyday coast. All born to be suburbs, in their opinion, and the sooner the better" (1990, 319). The late 1980s represent a context of simulated prosperity, with the old Californian dream having already become the superficial way of life emanating from TV, Hollywood, and Disneyworld.

In a land where the new centers of power are TV, the cinema, and the shopping mall, the new Pynchonian male protagonist, Zoyd Wheeler, is another schlemihl whose wife, Frenesi Gates, represents the transformation of the vital moral energy of the 1960s into the conservative patriarchal power of the commodified 1980s.[2] Symbolically, in line with Pynchon's old quest to trace the source of energy, Frenesi as "lady of situations" eventually abandons her hippie husband and her young daughter Prairie to become the lover of FBI agent Brock Vond. Entropy and waste rule at the end of the millennium and Pynchon, always attentive to popular cultural

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[2] As Joseph Slade perceptively argues, "What happened to the rocket [in *Gravity's Rainbow*] happens [in *Vineland*] to television: an instrument for change becomes an instrument of the status quo. The inventors of the rocket in Pynchon's third novel were guided by dreams of escaping gravity, of breaking down national borders, of achieving new knowledge [...]. Similarly, idealistic young Americans were enthusiastic over the power of television to expose political or economic malfeasance..." (1994, 70).

manifestations, draws the characteristic new symbol of the times: the Thanatoids. With colonial Vietnam War in the background, the narrator grotesquely describes its traumatized veterans as posthuman slaves trapped in the dreamy and technological American world of Baudrillard's simulacra:

> While waiting for the data necessary to pursue their needs and aims among the still-living, Thanatoids spent at least part of every waking hour with an eye on the Tube. "There'll never be a Thanatoid sitcom," Ortho Bob confidently predicted, "'cause all they could show'd be scenes of Thanatoid watchin' the Tube!" (170-171).

This particular breed of Eliotean living-dead remain on earth only to "advance in the condition of death" (171). War trauma and technological simulacra have replaced ancient myth. As the Fisher King, they are stuck between life and death, in the violet hour, and are in need of a questing knight who may find the Grail for them. Despite its ambiguous ending –which might only be a dream– *Vineland* resolves in a release of repressed energy thanks to the updated versions of female V. that come to replace Frenesi in the fight against conservative America. While trapped in the technological web of posthumanity, Frenesi thinks that God is perhaps a hacker who uses a computer to decide our destiny in terms of ones and zeroes (90-91), but powerful "ninjette" DL and young Prairie represent the return of the old power of Venus and the Virgin. Vond is finally defeated in the mythic land of magical realism, once the narrator has described his nightmare with the female energy that he wants to control but that eventually destroys him:

> He could hear her breathing, waiting for him –helplessly he opened, entered, as she advanced on him, blurry, underlit, except for the glittering eyes, the relentless animal smile, and accelerating leapt at him, on him, and underneath her assault he died (274-275).

Prairie, as representative of the new energy, shows her character as young "lady of situations" by escaping from Vond, despite being strongly attracted to the FBI agent. At the end of the story, she wakes up. Everything might have been only a dream, and readers would have to wait seven more years until Pynchon publishes his next novel, one that seeks out the origins of so many American contradictions. John Leonard explains that *Mason & Dixon* (1997) is a novel in which

> [f]rom historical odds and ends and the Field Journal they left behind, Pynchon re-imagines Mason and Dixon before, during and after the four-plus years, 1763 to 1767, they took to draw their 244-mile-long line through the American wilderness, dividing the proprietorships of the Penns of Pennsylvania and the Calverts of Maryland, ordaining our North and South. (1997, 56).

A mock-heroic historical novel about land "proprietorships," alternate realities and an enormous work of complex literary experimentation, many of its characters have as their initial a V. The destinies of the two protagonists become linked after an initial event in which both have to study the transit of Venus. The Pynchonian symbol that represents both the female energy of the Virgin and the

convergence of opposites is attributed to new and historic mechanical devices, such as Vaucanson's Mechanical Duck, here a female that also has a double (376). Because Pynchon's story is a lengthy reflection on the Enlightenment and the years that preceded the creation of the new American country, what Mason and Dixon find in their endless voyages of land surveys clearly evokes and expands the journeys of Oedipa Maas up and down California. Wherever they go on the globe, the project of Enlightenment and the prerevolutionary years mean commerce, consumerism, and colonialist profit. Having revealed their many differences at the beginning of their journey, Mason and Dixon advance gradually towards the vertex of V, here symbolized in the ampersand of the novel's title. These two historical surveyors drew the dividing line that was to become a symbol of the American Civil War, a line also called *Visto*. However, they were also astronomers and understood astrology. Accordingly, they also knew how to make the horoscope, thus emulating the Eliotean Madame Sosostris and Pynchon's gypsy seer from his early story, who is modelled on Violet Piping (549). Dreams, fantasy, reason, embedded stories, different narrative genres, and history amalgamate in a striking novel that shows that even at its birth American Democracy was already trapped by money and profits, but also that small narratives, where opposing characters become dear friends, can counteract the grand narratives.

Additionally, *Mason & Dixon* also reveals the increasing amounts of social waste that the Enlightenment brings with it: dispossessed black slaves, humiliated women, invisible murdered natives. In his next novel, Pynchon makes it clear that, once the line was drawn, American history became intimately linked to the First Industrial Revolution.

Advancing chronologically through his oeuvre, the longest of Pynchon's novels and his first post-9/11 narrative *Against the Day* (2006) possibly is his closest book to Eliot's poem and style. If the modernist poet advised his colleagues to be difficult and indirect, the postmodernist writer takes this advice to its limits and transports his readers to an extremely complex mixture of past, present, and future. Alternate realities, multiple plots, and mixed literary genres recall a large number of invented and historical popular events and artifacts that extend from the 1890s to the 1920s, enlarging Pynchon's historical revision of social energy initiated in *V.*, while also coinciding with the main temporal setting of *The Waste Land*. Bernard Duyfhuizen summarizes Pynchon's book as a work that "includes some 170 characters, and covers the globe from the west coast of America to inner Asia, locating many historical events in new juxtapositions—yet, the text repeats the mantra found in many Pynchon novels: 'everything fits together, connects'" (2011, 71).

In Eliot's description of London, the scene borrowed from Spenser's "Prothalamion" is perceived as real, while the modern waste is unreal, in a strange mixture of time periods.

> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
> Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed. (Eliot 2015, 62)

Within the narrative frame of the novel, a typical Pynchonian narrator who tells the story from the future (our present) delivers this mixture with an enormous number of explicit and implicit references to Eliot's poem and to his own novels. "Constantinople is wasteland," says one character (Pynchon 2006, 830), while gradually another starts to look like Tiresias (955). The story frequently recalls the settings used by Eliot in *The Waste Land*, especially in Lew's episodes in London, as both Eliot's poem and Pynchon's novel experiment with mixing time and space; both refer to the same moment of history, which certainly qualifies as highly "entropic." There is an accumulation of séances and interpretations of the Tarot: readers are thus comically informed that one morning Lew walked into a breakfast parlor and "took from an inner pocket a Tarot deck thinned to the twenty-two Major Arcana and dealt them one by one onto the table, between the remains of a vegetarian haggis and a platterful of pea fritters" (605). The demoted function of myth and vegetation ceremonies may echo Eliot's "mythical method" (1923), but it also offers an intertextual interpretation of Pynchon's abundant recourse to psychic archetypes, angels, centers of power, gates to be trespassed by the initiated, conversations with the dead, and, once again, to the role of Belladonna as a contradictory symbol of energy.

Readers of *The Waste Land* may quickly realize the reiterative use of motifs related to the notion of social decadence and to the stoppage of the life cycle. As happened in Eliot's poem, people –even the narrator– are described as "neither / Living nor dead," (Eliot 2015, 56) with the Eliotean *twilight* (a term often repeated in Pynchon's novel)[3] constantly evoking the process of decadence of western civilization and death. Even echoes from a combined Baudrillard/Stetson can be heard when readers are informed that "a large American population was forever passing through Paris, changing addresses or lying about them. Some might've been ghosts from the War with unfinished business in the city" (1068).

Once again, as happens in Pynchon's earlier fiction, especially in *The Crying of Lot 49*, darkness symbolizes the territory of the dispossessed, of the margins of social discourse where unknown forces may be ready to accost the passerby but where the invisible may paradoxically acquire visibility. From the false prophesies represented in the Kabbala and multiple references to the Chapel, readers of *Against the Day* can also enjoy different manifestations of Belladonna, "the lady of situations." From female representations such as the Suffragettes or Yashmeen (who strongly recalls Oedipa Maas), the story advances to card number II of the Major Arcana, the High Priestess, and to Father Ponko's interpretation of female power. "When God hides his face," he says, "it is paraphrased as 'taking away' his Shekhina. Because it is she who reflects his light, Moon to his Sun. Nobody can withstand pure light, let alone see it. Without her to reflect it, God is invisible. She is absolutely of the essence if he is to be at all operative in the world" (960). Such amalgamation of opposite powers, male and female, as in Eliot's Tiresias, brings life, while female darkness offers the necessary protection against the male light of day.

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[3] See pages 454, 543, 544, 551, 580, 805, 828, 851, 880, 941, 945, 973, and 1057.

Pynchon's penultimate novel, *Inherent Vice* (2009), represents a return to his Californian settings and offers a new version of nostalgia for the 1960s and the failure of the counterculture to replace the existing status quo. As John Miller perceptively argues, had "*Inherent Vice* been published in 1970, it might have been read as contemporary satire" with a touch of film noir (2013, 234). This time the protagonist is a male detective, Doc Sportello, who in 1970 has to fight against evil forces, again represented by land developers, the villains in an adventure in which his wife, a woman interested in the riches and luxury that these moguls offer her, has abandoned the schlemihl male once more. The main quest in Sportello's story is to help this "lady of situations" in an always-changing landscape that already features some early computers, together with living-dead characters and other reiterative Eliotean motifs. Evaluating the condition of the land, developer Crocker Fenway cynically tells the detective by the end of the book that he mostly values being in place: "we're in place. We've been in place forever. Look around. Real estate, water rights, oil, cheap labor –all of it's ours, it's always been ours" (Pynchon 2009, 347). As Miller also argues, these crooked developers "have the power to rewrite the landscape, erasing its history and imposing their own narrative on it" (2013, 235). At the end, Shasta, as "lady of situations," does not reunite with Sportello, whose condition remains uncertain as he drives through the fog of the Santa Monica Freeway when it is getting dark. Could the author rewrite the narrative, and the waste condition of the land be dispelled?

Pynchon's demand for the release of the social forces of history returns one more time. On this occasion, computers offer the gateway to virtual reality, the space that progressively replaces the physical landscape that preceded the technological revolutions of the twentieth century. *Bleeding Age* (2013) incorporates virtual reality as the property that has become the center of speculation and power for the new "land" developers in the hyper-saturated society of simulacra. Information has finally become the force that Henry Adams understood as the source of life. Accordingly, new evildoers want to control its flow. The story takes place in 2001, a year that marks not only the entrance into the third millennium, but also the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Maxine Tarnow, Pynchon's latest protagonist, is a female detective whose task will be to fight against this new type of evildoer and to release the emotional forces of life at a time in which technology is trapping people in a new limbo. In *Bleeding Age*, Pynchon draws a description of contemporary life where the limits between death and life are trespassed by the posthuman being that has emerged from the current application of cutting-edge technologies to our vital experience. Thus parodic references to a society of zombies abound, now affected by the new addiction to virtual reality that, as predicted by McLuhan (1964, 41-42), turns people into dumb slaves of the system, the new type of Eliotean living-dead, "We who were living are now dying/With a little patience" (Eliot 2015, 68). There are remarkable similarities between the characters of Oedipa Maas and Maxine Tarnow (Robson 2013, 56; Nelson 2014, 58), supporting the idea that the latter is Pynchon's new Belladonna, whose role is again to release the social and moral strength of the country. Both women are associated with real estate moguls, and both are explicitly linked to the figure of the Virgin (Pynchon 1966, 118–27; Pynchon 2013, 13, 170).

They are also fond of driving an Impala, which links them to their ultimate aim: to bounce and engage the stagnant social energy that old realty developers and new internet moguls have appropriated to control both the real and the virtual land. Additionally, the notion of waste becomes present throughout Maxine's adventure, including a long passage dedicated to the Island of Meadows. The island has been formed literally by garbage but, as the narrator soon discloses, "Like the Island of Meadows, DeepArcher also has developers after it" (Pynchon 2013, 167); DeepArcher ("Departure") is, in the virtual world the novel describes, a website represented by an avatar characterized by Trystero features, a new land where the dispossessed can still find refuge.

However, in Pynchon's latest –perhaps last– narrative there seems to be a more optimistic ending to the tale. Maxine becomes a much harder "lady of situations" than Oedipa was. Although in *Bleeding Edge* V. stands mostly for Virtual, she is able to defend the weak and dispossessed by pointing her real gun at Gabriel Ice, the real-estate turned dot-com millionaire who embodies the evil destroyer of the new land. Even if she becomes briefly addicted to the Internet portal, Maxine is able to release herself, expose the dangers of posthuman virtuality, and unveil the sinister patterns of control looming above the new society of information. Once she has defeated Ice, Maxine again drives the old bouncing Impala, a car dating back to the countercultural times in which Oedipa drove the same model. She drives back home on an early morning in which "once again, overnight, all together, pear trees have exploded into bloom" (475). Springtime has finally come and the cycle of life has bounced back from its stoppage; and it seems that, at least for now, in Pynchon's Eliotean fiction April is no longer the cruellest month.

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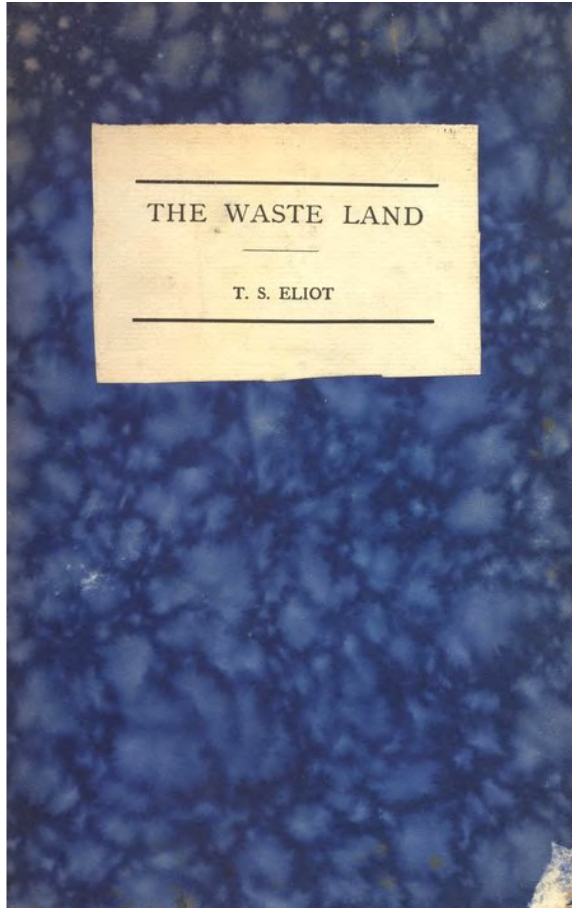

"BURNING BURNING BURNING BURNING": THE FIRE OF *THE WASTE LAND* IN ANNA AKHMATOVA'S *POEM WITHOUT A HERO*

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Abstract

In 1940, when the flames of WWII were already devastating Europe and approaching the USSR, the Russian poet Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966) started what was to become her last major work, *Poem Without a Hero* (1940-1960). Thanks to the poet and writer Boris Pasternak, Akhmatova was able to read T.S. Eliot's work. Although she and Eliot never met nor communicated directly, Akhmatova considered him her soulmate. Having witnessed WWI, the Russian Revolution and Civil War, the communist purges, Stalinism, and foreseeing the upcoming Nazi invasion, Akhmatova turns to Eliot as one of her main inspirations. The present paper explores one of the leitmotivs of *The Waste Land*, the multifaceted fire, seeing it as, first, a symbol of the horrors depicted in *Poem Without a Hero*, and second, a hope of a purifying power. Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero* originated in *The Waste Land*'s despair and longing for salvation, and the fire in her poem is as merciless as it is redeeming, "like a pure flame in a dish of clay" (*Poem Without a Hero*).

Keywords: Anna Akhmatova, T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, *Poem without a Hero*, Avantgarde.

"'ARDIENDO ARDIENDO ARDIENDO ARDIENDO': EL FUEGO DE *LA TIERRA BALDÍA* EN *POEMA SIN HÉROE* DE ANNA AJMÁTOVA"

Resumen

En 1940, cuando las llamas de la Segunda Guerra Mundial ya estaban devastando Europa y se acercaban a la URSS, la poeta rusa Anna Ajmátova (1889-1966) comenzó a trabajar en el que iba a ser su último gran poema, *Poema sin héroe* (1940-1960). Gracias al poeta y escritor Boris Pasternak, Ajmátova pudo leer los poemas de T.S. Eliot. Aunque ellos nunca se conocieron ni se comunicaron directamente, Ajmátova lo consideraba su alma gemela. Tras haber vivido la Primera Guerra Mundial, la Revolución y Guerra Civil Rusa, las purgas comunistas, el estalinismo y previendo la invasión nazi, Ajmátova recurre a Eliot como su principal fuente de inspiración. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo explorar el fuego, uno de los temas principales de *La tierra baldía*, símbolo tanto del horror como de la esperanza de purificación en Poema sin héroe. El poema de Ajmátova tuvo su origen en la desesperación y el anhelo de salvación de *La tierra baldía*, y el fuego en su poema es tan despiadado como redentor, "como una llama pura en un plato de barro" (*Poema sin héroe*).

Palabras clave: Anna Ajmátova, T.S. Eliot, *La tierra baldía*, *Poema sin héroe*, vanguardia.

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One hundred years after the publication of *The Waste Land* (1922), the significance of Thomas Stearns Eliot's work is yet to be fully explored. *The Waste Land*'s gravity and legacy stretch far beyond Eliot's native language or his native country, and to take just one example of his reach, they can be seen in his hitherto underexplored influence on the work of Anna Akhmatova (1889-1966). While echoes of his *Four Quartets* (1941) can be found in Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero* (1940-1960), it was *The Waste Land*, written almost twenty years earlier, that remained a strong inspiration for her in her revision of her past and that of her country, which is intertwined with the destiny of Europe.

In *Freedom and the Spirit,* the Russian philosopher and theologian Nikolay Berdyaev (1874-1948) wrote: "the spiritual world is like a torrent of fire in free creative dynamism" (1944, 57). In expanding the connection between fire, spirituality, and freedom, this paper uses the symbol of fire to explore Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero*.

Considering the complexity of both Eliot's and Akhmatova's creative methods, a comparative analysis of their work is needed. Eliot's and Akhmatova's mutual admiration for Dante (1265-1321) and Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821-1881), as well as their advocacy for Christian values, have contributed to their shared perspectives on the challenges of secularism. In her notes to *Poem Without a Hero*, Akhmatova describes the poem as a "Requiem for all Europe" (Akhmatova 1990, 352). In truth, not only *Poem Without a Hero* but also *The Waste Land* can be read as requiems for Europe, the purifying fire of *The Waste Land* redeeming the land without heroes of Akhmatova's *Poem*, which is a land without heroes.

Poem Without a Hero has only recently become a focus of Slavonic studies. Akhmatova was unable to publish her poem during her lifetime; Soviet censorship meant that it became available to Russian readers only thirty years later. Since the secret police agents and several of her acquaintances were spying on her, Akhmatova developed a shrewd way of writing poems, called *tainopis*, which means "secret writing": she did not write down the poems, instead memorising them along with friends she could trust, some of whom would eventually write them down. As a result, many of her poems were published abroad or long after her death; as of today, more than one edition exists for various texts.

The parallel between Eliot and Akhmatova was suggested by Akhmatova herself. In her memoirs, she mentions Charlie Chaplin, the Eiffel Tower, and Eliot as all being "born" in the same year as herself (Polivanov 1994, 6). This is not quite accurate, as Eliot was born a year earlier, but her mistake might well have been deliberate, with the intention of enhancing their connection. In her conversations with Anatoly Nayman (1991, 38) and Lydia Chukovskaya (1994, 112), she referred to Eliot as her "little brother," seeing him as a kindred soul. *The Waste Land* and Eliot's later poems were an inspiration for Akhmatova, and although the dialogue between the poets never took place in person, it remains vocal in their poetic texts.

The Waste Land and *Poem Without a Hero* were created simultaneously in contexts at once similar and dissimilar. Eliot first became known with "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915), whose unique language altered the poetic idiom. With *The Waste Land* in 1922, Eliot established himself as one of the most

prominent figures of Western Modernism. *The Waste Land* is the poetic illustration of Eliot's conception of tradition, of "the mind of Europe," a mind "that abandons nothing *en route*" (Eliot 1972, 16) and of the historical sense which poets need to share, which he outlines in his seminal essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919). The experimental nature of the poem meant the consecration of Modernist aesthetics, which presented "multitudes of points of view" and established "links between different sets of beliefs that lie at the foundations of the mind of Europe" (Patea 2007, 96).

Anna Akhmatova was already a well-known poet by the time she started writing *Poem Without a Hero* in 1940. She published her first collection, *Evening*, in 1912 and immediately obtained national recognition. For some time, her poetry had been concerned with her personal challenges, but as Roberta Reeder states, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905) and WWI (1914-1918) "marked a significant change in Akhmatova's work, and soon she began to take on the role of the traditional village 'wailer'" (1994, xiii). From that time on, she spoke out for all the Russians and thus became a national hero and prophet. After the Revolution of 1917, Akhmatova wrote some of her most emblematic poems: witnessing the terror that the communists brought upon her country, she created one of her best-known testimonies, *Requiem* (1935-1940). Here, Akhmatova used the strength of her talent to speak up for all those forced to remain silent while their fathers, wives, and children were torn apart in front of them. *Poem Without a Hero* was to become Akhmatova's last major poem and the crowning work of her career. Written over more than two decades, based on various fragments from her early poetry, edited tirelessly, the *Poem* was to crystallise history and its lessons lived and learnt in some terrible times.

Both *The Waste Land* and *Poem Without a Hero* are war poems. However, the texts were produced at quite different stages of their writers' lives. For Eliot, it was one of his earliest works, written when he was 34 years old; for Akhmatova her last major poem, one to which she had dedicated more than twenty years. They were written against different historical backgrounds: *The Waste Land* addresses WWI and its aftermath as well as Eliot's personal disillusionment and that of his generation in times of spiritual bankruptcy, while *Poem Without a Hero* is concerned with the ordeals of WWI, the Russian Revolution and the Civil War, the communist purges, WWII, and Stalinism. Akhmatova's poem may therefore be seen as conversant with Eliot's in its search for meaning in a meaningless wasteland.

The symbolism of fire pervades both *The Waste Land* and *Poem Without a Hero*, burning intensely yet differently in the two poems. Ronald Schuchard describes the poetic personae of *The Waste Land* as "sunk in an insidious dialogue with the self, their spirits exhausted" (1999, 5), and this spiritual burnout is both caused and healed by fire. The two poems recreate "the archaic mythological pattern of the descent into Hell" (Ushakova 2016, 76), whose fire forever tortures sinners in Dante's *Inferno,* especially in two of the lowest circles, the Seventh Circle, in which Physical Violence is punished, and the Eighth Circle, where Fraud finds its penalty (Dante 2008).

However, Eliot and Akhmatova explore fire not as a trial only. The imagery of fire is particularly striking in *The Waste Land*. In the poem, "fire" symbolises

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several concepts: actual fire, the fire as a carrier of lost rituals and traditions, fire as suffering, and fire as purification through suffering. It is implied in the title, in the hell-like journey through the ashes of the modern world, as well as in multiple symbols of burning and what is left after a fire. The very same flames are ignited in Anna Akhmatova's *Poem Without a Hero,* which echoes the various functions of fire in *The Waste Land*.

"I TURN TO STONE, I FREEZE, I BURN": FIRE AS AN ELEMENT

Fire is one of the four basic elements: as such, fire constitutes the foundation of all creation, and it is opposed to water. However, in their poems, both Eliot and Akhmatova reflect on the fluidity and interconnectedness of the elements. This idea is found at a structural and conceptual level in both *The Waste Land* and *Poem Without a Hero*. Take, for instance, the titles of *The Waste Land*'s sections, "Fire Sermon" and "Death by Water." Both refer to highly significant spiritual experiences. "Fire Sermon" refers to the Buddha's Fire Sermon, where he reveals to his disciples that the origin of human suffering is people's longing for the illusory and, thus, unfulfilling things of this world. The flames of their appetites enslave and lead them astray. The only refuge is found in putting out the burning fire of egoistic and transitory wishes, so as to achieve detachment from the things of this transitory world. Eliot linked it to the next section, "Death by Water," which establishes an allusion to baptism, one of the most symbolical rituals of Christianity, in which an old, ignorant self dies to give way to a new, illuminated one.

Poem Without a Hero does not employ as much symbolism of fire and water in its structure as it does in its conceptual picture. Some of the most tense passages bring the elements of water and fire together, for example in the first section of the poem, "The Year Nineteen Thirteen," which revolves around a mysterious masquerade set in the Fountain House (where Akhmatova lived most of her life). Seeing some of the most famous literary sinners enter her home, Akhmatova's lyrical "I" personifies all the elements at once: "And I break into a wet coldness, / I turn to stone, I freeze, I burn...."[1] / "И я чувствую холод влажный, / Каменею, стыну, горю" (Akhmatova 1990, 323). It is only after going through such a transformation that she feels strong enough to face her unexpected visitors.

The union of fire and water may seem impossible in a land sunk in spiritual blindness. On the contrary, for those who seek release from the prison of unconscious living, every element is tied with another so as to build an eternal pattern of destruction and creation, death and birth. If in "The Year Nineteen Thirteen," Akhmatova's persona poetica was looking at the river Neva "smoking," in "The Epilogue," at the end of her journey, she is by the river Kama that "chilled and froze over in front of me" / "предо мною леденела и стыла Кама" (Akhmatova

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[1] Unless otherwise indicated, all translations from Russian are mine.

1990, 344). Unlike the river Neva in Saint-Petersburg, one of the most westerly points in Russia, the river Kama runs along the Siberian part of the country, serving as a gate to the eastern part. Having walked the land burned with the flames of unfulfilling desires and unconscious choices, the poems end with a flight "to the east" (Akhmatova 2014, 576). In the same way, Eliot's *The Waste Land* ends in the East, in the Himalayas, closing with "Shantih shantih shantih" (Eliot 2015, 576), leaving those who have travelled that far in search of a new dawn and a renewal.

"SACRED CANDLES": FIRE AS A RITUAL

Eliot and Akhmatova employ candles as one of the primary fire-carrying torches through their work. For Eliot, "the seven-branched candelabra" (Eliot 2015, 58), for Akhmatova, "wedding candles" (Akhmatova 2014, 549) / "венчальные свечи" (Akhmatova 1990, 322). These candles bring about the notion of rite, which is closely tied to spiritual living. A believer lives his or her life in the certainty that every action and moment is filled with value and meaning. From this perspective, the candles of *The Waste Land* and *Poem Without a Hero* are relics of something which is now lost, and they are there only for decorative purposes. In the modern world, religious rituals are obsolete. The candles that used to light human homes and enlighten their inhabitants are being forgotten, leaving people in physical and spiritual darkness.

The contrast between candles as carriers of light and meaning, as opposed to rooms unlit and cold, is particularly noticeable in Akhmatova's poem. She indicates that it is being written on the eve of 1941, while her poetic "I" is lighting the "sacred candles so this evening might shine" (Akhmatova 2014, 549) / "я зажгла заветные свечи, чтобы этот светился вечер" (Akhmatova 1990, 322) and waiting for a new year to come. After WWI and the outbreak of WWII in 1939, this new year, as Akhmatova will shortly find out, is about to bring new terrors: the Nazi invasion of the USSR that will "undo" millions of people, the Stalinist terror of labour camps and executions, the purges, and the mass deportations.

The protagonist of *Poem Without a Hero* faces her own and her people's past, their faults and misdeeds. Hosting a dreadful masquerade in the candlelight of the Fountain House, she is to welcome uninvited guests, among whom we see Faustus, Dorian Gray, and Mephistopheles himself. They are in fact doubles of Akhmatova's acquaintances and friends. She was one of only a few who chose to stay in Russia after the Revolution, whereas most of her artistic circle fled the country. Like Eliot's wastelanders who "read, much of the night, and go south in the winter" (Eliot 2015, 55), the protagonists of the masquerade attempt to escape to a distant happy land sought by so many of Akhmatova's friends. However, in the *Poem*'s "The Epilogue," this land is never discovered by those in exile:

And that happy phrase –at home–
Is known to no one now,
Everyone gazes from some foreign window.

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Some from New York, some from Tashkent,
And bitter is the air of banishment–
Like poisoned wine. (Akhmatova 2014, 575)

А веселое слово –дома–
Никому теперь не знакомо,
Все в чужие глядят окно.
Кто в Ташкенте, а кто в Нью-Йорке,
И изгнания воздух горький–
Как отравленное вино. (Akhmatova 1990, 343)

As the poems demonstrate, the twentieth century dismembered bodies and souls but also families and nations, forcing millions of people to leave their home and flee to save their lives. The "bitter air of banishment" also smells of "our burned woods" (Akhmatova 2014, 574) / "опаленных наших лесах" (Akhmatova 1990, 342), the woods where "the cuckoo does not cuckoo" (Akhmatova 2014, 574) / "и кукушка не закукует" (Akhmatova 1990, 342), which leaves "us" in an eternal lifeless wasteland.

Among the unexpected masqueraders, Psyche stands out. She is a double of Olga Glebova-Sudeikina (1885-1945), who was Akhmatova's close friend and a vital character of the *Poem* and one of the three people to whom Akhmatova dedicates her poem. Psyche quickly became Glebova-Sudeikina's nickname after she had interpreted this role in a play of the same name. An idol of her time, in the *Poem*, Glebova-Sudeikina came to symbolise the sins of her own and Akhmatova's generation, one which left Russia and did not face the consequences of its choices. Akhmatova never disassociated herself from the friends of her youth and their actions. Nevertheless, for her, leaving Russia was never an option, and her feeling of betrayal over those who fled abroad is one of the key themes of the *Poem*:

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You fled from the portrait
And the empty frame on the wall will wait
For you until dawn.
You're to dance –without a partner.
And the role of the fatal chorus
I agree to take on. (Akhmatova 2014, 559)

Ты сбежала сюда с портрета,
И пустая рама до света
На стене тебя будет ждать.
Я же роль рокового хора
На себя готова принять. (Akhmatova 1990, 330)

Psyche's tragic but in the end redemptive story is tied to fire. According to Apuleius, Psyche falls in love with Cupid, who has been ordered by his mother, Venus, to punish the princess for her beauty, yet he cannot resist Psyche's charms. Seeking to protect Psyche from his vengeful and jealous mother, Cupid places the princess in a remote palace and forbids her from ever looking at him. However,

one night, Psyche is taken over by the doubts stirred by her sisters, who are jealous of her luxurious palace, and she approaches her mysterious lover with a lit lamp so as to see him. In her amazement at seeing the god of love next to her, she cannot prevent a drop of oil from touching Cupid's skin. Having broken her vow to Cupid, Psyche is left alone as he is forced to leave her. Now Psyche has to confront various challenges to regain her happiness (Apuleius 2013, Book V).

Thus, in the myth, Psyche, whose careless use of light and fire moulded her life, had to pay the toll for her actions. Having lost her loved one to her negligence and misdoing, Psyche was to undergo numerous torments. However, many centuries later, her Russian double, Glebova-Sudeikina, among millions of others, chose exile to facing the torments of post-Revolution Russia. The sacred candles are hardly burning in the Saint-Petersburg of 1940, as Akhmatova's lyrical "I" is one of only a few who are willing to embrace torment as a path to redemption.

"THE CITY IN FLAMES": PUNISHING AND REDEEMING FIRE

Fire possesses the ambiguous power to destroy and to create through destruction. It is this creative potential that Eliot and Akhmatova explore most deeply in *The Waste Land* and *Poem Without a Hero*.

Through images and direct references, the two poems recall the tragic destiny of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, devoured by sulphur and fire in punishment for the wickedness of their inhabitants (Genesis 18:20-21). Before the destruction, two angels come to Sodom in search of righteous people, but the only family welcoming the visitors is Lot's. In gratitude for their kindness, Lot, his wife, and children are told about the fate awaiting the sinful cities and instructed to leave their home without looking back. However, Lot's wife cannot abandon her native land like that; she turns to look at the city and is immediately turned into a pillar of salt.

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Eliot does not specifically mention Sodom and Gomorrah in *The Waste Land*, yet we can say that its image is implicit in the "Unreal City," a metaphor for the desolate desert of modernity. Indeed, its atmosphere of spiritual stagnation and demise of the modern citadel recalls the doomed Biblical cities. Eliot provides a precise map of the "Unreal City" and supplies a clear topography of London: the City, King William Street, Saint Mary Woolnoth and Saint Magnus Martyr Greenwich, the Isle of Dogs, the Thames from whose banks "the nymphs are departed" (Eliot 2015, 62), the Strand, Queen Victoria's Street, Lower Thames Street. His map is very precise, yet the Unreal city is also Dante's twelfth-century Florence, Dickens' nineteenth-century London and Baudelaire's nineteenth-century Paris. The concrete city is likened to other fallen citadels "Jerusalem, Athens Alexandria," the birthplace of ancient religions, as well as the modern metropolis "Vienna London / Unreal" (Eliot 2015, 69). London becomes an archetypal city of fallen towers.

On the contrary, Akhmatova's Saint-Petersburg is very realistic. Although it is peopled by inhabitants that are as phantasmagorical as in the unreal London, Saint-Petersburg and specifically Akhmatova's house, the Fountain House, remains almost photographically precise itself. However, like Eliot's London, Saint-Petersburg

is populated by trespassers: "Dostoevskian and possessed by demons, The city withdrew into its mist" / "Достоевский и бесноватый, Город в свой уходил туман" (Akhmatova 1990, 332). Virtually all of Dostoevsky's novels centre on the duality of human nature, body and spirit, and on the unending battle that unfolds between good and evil in the human soul. Although those who remain faithful to Christian values, like Alyosha Karamazov, are often laughed at, their spiritual antagonists, such as Ivan Karamazov, are eventually destroyed by their own crimes and moral struggles. Akhmatova's Saint-Petersburg appears synonymous with its inhabitants, and like them, the city has relinquished its spirit to spiritual hollowness: "And not becoming my grave, You, granite, infernal, dear to me, Grew pale, benumbed and still" (Akhmatova 2014, 575) / "А не ставший моей могилой, Ты, крамольный, опальный, милый, Побледнел, помертвел, затих" (Akhmatova 1994, 343).

Eliot shares Akhmatova's admiration for Dostoevsky, one of the most significant Russian writers and Christian thinkers. Eliot had read *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, and *The Brothers Karamazov* before completing *Prufrock* (1915), and repeatedly admitted that these three novels "made a very profound impression" on him (Eliot 2015, 374). This impression is reflected in "What the Thunder Said":

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you
> Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
> I do not know whether a man or a woman
> –But who is that on the other side of you? (Eliot 2015, 69)

Critics following Eliot's lead in his Notes have analysed his reference to the disciples encountering the resurrected Christ on their way to Emmaus and the poet's allusion to Shackleton's exploration of the South Pole. However, these lines are also reminiscent of the dialogue between Ivan Karamazov and Pavel Smerdyakov in *The Brothers Karamazov*: "'Who is he? Who is here? What third person?' 'The third is God himself –Providence'" (692). In the intense scene between Ivan, who is possessed by demons and talks with them, and Smerdyakov, the murderer of Ivan's father, the latter is forced to confess his sin. Smerdyakov, Ivan's illegitimate half-brother, is spiritually blind. While Ivan, through his conversations with the demons, is troubled by his materialism, Smerdyakov remains unrepentant to his death. However, even this inert soul yields to the invisible power that, in Eliot's words, "always walks beside you" (Eliot 2015, 69) and is compelled to admit his sin of parricide.

Moreover, the demise of the brothers Karamazov's world aligns with that of Eliot's wasteland, whose inhabitants are exiles:

> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation
> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth

Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air. (Eliot 2015, 69)

He refers to the exiles of the Russian Revolution, who, faceless, anonymous, "hooded," wander aimlessly along a "flat horizon" unaware of the transcendent dimension of life. Eliot's note to this line mentions Herman Hesse's collection of essays *A Glimpse into Chaos* (1920) and refers to Hesse's interpretation of Dostoevsky's novel, "The Brothers Karamazov and the Downfall of Europe" (2015, 76). In this text, Hesse describes Europe as being in a state of "drunken illusion" singing a "drunken hymn," which makes the ordinary man laugh and the saint cry (Hesse 1922). Hesse predicts that the downfall of Europe will originate in Asian culture, such as the Russian. When in *Poem Without a Hero*, Akhmatova witnesses the flames of sins consuming her Saint-Petersburg, she looks at the same flames that are to devour Europe in Eliot's poem.

For Akhmatova, the story of Sodom and Gomorrah is a recurring motif. In another of her later poems, "Lot's wife," the poet praises the woman's unwillingness to leave her homeland without ever looking back despite the high price she has to pay for it. Akhmatova too refused to abandon her native Russia and, as is evident in the *Poem*, felt compelled to face her past and, by doing so, the past of the whole nation in order to shape a different, better future.

In *Poem Without a Hero*, the reference to the Biblical story of Sodom and Gomorrah is most evident in the line "Death everywhere –the city in flames" (Akhmatova 2014, 585) / "смерть повсюду –город в огне" (Akhmatova 1990, 338), which belongs to the second part of the poem, "The Other Side of the Coin." Strikingly, the following line reads "And Tashkent in wedding bloom (Akhmatova 2014, 585) / "И Ташкент в цвету подвенечном" (Akhmatova 1990, 338), referring to the fire's rituality. As at the beginning of the poetic journey, fire is to bring about the ceremonial celebration of a sacred union. The "wedding bloom" thus becomes a logical successor of the "city in flames" refined in the heat.

Through the image of the Biblical tragedy, Akhmatova brings witness to the silenced crimes of the Stalinist regime. In the prefatory note to her arguably most known poem, *Requiem*, the poet recalls:

> I spent seventeen months in the prison lines of Leningrad. Once, someone 'recognized' me. Then a woman with blueish lips standing behind me, who, of course, had never heard of me before, woke up from the stupor to which everyone had succumbed and whispered in my ear (everyone spoke in whispers there):
> 'Can you describe this?'
> And I answered: 'Yes, I can.'
> Then something that looked like a smile passed over what had once been her face. (Akhmatova 2014, 384)

Poem Without a Hero and *Requiem* share a thematic unity. Both address Stalinism, guilt and redemption, and both feature similar images, for instance, using Fountain House and Leningrad (former Saint-Petersburg) as their location,

evoking Christian symbolism, and personifying Russia as a woman in grief. However, *Requiem* remains one of the crucial testimonies of Stalinist terrors, while *Poem Without a Hero,* although a historical document, is concerned with the universal human condition caused by spiritual apathy. Akhmatova believed the two poems occupied different places in her legacy. From the beginning, *Poem Without a Hero* had been thought of as a crowning work, which was to consolidate Akhmatova's experiences and lessons learned in history. As such, it borrowed freely from Dante, Shakespeare, and Eliot, threading itself into the canvas of what Eliot defined as "tradition." In 1949, Boris Pasternak (1890-1960) was presented with Eliot's *Four Quartets* but soon saw that another level of proficiency in English was necessary to read the poem and gave it to Akhmatova (Chukovskaya 1994, vol II, 63). Perhaps, reading Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*, Akhmatova felt further compelled to provide her personal experience with a universal and atemporal dimension.

Eliot's poem strives for spiritual renewal. The poetic "I" sees the sterile, almost lifeless land, burnt-out and inhabited by people who have lost their souls along with their values. At this stage, water and life are only a promise, not a reality. "April is the cruellest month," and spring barely stirs "dull roots with spring rain" (Eliot 2015, 55). Akhmatova echoes Eliot in the *Poem*: "The one people call spring I call loneliness" (Akhmatova 2014, 546) / "ту, что зовут весной, одиночеством я зову" (Akhmatova 1990, 321). For a Christian, spring is a season of death and birth: as Easter approaches, Christ's trial and crucifixion are mourned while his resurrection is a matter of rejoicing. Both Akhmatova and Eliot portray a problematic spring, a mixture of death and birth, but their spring is not a facile jubilee of nature and of the spirit's renewal. Spring is "cruel," and it arrives to "dried tubers." Just as Christian mourning is accompanied by a silent faith in resurrection and redemption, there is hope for revivifying water. The thunder heard above the wasteland is a promise of fertilising faith falling on the scorched desert (Eliot 2015, 55). The voice of *The Waste Land*'s thunder is heard over Akhmatova's Fountain House too:

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> Didn't a shiver run through the rows,
> Like a premonition of dawn?
> And once more that familiar voice,
> Like mountain thunder echoing–
> Horror, death, forgiveness, love...
> Unlike anything else on earth,
> It floats like a god's messenger,
> Catching us again and again.
>
> Не предчувствием ли рассвета
> По рядам побежал озноб?
> И опять тот голос знакомый,
> Будто эхо горного грома,–
> Ужас, смерть, прощенье, любовь...
> Ни на что на земле не похожий,
> Он несется, как вестник Божий,
> Настигая нас вновь и вновь. (Akhmatova 1990, 329)

Akhmatova directly attributes this voice to God and invests thunder with divine attributes. Convinced that being a witness to some of history's most dramatic processes is an honour, she welcomes the horrible storm that is both to destroy and to liberate. The inevitability of the thunder which is "catching us again and again" is on a par with that of "horror" and "death" brought about by "love, betrayal and passion" (Akhmatova 2014, 575) in Part One. Amanda Haight, Akhmatova's first biographer, writes about the poet's belief that "it could be a privilege to be present at the Crucifixion." Not all, as she was to express in *Poem Without a Hero*, are lucky enough to be called poets of the True Twentieth Century (1976, 148). Bearing witness to history's calamities for Akhmatova meant the honour of having the power to give testimony that will outlive her and may contribute to shaping a different course of history.

Hope for renewal pervades the voices of *The Waste Land* and the *Poem*. The hope for a new era shines the brightest in Eliot's direct allusion to Dante, in the final section of *The Waste Land*: "*Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina*"[2] (Eliot 2015, 71). At the end of his arduous journey, Eliot recalls the words of Dante's poetic mentor, Arnaut Daniel, who willingly throws himself into the purifying fire in the *Purgatorio*.

Poem Without a Hero also seeks the refining power of fire and does find glimpses of it. In a room lit with sacred candles, Akhmatova's alter ego sees "a pure flame in a dish of clay" (Akhmatova 2014, 546) / "Словно в глине чистое пламя" (Akhmatova 1990, 321). A reference to Greek mythology, the line evokes the notion of creation that cannot be completed only by divine forces but requires human action too. In Greek mythology, fire is a prerogative of gods. Prometheus stole the fire and gave it to humans; although sentenced to eternal torture, Prometheus changed people's destiny, and they willingly took the chance to shape their own lives. After all, as Berdyaev writes in *Freedom and the Spirit*, "(man) moulds and creates himself in and through his experience of life, through spiritual conflict, and through various trials, which his destiny imposes upon him. Man is only what God is planning, a projected design" (1999, VII): just as clay needs firing, so does the human soul.

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CONCLUSION

E.M. Forster's definition of *The Waste Land* as "a poem of horror" (quoted in Schuchard 1999, 126) can easily be applied to Akhmatova's poem, written as a testimony to twentieth-century tragedies. Horrified at the physical and spiritual devastation they witnessed, Eliot and Akhmatova depict the tragic portrayal of the wasteland burnt out with the flames of materialism, which has left modernity almost deprived of meaning.

What hope can there be? Eliot and Akhmatova differ in their responses. In their metaphysical deserts, the poets observe flames, the old ones that have led to

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[2] In English: "Then he hid himself in the fire which refines him" (Dante 2008, 315).

destruction, and the new ones, which may convert ashes into fertile soil. *The Waste Land* ends with the revelation of the Word that can lead to spiritual rebirth. The fire has burnt out the land, leaving it dead, and despite the sound of water here and there, so far, life has not returned to the wasteland. Akhmatova too confronts the devastating flames not only with horror but also with gratitude, as they are to purify her sins and those of her generation. Like Eliot, she grieves for what is lost in the course of time, rushed by people who find no meaning in life. She is anguished at witnessing whole cities that are "dead," not only because of wars, but also because of the candlelight, which has become a vicious bonfire. The reason why Akhmatova and Eliot find consolation in such darkness is the belief in the redeeming power of faith, which grants them and their readers a hope for "thunder of spring over distant mountains" (Eliot 2015, 68).

After guiding their readers through the ruins of a modernity scorched by spiritual poverty, Eliot and Akhmatova will bring the readers to the poems' final sections, "The Epilogue" and "What Thunder Said." In *The Waste Land*, the rain falls in the form of the fable of Thunder, the revelation of the Word, DA, that can guide the individual to "Shanti shanti shanti." Akhmatova's regenerating water is frozen (Akhmatova 2014, 57), but this "frozen" hope is less distressing, as the Russia "recognizing the hour of vengeance" (Akhmatova 2014, 576) is certain to see the thaw, which comes even after the deadliest winter.

Reading *The Waste Land* alongside *Poem Without a Hero* demonstrates that in her last major poem, Akhmatova establishes a dialogue with Eliot, a poet whom she thought of as her soulmate. Unable to communicate with him in real life, she used the power of her talent to impress her work on European literary tradition. Through this dialogue, Akhmatova carries the redemptive fire of *The Waste Land* to any Sodom and Gomorrah, whether it be an unreal London or Dostoevskian Saint-Petersburg, thus universalising the spiritual quest of both T.S. Eliot and Akhmatova herself.

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ROMANTIC ELIOT: THE RECEPTION OF T.S. ELIOT IN SPAIN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Abstract

The article explores interpretations of T.S. Eliot by three Spanish poets: José Ángel Valente, Andrés Sánchez Robayna and Antonio Colinas. For them Eliot brought about the renewal of poetry in the early twentieth century. However, contrary to the popular view of Eliot as a Modernist who censured the late developments of Romanticism, Valente, Sánchez Robayna and Colinas regarded his poems as a continuation of Romanticism. The article considers the Spanish authors' essays by analyzing the way they created the figure of Eliot as an heir of Romanticism.

Keywords: José Ángel Valente, Andrés Sánchez Robayna, Antonio Colinas, Romanticism, Spanish poetry, renewal.

ELIOT ROMÁNTICO: LA RECEPCIÓN DE T.S. ELIOT EN ESPAÑA EN LA SEGUNDA MITAD DEL SIGLO XX

Resumen

El artículo analiza cómo tres autores españoles: José Ángel Valente, Andrés Sánchez Robayna y Antonio Colinas, han interpretado la obra de T.S. Eliot. Para estos poetas Eliot fue un revulsivo en la poesía de comienzos del siglo xx, pero, en contra de la idea más extendida según la cual Eliot era un autor vanguardista que rechazaba la poética romántica, Valente, Sánchez Robayna y Colinas lo leen como continuación del Romanticismo. El artículo estudia los ensayos de estos tres poetas españoles en la medida en que crean la figura de un Eliot romántico.

Palabras clave: José Ángel Valente, Andrés Sánchez Robayna, Antonio Colinas, Romanticismo, poesía española, renovación.

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The shadow of T.S. Eliot has loomed large over Spanish poetry[1], with generations of Spanish poets embracing him as their model. Nobel prize winner Juan Ramón Jiménez, who was closer to the Symbolist movement than the Modernists, nevertheless believed that his own poetry shared Eliot's Modernist concerns. Meanwhile the poets of the 1950s generation, such as Jaime Gil de Biedma and José Ángel Valente, regarded Eliot as the poet who had created the new poetic idiom of twentieth-century poetry.[2] The poets of the seventies, the *Novísimos*, also took him as their master, recognizing in Eliot the poet who renewed the worn-out poetic rhetoric of the end of the nineteenth century. Although Eliot was the master of impersonality and believed that poetic language had been rendered obsolete by the excessive sentimentalism of Romantic and Victorian rhetoric, strangely enough the Spanish poets writing in the second half of the twentieth century, while they differed greatly from his critique of the romantic tradition, considered him an heir of Romanticism.

If, in the first stage of his career, Eliot discussed the need to move beyond an exhausted Romantic aesthetic (Egri 1974, 13), the Spanish poets thought that looking back to the Romantic period would help restore new life to a poetry that had become drained of its essence. This new sensibility was provided by Eliot's Modernist poetics –which, however, the Spanish authors took out of the context in which it had been written, adapting it, against Eliot's doctrine, to their own aesthetic agenda.

In the first half of the twentieth century, Eliot was read as a Modernist poet who, despite his fame and prestige, was poorly understood in Spain. Indeed, *The Waste Land* was among the best appreciated of Eliot's writings by Spanish poets. In his pioneering study, *T.S. Eliot en España* (1996), Barón claims that Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1858), Federico García Lorca (1989-1936) and Luis Cernuda (1902-1963) took him to be a father figure who changed the language of modern poetry. He argues that the influence of *The Waste Land* is clearly discernible in Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* (1940) (Barón 1996, 19), as well as in Cernuda's "Lázaro" (1940) and "Otras ruinas" (1958) (Barón 1996, 46; 55-59). In the second half of the century, interest in *The Waste Land* was displaced by *Four Quartets*, a poem much more in line with the religious atmosphere prevalent in Spanish society after the Civil War.

In this aesthetic shift, poet José Antonio Muñoz Rojas's essay "Humillación y maestría en los poemas recientes de T.S. Eliot," published in the journal *Arbor* in 1950, played a central role. But Dámaso Alonso, too, maintained his enthusiasm for *The Waste Land*, as we can see in his 1944 collection *Hijos de la ira*.

In the fifties, Spanish poets who regarded Luis Cernuda (1902-1963) as their mentor also became interested in Eliot. As an exile of the Civil War, Cernuda lived in England and was an avid reader of English poets among whom, in his opinion, Eliot held a privileged position. By following Cernuda's literary tastes, Spanish

[1] See especially the studies of Barón 1996; Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 141-153; Maqueda Cuenca, 2002; Llorens-Cubedo, 2013.

[2] See especially Gruia 2008; Walsh 2003.

poets at home came, via Eliot's poems, into contact with the modernist sensibility. Cernuda set the model for Gil de Biedma (1929-1990) and José Angel Valente (1929-2001). However, following Cernuda's interpretation of Eliot's oeuvre, placing it in the Romantic tradition, Spanish poets interpreted Eliot's Modernist sensibility as a continuation of Romantic aesthetics.

In this article I will explore the literary essays of three Spanish poets, José Ángel Valente, Andrés Sánchez Robayna (1952) and Antonio Colinas (1946), investigate their assessment of Eliot's poetics, and analyze the ways in which they connect him to the Romantics.

It is a truism that Eliot developed his theory of impersonality as a reaction against the Romantic poets' exaltation of the self. While poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge produced verse that was largely centered on the poet's creation and contemplation of the world, Eliot regarded poetry as a means of writing about the world without the active and direct mediation of the Idealist self of the poet. Rather than viewing the world as a tabernacle for the poet's self, he preferred an indirect form of creation in which the poet looks into the world and discovers elements that can represent any emotion indirectly, as he theorized in this passage on the "objective correlative":

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion. (1932d, 125)

Similarly, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), he had pointed to the same idea: "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (1932e, 7). From these words, the reader may infer a total rejection of romantic poetics, although Eliot qualified these statements throughout his life. If, as George Bornstein argues, "Keats, Shelley and Wordsworth became a sort of anti-Trinity for Eliot" (1976, 101), after the 1930s Eliot may have appropriated the Keatsian image to recreate the interplay of reason and emotion he found in the Metaphysical poets (Baker 2003, 58-59). At the same time, Eliot's essay reinforced the historical sense of poetry, as Viorica Patea has argued (2016, 2). This historical sense figured preeminently in the Spanish authors' readings of Eliot's oeuvre in the second half of the twentieth century.

José Ángel Valente sought poetic models that would throw off the shackles of the rhetorical style of poetry that was dominant in Spain following the Civil War. The time Valente spent in Oxford between 1954 and 1958 opened the gates to a new arena of English literature, which until then he had hardly explored. He was stunned by the British Romantics and the Modernists. His interest in these poets had been dictated by Cernuda, then an exile in Mexico, who had read the English Romantics (Rivero Taravillo 2001, 55, 78-82) and had attended one of Eliot's lectures in Glasgow (91). In his British exile Cernuda came to realize Eliot's central role in poetry (111, 126). In his essay "Luis Cernuda y la poesía de la meditación," Valente explores his indebtedness to Cernuda by analysing the importance that the poetry of meditation had for his older colleague. Valente argues that the tradition

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of meditative poetry connects early practitioners such as the English Metaphysical poets with William Blake, William Wordsworth, T.S. Eliot, Emily Dickinson and William B. Yeats (Valente 2008b, 138-140). Valente makes reference to Louis Martz's famous *The Poetry of Meditation* (1954), in which the American scholar analysed the influence of religious meditation in the English poetry of the seventeenth century. Valente points out that the core of meditative practice is the combination of mental analysis with the affective will, a union that in the end results in "that particular blend of passion and feeling" (2008b, 139)[3] to paraphrase Eliot's argument, that, for the Metaphysical poets, thought and feeling were not different species of experience (Eliot 1932a, 247-248).

Eliot's theory of imagination starts with recognizing a dissociation between thought and feeling in the post-seventeenth century sensibility. He acknowledges that for Donne a "thought was an experience; it modified his sensibility" (1932a, 247). With a few exceptions, writers only meditated on the topics poetically, but never achieved the creation of a "verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling" (1932a, 248). However, Eliot "conceived of aesthetic creation as a transforming, unifying process between polarizing realities –feeling and thought" (Patea 2011, 26).

Though Eliot reveals the gap between the Metaphysical poets and Victorians such as Alfred Tennyson or Robert Browning, who do not maintain the unity of thought and feeling, Valente does not seem to take into account the nuance that Eliot refers to in his essay. He rather looks towards the Spanish literary tradition to find modern examples of poetry in which thought and feeling are in unison. He finds a precursor in Miguel de Unamuno (1864-1936), who famously wrote: "Think your feelings, feel your thoughts"[4] (Unamuno 1969, 168). However, when Unamuno expressed his poetic creed, he likened it to that of the English Romantic poets, Wordsworth and Coleridge in particular (Perojo Arronte 2007, 167-174). Valente recognizes the coherence that underlies Eliot's analysis of the Metaphysical poets and, due to his own interpretation of Martz's book, sees Unamuno's poetic doctrine as largely dependent on the Romantics. Valente argues that meditation was destined to create a spiritual mood that does not differ from that described by Coleridge when he theorized on the imagination. In his essay Valente quotes Cernuda's paraphrasis of the excerpt from *Biographia Literaria*, in which Coleridge explains the esemplastic imagination. For Valente that esemplastic power is the culmination of the contemplative process, in which the senses and the interior powers of the soul become one (Valente 2008b, 140); although Eliot was referring, rather, to the union of thoughts and feelings.

Valente reads Coleridge, Unamuno, Eliot and Cernuda creatively, and establishes a kinship between them. He uses Martz's analysis of the meditative tradition in poetry to create subtle links. However, by basing his argument on Unamuno's

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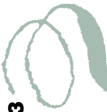
[3] The Spanish original reads: "esa 'mezcla particular de pasión y sentimiento'." Translations are mine.

[4] The Spanish original reads: "Piensa el sentimiento, siente el pensamiento."

ars poetica and applying it to the Romantic poets, Valente in fact disavows Eliot's critique of Romantic aesthetics. Perhaps following his readings of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Valente thought that there was a tradition of poetry stretching from the Romantics to the Symbolists and the Modernists, so that Coleridge and Eliot could be included within the same group. The only difference was that in his view Eliot was a Romantic of the second wave alongside Charles Baudelaire, Arthur Rimbaud, Juan Ramón Jiménez, Paul Valéry and Rainer Maria Rilke, among others (Valente 2008a, 96). For Valente, Unamuno's and Eliot's poetics aimed to achieve a unified sensibility in which feeling and thought are recovered and bound together. Precisely because Valente shared Eliot's notions of the dynamics between "tradition" on the one hand, and "the individual talent" on the other, he conceived Modernism as a continuation of Romanticism, one more phase of a never-ending tradition. This is not to say that Valente did not appreciate Eliot's revolution in poetry, rather that he was concerned to explain Cernuda's shift from his early Surrealist verse to his mature poetry of exile, in which the Romantic imprint is present (Perojo Arronte 2007, 174-180), while recognising Cernuda as a modern poet on whom Eliot's influence was clear (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 146-147). Valente built an argument that made the poetic movements, despite the harsh criticism Eliot had expressed of the Romantics, congenial to one another.

In Andrés Sánchez Robayna's essays on poetry, Eliot figures only discreetly. Robayna views Eliot as a poet in whose poetics thought is central, in a way that goes back to the tradition of Dante, Novalis and S.T. Coleridge (Sánchez Robayna 1999, 189). The essay, "Poesía y poética," was originally a lecture delivered at the University of Texas, Austin, in 1984, and it is a *biographia literaria*, in which the Spaniard reviews the most important moments and literary discoveries of his early formative period. His readings during these years gravitated towards, among others, Stéphane Mallármé, Octavio Paz, José Lezama Lima, Giuseppe Ungaretti and Wallace Stevens, whom he also translated. His poetics was built on the importance of the poetic word, and on a poetry reduced to its most essential elements (López Fernández 2000). In this lecture Sánchez Robayna merges the idea of the poet-critic and of the poet-philosopher. For him Dante and Novalis, who did not theorize any poetics, can be equated with Coleridge, Eliot and Paz, who developed influential careers as essayists. Robayna's misunderstanding arises both from his reading of Eliot's essays and from his reading of the Romantic poets.

Eliot did devote several essays to the critical process. In "The Function of Criticism" (1923) he asserts: "The critical activity finds its highest, its true fulfillment in a kind of union with creation in the labor of the artist" (1932b, 19), which conforms to the common idea that, starting with Romanticism, literature was both an act of creation and of literary theory. As for Dante, Eliot stresses the importance of the theological thought underlying Dante's *Divine Comedy*. There he sees a distinction between "philosophical *belief* and poetic *assent*" (1932c, 218), a difference which makes Dante's poetry and philosophy two distinct entities, but which also secularizes the theological doctrine present in the poem, turning it ultimately into a matter merely of intellectual pursuit.



As for the Romantic poets, Robayna argues that in the Romantic period there was a renewed union of poetry and thought. As he wrote in "Juan Ramón Jiménez en la perspectiva del fin de siglo," one key literary current is that of the philosophical musing, analyzed by Friedrich Schlegel in Novalis's work (2008a, 50). In his essay "Poesía y pensamiento," a lecture originally delivered in 2006, Sánchez Robayna explores in greater depth his idea of a philosophical poetry, following Valente's essay "Luis Cernuda y la poesía de la meditación"; the analogical thought that, for Eliot, characterizes the Metaphysical poets is also a central feature of Romantic poetry. Sánchez Robayna mentions Novalis, Giaccommo Leopardi and Wordsworth, who perceived that such a reflection established a tight bind between thought and poetry (2008b, 318-319). Sánchez Robayna moves beyond Valente's analysis of the tradition of Cernuda's meditative poetry to examine the critical task this poetry carries out. What Eliot called "a direct sensous apprehension of thought" (Eliot 1932a, 246) is close to Sánchez Robayna's integration of metaphor and image, imagination and perception, materiality and the sense of the word (Sánchez Robayna 2008b, 327), which is a way of describing what he calls philosophical poetry, a concept in line with María Zambrano's notion of poetic reason.

Sánchez Robayna acknowledges that Eliot's poetic credo, formulated in his widely read essays on the Metaphysical poets, is central to the connection between poetry and philosophy. Nevertheless, he also grants that the poetics of Symbolism, a direct heir of Romanticism, had opened up a similar avenue of investigation into the consubstantiality of poetry and philosophy (2008b, 327-328). In his memorable essay "Juan Ramón Jiménez en la perspectiva de fin de siglo," (1998), Sánchez Robayna denies the influence on Eliot of the French Symbolist poets such as Jules Laforgue. Furthermore, Sánchez Robayna –who bases his argument on Valente's exploration of Eliot's influence on Cernuda's poetry– attributes the connection between Romanticism and Eliot to the latter's conception of the unity between poetry and philosophy. Sánchez Robayna argues that the English poets of the seventeenth century prefigured the romantic sensibility, and supports his case by exposing the analogy to romantic philosophical poetry which Eliot continued in his verse.

Eliot was one of the poets whom the Spanish poets who began publishing at the beginning of the 1970s read as a path to a renewal of Spanish poetry in the last quarter of the twentieth century. In the anthology *Nueve novísmos poetas españoles* (1970), edited by José María Castellet, the poets included mention Eliot as a poet central to their poetics. Castellet himself acknowledges the Novísmos's indebtedness to Eliot: "Thus, their masters are Eliot, Pound, Saint-John Perse, Yeats, Wallace Stevens, the French Surrealists, etc."[5] (2001, 39). When writing about his literary

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[5] The Spanish original reads: "Así, resultan ser sus maestros Eliot, Pound, Saint-John Perse, Yeats, Wallace Stevens, los surrealistas franceses, etc."

models, poet Antonio Martínez Sarrión (b. 1939) says: "In my particular case, I think an echo of the first Eliot is visible in my poems"[6] (2001, 89).

Félix de Azúa (b. 1944) mentions Eliot when he examines the lack of importance that political ideas may have in a poem (2001, 135). Two decades later de Azúa would return to Eliot. In one brief essay he analyses the popularity the Anglo-American poet enjoys in England. In his opinion, Eliot is a foreign cultural critic who taught the British the importance of culture (1998, 193-195) and, in "Nuevas lecturas compulsivas," Azúa discusses Andreu Jaume's translation of *The Waste Land*.

The poet Pere Gimferrer (b. 1945) describes his formative readings and mentions Eliot's and Pound's poetry (2001, 152). José María Álvarez (b. 1942) maintains that Eliot was one of the models that the Novisimos adopted in their effort to renew Spanish poetry: "We said: our inheritance is not the one that has been accepted by the Spanish poets for so long. And we fortified ourselves in Eliot, in Pound, in Kavafis, in Rimbaud, in Baudelaire"[7] (2001, 54).

Other poets, such as Marcos Ricardo Barnatán, Luis Antonio de Villena and Luis Alberto de Cuenca, were not strictly regarded as *Novísimos*. Nonetheless they also acknowledged Eliot's importance. Barnatán (b. 1946), for example, produced a poem to illustrate his poetics that includes as a preliminary quotation line 405 from *The Waste Land* –"By this, and this only, we have existed" (Barnatán 1985, 205)–. This incomplete list of names and quotations is intended only to show the number of poets who directly mentioned Eliot in their poetics, a fact that underlines Eliot's popularity in Spain during the 1970s.

Antonio Colinas's critical appreciation of Eliot is somewhat different to that of the *Novísimos*. While the latter regards Eliot as a Modernist poet, Colinas realizes that there is a thread that leads from the Romantics to Eliot. Colinas published his first book of poems in 1967, but was not regarded as a true *Novísimo* despite the fact that his poetics is based on tenets similar to theirs, i.e. linguistic renewal and use of cultural references such as allusions to the Renaissance, Venice and Mediterranean cultures, and any other period of the past that might serve as an emblem of literacy and beauty, as exemplified in a large number of the poems collected in *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (1975). In Colinas's poetics, Romanticism figures as a central movement in European civilization, a theme which runs through his essays "El romanticismo que surgió de la metrópoli" (2008a) and "El infinito en Leopardi y el infinito poético" (2008b), as well as poems such as "Novalis" and "Noviembre en Inglaterra" from *Sepulcro en Tarquinia* (2011).

While for Valente and Sánchez Robayna the tradition of meditative poetry led from Cernuda's view of the Romantics to their view of Eliot as heir to Romanticism, Colinas is not interested in the relationship between Romantic

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[6] The Spanish original reads: "En mi caso particular tengo que hablar, creo que es visible en mis poemas, del eco del primer Eliot."

[7] The Spanish original reads: "Dijimos: nuestra herencia no es la que han venido aceptando los poetas españoles desde hace tanto. Y nos fortificamos en Eliot, en Pound, en Kavafis, en Rimbaud, en Baudelaire."

philosophical poetry and Eliot's verse. He develops his understanding of Romanticism from an international perspective which is indirectly linked to his conception of the Mediterranean sea as the origin of an important civilization. For Colinas, Romanticism is not only associated with a historical period; it is, rather, a moment in which people attempt to achieve a type of knowledge that encompasses visible and transcendental reality (2008a, 111-112). For Colinas, the Romantics and their heirs sought to achieve a sense of wholeness, and this is indeed illustrated by the transcendental Idealism that bloomed in Germany at the end of the eighteenth century (117-118). Colinas places art at the center of his theory on Romantic absolute knowledge (2008a, 116), and indeed Colinas's idea of the function of art shows a clear affinity with the role of art as conceived during the Romantic period. He paraphrases John Keats on the purpose of art, which is to free man from worries and to elevate his thoughts (2008a, 117). The only significant difference between thought, i.e. Idealist philosophy, and poetry is that philosophical thought belongs to the realm of reason, while the poetic word is in harmony with music (2008a, 119).

The renewal of poetry that Colinas regarded as necessary in the 1970s was also a rejection of the previous Spanish poetic movement, which maintained that poetry was primarily a means of communication, in detriment to the importance that poetic language had in the creative process (Benéitez Andrés, 2019). Colinas argued that poetry is a form of knowledge that interprets reality (2008c, 136). There is an obvious connection with his interpretation of the role of art in society, an interpretation that is largely dependent on the role the Romantics attributed to art, and Eliot's view of poetry as expressed in *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933). In his introduction Eliot does not really accept the notion of poetry as communication. He writes: "If poetry is a form of 'communication', yet that which is to be communicated is the poem itself" (1933, 30). The poem is self-sufficient in itself and requires neither experience nor the reader to attain any sort of completeness. This self-sufficiency is provided by the relationship between the writer and the reader; for Eliot, this creates a transcendent poetic realm that approximates poetry to religion and that, for Colinas, takes the form of the quest for absolute knowledge which he discussed in several essays. Similarly, Colinas argues that the poet metamorphoses reality by means of language to present the world wisely and perennially. There exists the same transcendent urge in Colinas's use of poetry as there is in Eliot's *Four Quartets*, particularly in "East Coker."

In any case, the renewal of poetry for Colinas was achieved by a new conception of the poetic word, as he expounds in "Nuevas notas para una Poética," originally delivered as a lecture in 2004. Poetic language is based on the intensity and condensation that Pound claimed was necessary, and is achieved, as Unamuno had stated, by the union of feelings and thought (2008c, 137). Colinas quotes Unamuno's dictum in summarizing the characteristics of poetic language: it moves the reader, it is intense, it is pure and it has rhythm (2008c, 141). By writing that poetic thought must lie behind the poet's work (2008c, 142), Colinas made reference to Eliot in the essay a few paragraphs later, suggesting that he regarded Eliot as a poet with whom he shares this poetic conception.

Though Colinas does not mention the visual imagination Eliot explored in his essay on Dante (1932c, 204), this type of imagination is present in the poems of *Sepulcro en Tarquinia*, for example in “Simonetta Vespucci”:

> Simonetta Vespucci:
> For your two green eyes
> Sandro Botticelli,
> Has taken you out of the sea,
> And for your long plaits,
> And for your long thighs (2011, 155)[8]

This use of the visual image in Colinas’s poetry might bring to mind the notion of the objective correlative, “a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion,” as Eliot theorized it in “Hamlet and His Problems” (1932d, 124-125). The visual imagination allows Colinas to reconcile the tenets of modern poetry, as exemplified by Eliot’s verse, with his own poetics, which is largely reliant on a personal reading of Romanticism (Baker 2003).

Another remarkable point of union between Eliot and Colinas is their use of a language that moves towards its purest expression. In his early years, Eliot’s poetical stance was close to Imagism. Poetic language had to be stripped of everything that was surplus, a tenet to which Colinas also subscribes when he discusses Pound’s excisions to *The Waste Land*. The deletion of excerpts that were not necessary for the poem was an exercise in creative liberty (2008c, 145). Much more important is the reduction of poetic language to its essentials: “as years pass by, the poet thins his language, simplifies it, reduces it”[9] (2008c, 143). Both Eliot and Colinas moved from a poetry based on the image, exemplified by “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and “Sepulcro en Tarquinia,” to the concise and meditative poetry of *Four Quartets* and *Desiertos de la luz* (2008). Eliot’s affective and austere language also helps us understand Colinas’ interest in the American poet. Eliot’s shift in *Four Quartets* towards humility and his later disregard of the Modernist irony present in *The Waste Land* give rise to a poetic language in which affect, even if it is restrained, is nonetheless present (Moses 2005). This shift from Modernist irony to affect is a consequence of Eliot’s later nuanced reading of the Romantics (Egri 1974, 15). Eliot may not have expressed it directly in his poetry, but there is little doubt that Colinas realized that the Modernist sensibility was replaced by a Romantic-like sensibility and language in Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. This would interest Colinas as a way of merging modern sensibility and Romantic aesthetics.

In the second half of the twentieth century, T.S Eliot was read in Spain as an heir of the Romantics due to Valente’s readings of Eliot’s criticism that go back to

[8] The Spanish original reads: “Simonetta Vespucci: / por tus dos ojos verdes / Sandro Botticelli / te ha sacado del mar, / y por tus trenzas largas, / y por tus largos muslos.”

[9] The Spanish original reads: “cuando avanza en años el poeta va adelgazando su lenguaje, lo simplifica, lo reduce.”

Cernuda. Following Valente's reading, Sánchez Robayna read Eliot as a Modernist and kinsman of the Romantics. Finally, Colinas saw Eliot as a renewer of poetry who maintained an indirect link with the Romantic poets, with both writers rooting poetic expression in the unity between thought and feeling. All in all, Eliot was read as another link in the poetic tradition, much in the sense he himself had theorized in "Tradition and the Individual Talent"; though for the Spanish poets, Modernism was interpreted as a development of Romanticism, rather than as a new movement that criticized and opposed it. This explains why *The Waste Land* did not figure prominently among the readings of the Spanish poets after the 1940s, while *Four Quartets* became the poem most quoted from and cited by Spanish authors during the second half of the twentieth century.

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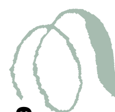

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THE WASTE LAND IN SPANISH A HUNDRED YEARS LATER: THE CASE OF CLAUDIO RODRÍGUEZ*

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Abstract

This article explores Claudio Rodríguez's approach to Eliot's poetry through his unpublished translation of *The Waste Land*. It also considers Rodríguez's translation work within the wider context of Eliot's influence on Spanish poets during the twentieth century, an influence deriving largely from the repeated translations of *The Waste Land*. Unlike other renowned Spanish poets from the 1950s, my study tackles the significance of Rodríguez's contribution to the translations of Eliot into Spanish by focusing on his initial reluctance to undertake the task and on the conceptual divergence he felt vis a vis the Anglo-American poet's poetic principles.

Keywords: Spanish translations of *The Waste Land*, Eliot's influence on twentieth-century Spanish poets, Claudio Rodríguez, conceptual divergence.

THE WASTE LAND EN ESPAÑOL CIEN AÑOS DESPUÉS: EL CASO DE CLAUDIO RODRÍGUEZ

Resumen

Este artículo explora el acercamiento de Claudio Rodríguez a la poesía de Eliot a través de sus traducciones inéditas, entre las que se encuentra la de *The Waste Land*. Concretamente, aborda el trabajo de traducción de Claudio Rodríguez dentro del contexto más amplio de la influencia de Eliot sobre los poetas españoles durante el siglo xx a raíz de las constantes traducciones de *The Waste Land*. Además, y a diferencia de otros poetas renombrados de los 50, Claudio Rodríguez se acerca a Eliot no por admiración sino por una divergencia conceptual de los principios poéticos del angloamericano.

Palabras clave: traducciones al español de *The Waste Land*, influencia de Eliot en los poetas españoles del siglo xx, Claudio Rodríguez, divergencia conceptual.

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No other contemporary poem has been translated into Spanish as often as *The Waste Land,* a fact that illustrates the consolidation of Eliot's international influence in Spain and in Spanish-speaking countries (Barón 1996). The Puerto-Rican Ángel Flores and the Mexican Enrique Munguía were the pioneering translators of this enduring poem, while an anonymous fragment of "The Fire Sermon," translated into Catalan and attributed to Marià Manent, was also published in 1927 (Young 1993). Flores and Munguía published their respective versions as early as 1930, after a detailed epistolary interchange with Eliot (Garbisu 2017). With all their deficiencies, these early renderings, respectively entitled *La tierra baldía* and *El páramo,* produced a revolution in the realm of Spanish poetry, one comparable only to Rubén Darío's inauguration of *Modernismo* in its Hispanic version at the turn of the nineteenth century.[1]

The long road from those tentative beginnings to the most recent versions of *The Waste Land*, published in Spain by Andreu Jaume (2015), Caballero Cebrián (2017), José Luis Rey (2017), and Luis Sanz Irles (2020), together with partial renderings such as Jordi Doce's "El entierro de los muertos" (2018), is marked by an overwhelmingly wide range of new translations. Among these, we find a multitude of versions translated by poets and/or scholars, published by prestigious presses in bilingual editions or in Spanish, with critical introductions and profuse annotations, or modestly included in small magazines, fanzines, and in the most varied written and online media. The poem appeals to both highbrow and lowbrow poetry readers, including counter-cultural movements. In the twenty-first century, and beyond Spanish frontiers, *The Waste Land* has become a motif of graphic novels and films, as well as a constant reference for many artistic treatments of war, ecology, and dystopias.

As early as 1989, academics such as Bernd Dietz and Luisa Fernanda Rodríguez undertook a study of the existing translations. Among these, literary critic and scholar Teresa Gibert carried out an exhaustive comparative textual analysis of the ten best-known versions of *The Waste Land* in Spanish available over six decades, starting with Flores's and Munguía's.[2] In her study, Gibert appropriately compares

* The author would like to thank the *Seminario Permanente Claudio Rodríguez* and the Claudio Rodríguez archive from the *Fundación Jorge Guillén* for their invaluable help, and especially Miguel Casaseca and Marta Valsero. I am equally indebted to Claudio Rodríguez's widow, Clara Miranda, for her permission to reproduce documents from the archive. The research resulting in this article relates to the project "T.S. Eliot's Drama from Spain: Translation, Critical Study, Performance (TEATREL-SP)," funded by the Spanish Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades and by the European Regional Development Fund (PGC2018-097143-A-I00).

[1] Spanish *Modernismo* derives from nineteenth-century symbolism and does not exactly coincide in dates or aesthetic purposes with Anglo-American Modernism, although its conception of art has a cosmopolitan and experimentalist vocation which it shares with the Anglo-American avantgarde.

[2] Among these studies, Bernd Dietz's and Gibert's stand out. She focuses on the best-known full translations of the poem by Manent, Aguirre and Valverde, among many others. There are other interesting complete translations, such as José María Álvarez's –a major poet from the *Novísimos*

translation preferences, confirming the difficulty, given the wide diversity of possible choices, of finding a definitive version for this monumental poem. In fact, the *tour de force* that Spanish translators have undertaken over decades with *The Waste Land* echoes that of their counterparts in other European countries (Barón 1996) and underlines the difficulties of translating avant-garde poetry into Spanish (Gallego Roca 2001).

Eliot's permanent allure has crystalized over decades into varied, even opposing views and appropriations of his oeuvre by Spanish poets and translators. Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan contends that Eliot's poetic and critical writings brought about the renewal of Spanish poetry, similar only to the revolution caused by the influence of French literature in the nineteenth century: "Through Eliot's example, Spanish poets realized that the use of a narrative mode opened up the possibility of a philosophical poetry, which was meditative rather than traditionally lyrical, and written in a lower linguistic key" (2007, 141).

This study does not aim to provide an exhaustive account of Eliot's influence on Spanish poets to the present day, but to specifically analyze Claudio Rodríguez's relationship with Eliot's oeuvre. Nevertheless, before focusing on Rodríguez's reception and translation of *The Waste Land*, I will offer a general overview of the Spanish poets of differing generations who have affinities with Eliotian poetics.[3]

Contemporary to Eliot, 1956 Nobel-prize poet Juan Ramón Jiménez (1881-1958) is a fundamental figure in Spanish letters, one whose bearing upon later generations has never waned. Jiménez began his poetic career under the aegis of *Modernismo*, a movement characterized by an aesthetic of escape from reality into dream states, the cultivation of nostalgic landscapes, and sensual rhythms and sounds. His poetic evolved later towards a terse, austere expression that relied on a highly intellectualized idiom. He finally founded a poetic language and a style of his own that left its imprint on most twentieth-century Spanish poets. Despite his scant knowledge of English, Juan Ramón Jiménez tried his hand at translating Eliot and Pound in the 1930s (2006), with a view to introducing new foreign influences into Spanish poetry.[4] Furthermore, in his move towards a poetry of intellectual abstraction, away from the lyrical effusiveness of his beginnings, Jiménez saw himself –in purpose, content and mode of expression– as akin to Eliot (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 143).

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Generation– published in the poetry magazine *Barcarola* in 1987, which he entitled *El yermo*, later reprinted as *Tierra asolada* in *Renacimiento: revista de literatura* (2008).

[3] For a closer account of Eliot's influence on Spanish poets, see especially Fernando Ortiz (1985), Emilio Barón (1996), Eugenio Maqueda (2003), Howard Young (1993), and Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan (2007), among others.

[4] More specifically, Jiménez translated "Marina," "La Figlia che Piange" and some fragments from *Ash Wednesday* into prose. Always in collaboration with his multilingual wife, Zenobia Camprubí, he translated other English-speaking poets such as Robert Browning, William Blake, Emily Dickinson, W.B. Yeats, and Ezra Pound.

Not unlike Jiménez, the 1927 Generation poets, also called *The Silver Generation* –Federico García Lorca, Rafael Alberti, Jorge Guillén, Dámaso Alonso, Vicente Aleixandre, Luis Cernuda, Pedro Salinas and Miguel Hernández, among others– hailed Eliot's avant-garde poetry and reinforced the social and cultural role assigned to the poet and critic (Rosell 2009, 83). These poets, strongly influenced by contemporary foreign aesthetics, changed the language of Spanish poetry, combining popular traditions with experimental verse of an irrational, surrealist bent. A case in point was Luis Cernuda, who exiled himself to the UK, lectured at Cambridge University, and later emigrated to the US, where he taught at Mount Holyoke and Amherst College. Cernuda's knowledge of Anglo-American poetry was thorough, and in 1958 he published in Mexico the study *Pensamiento poético en la lírica inglesa del siglo XIX*, still a key reference in English studies. As in the case of Jiménez, Cernuda adopted Eliot's philosophical and impersonal poetics, rejecting the pervasive and emotional rhetoric that had cluttered Spanish poetry prior to the cultural innovations of the 1920s (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 147).

Spanish poetry following the Civil War (1936-1939) is divided into poets who went into exile –Juan Ramón Jiménez, Luis Cernuda, León Felipe, and most of the 1927 Generation– and those who remained in Spain, among whom Luis Rosales stands out (1920-1992), followed by Luis Felipe Vivancos, Leopoldo Panero, and Dionisio Ridruejo. These poets entered the post-war era with a poetic style modelled on classical traditions from the Renaissance and the Spanish *Golden Age.* They followed in the footsteps of the sixteenth-century sonneteer Garcilaso de la Vega and sometimes conveyed nostalgic views of Spain's glorious past. From the 1940s, other key poets, such as Blas de Otero (1926-1979) and Gabriel Celaya (1911-1991), introduced what is now known as "social poetry," a combination of popular rhythms and direct speech through which they denounced political and economic injustice. These poets served as the closest model for the generation of the 1950s. Moreover, those 1927 poets who did not go into exile, such as Dámaso Alonso (1898-1990) and Vicente Aleixandre (1898-1984) –both still active and highly influential during the 1940s– together with Carlos Bousoño and Eugenio de Nora, and others –opted for an existentialist *poesía del desarraigo* ("poetry of uprootedness") based on surrealist visions and an irrational use of language. All of these trends paved the way for the following generations, whose affinities with Eliot's poetry and thought were to be intensified.

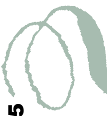
The most significant postwar literary movement, made up of both poets and novelists, was in effect the Generation of the 1950s, some of whose members were also active in the 1960s. As children of the Spanish Civil War, the poets of this generation –Jaime Gil de Biedma, José Ángel Valente, Francisco Brines, Claudio Rodríguez, Ángel González, José Agustín Goytisolo, José Hierro, Antonio Gamoneda, and others– cultivated a more subversive personal style, perhaps lacking the religious connotations of some of their predecessors, but not impervious to the social realities of their time and the quest for the spiritual. They proposed a poetic language of visionary, cryptic and metaphysical tones, often blended with colloquial or anti-rhetorical strategies from everyday experience. They also showed clear connections with the avant-garde of the 1930's.

Thanks to the "Colección Adonais" in Rialp Editions, founded in 1943 by Juan Guerrero Ruiz, many of the poets coming of age in the '40s and the '50s who belonged to different poetic movements could read T.S. Eliot and other foreign poets in translation (Guillén Acosta 2016). Among these, the most enthusiastically Eliotian figure was probably Jaime Gil de Biedma (1929-1990), who was indebted to *The Waste Land* as well as to Eliot's criticism (1980). Likewise, poet and translator José Angel Valente (1929-2000) made Eliot (1953) the focus of some of his key criticism (Peinado Elliot 2003; Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 1995). Together with Biedma and Valente, Claudio Rodríguez (1934-1999), who also belonged to the Generation of the 1950s, approached the poetry of T.S. Eliot from a singular viewpoint.

The most enthusiastically Eliotian movement of the 1970s was the *Novísimos* Generation, a group that comprises poets still active today, such as Pere Gimferrer, Antonio Colinas, Luis Alberto de Cuenca, Jaime Siles –the author of the most recent essay about Eliot and Spain (2021)– Luis Antonio de Villena, and José María Álvarez. They turn to popular culture for inspiration and are deeply knowledgeable about foreign poetry; besides Eliot, they admire Pound, Constantine Cafavis, Arthur Rimbaud, and Stéphane Mallarmé. Unlike their predecessors, the *Novísimos* read Eliot "as a poet whose work blended high and low culture and whose literary achievements they could use within the context of a pop worldview" (Rodríguez Guerrero-Strachan 2007, 151).

Claudio Rodríguez was born in 1934 in the small rural town of Zamora, whose landscape and people remained a constant presence in his poetry. He studied Philosophy and Literature at the University of Madrid, where he lived with his wife, Clara Miranda, for most of his life. Having published only five volumes of poetry, he is now considered one of the most prominent names of the second half of the twentieth century. A precocious poet, in 1953 Claudio Rodríguez obtained the prestigious literary award *Adonáis* for his visionary book of Rilkeian inspiration *Don de la ebriedad* ['Gift of Inebriation']; throughout his life he was to receive many important awards, such as the *Premio Nacional de Poesía* (1983), *Premio Príncipe de Asturias de las Letras* (1993) and *Premio Reina Sofía de Poesía Iberoamericana* (1995). In 2008, Shearsman Press published all his poetry collections, translated by Luis Ingelmo and Michael Smith. Anglo-American Hispanists such as Philip Silver, Louis Bourne and Michael Mudrovic –whose comprehensive study of Rodríguez's oeuvre *The Transgressive Poetics of Claudio Rodríguez* (1999) has not to date been surpassed– have paid close attention to his poetry. However, with the exceptions of Dionisio Cañas (1988), Antonio Rivero Taravillo (2018), and Luis Ingelmo (2018), Claudio Rodríguez's facet as a translator of Eliot is scarcely mentioned within the extensive critical corpus devoted to his work.

Although Claudio Rodríguez belongs to the generation of the 1950s, the recognizable influences on his own poetry have always been a matter of debate. This is basically due to the originality of Rodríguez's poetry, which remains unparalleled in the history of Spanish literature (Sánchez Santiago 2006). In fact, the unique quality in Rodríguez's poetry has been partly attributed to his constant reading of English poets at a time when very few Spanish poets were reading English (Doce 2007). Especially in his two first books, *Don de la ebriedad* (1953) and *Conjuros*



["Conjurings"] (1958), Rodríguez's visionary impulse and hymnic expression, as well as his treatment of nature, bear the imprint of such English poets as William Blake, William Wordsworth, and Dylan Thomas.[5]

Claudio Rodríguez lectured at the University of Nottingham between 1958 and 1960, and at Cambridge University from 1960 to 1964. During those years, he became a close friend of his fellow-poet Francisco Brines, who lectured at Oxford and who also came under the influence of English poetry in general, and of Eliot in particular. Rodríguez read English poetry thoroughly, mostly Shakespeare, the Romantic and the Metaphysical Poets, and he maintained a keen interest in the poetry of Gerard Manley Hopkins (Carbajosa 2009). English poetry "influenced the rigor of my poetic construction, and my access to the poem," he affirmed in a 1971 interview with Federico Campbell (Yubero 2004, 222).[6] He believed that English poetry had a more orderly structure, in its conception and structural development, than Spanish. In addition, Rodríguez's stay in England allowed him to distance himself from his own country and its values. According to Dionisio Cañas (1988, 69), the English influence is reflected in the new themes that Rodríguez introduces in his third book, *Alianza y condena* (1965).

Rodríguez's English readings, mixed with his preference for the Spanish mystics and for a poetry with an irrational component, conferred a singularity on his new verse (Rodríguez Padrón 2011). During his stay in England, he personally met some English poets, among them Ted Hughes and Eliot. By 1966, when Rodríguez received the prestigious Spanish Critics' Award for the book partly written in England, *Alianza y condena* ['Alliance and Condemnation'] (1965), he had brought his English adventure to a close and moved to Madrid. In the same year, commissioned by a Spanish publisher whose identity was never revealed, he undertook the task of translating all of Eliot's poetry, with the exception of the *Four Quartets*.

Rodríguez's personal library, which includes his copy of Eliot's Faber edition of *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, is currently part of the Claudio Rodríguez Archive at the *Jorge Guillén* Foundation in Valladolid. The translated versions that Rodríguez consulted and annotated are available too: *Tierra baldía,* translated by Ángel Flores and published in Barcelona in 1930, and *La tierra baldía,* translated by José María Aguirre and published in Madrid in 1965. Besides these editions, Rodríguez had access to several anthologies of Eliot's poems in Spanish: *Poemas T.S. Eliot* (1946), edited by poets Dámaso Alonso and Leopoldo Panero, and *Poesías reunidas* (1978), translated by José María Valverde for Alianza Editorial. This edition was considered canonical until it was supplanted by Viorica Patea's bilingual edition

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[5] M.ª Antonia Mezquita Fernández highlighted Rodríguez's poetic affinities with William Blake (2006), William Wordsworth (2017) and Dylan Thomas (2021).

[6] "La poesía inglesa ... me ha influido en el rigor de la construcción, en el acceso al poema." What Rodríguez meant by "el acceso al poema" ("the access to the poem") remains unclear. He was always reluctant to speak about his own poetry and always did it in very concise, elusive terms. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

of *La tierra baldía* for Cátedra Letras Universales. Because of its ample annotations and book-length analysis of the poem, this constitutes the most complete academic interpretation of the poem to date in Spanish Eliotian circles. Unfortunately, Claudio Rodríguez, who died in 1999, did not have access to this edition.

The Claudio Rodríguez Archive also contains a considerable amount of handwritten and typed sheets with different versions of all the Eliot's poems save *Four Quartets.* Rodríguez decided to translate the title of *The Waste Land* as *La tierra yerma* instead of the more common appellation, *La tierra baldía*. Besides *The Waste Land,* the archive includes versions of: *Prufrock and other Observations*, "The Hollow Men," "Ash Wednesday," *Ariel Poems, Unfinished* and *Minor Poems, Occasional Verses,* and even the *Choruses from The Rock.* For all these poems there seems to be no finished version; the typed manuscripts contain numerous handwritten corrections, multiple options, and deletions. Some of Rodríguez's translations were published in the literary supplement of the *ABC* national newspaper in 1988: "El entierro de los muertos," "La figlia che piange," "El cultivo de los árboles de Navidad," "Un canto a Simeón," "Histeria," "Miércoles de ceniza" and "El viaje de los Magos."

More than twenty years elapsed between Claudio Rodríguez starting to translate Eliot and publishing a three-page version in the *ABC* cultural supplement. Rodríguez's painstaking "philosophy of composition" led him to constantly revise his own poems and discard countless versions over the years. He was as fastidious in translating as he was in composing his poems, with his collected poetry amounting to only five published titles: *Don de la ebriedad* (1953), *Conjuros* (1958), *Alianza y condena* (1965), *El vuelo de la celebración* ["The Flight of Celebration"] (1976) and *Casi una leyenda* ["Almost a Legend"] (1992); given his meticulous composition process, it is more than probable that he proceeded in the same way with Eliot's translations and that he was still intermittently working on these translations decades after being commissioned for them. It is also very possible that the publishers may have dropped their initial project (García Jambrina 1993, 28). Claudio Rodríguez himself introduces a preliminary note in his *ABC* translations, "Because the beginning will remind us of the end" ("*Porque el principio nos recordará el fin*"). Each one of the words included in this note is evidence of Rodríguez's particular approach to Eliot's concept of poetry, as well as his linguistic choices. Rodríguez himself confesses: "the impulse that drove me to that translation was not that of my affinity with his poetry, but quite the opposite: that of my divergence, yet not remoteness, which still exists, vis a vis his oeuvre. It is an exercise or a discipline that broadened and changed the extent of my knowledge of language and of my vital experience" (*ABC* 1988, VII).[7]

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[7] "...el acicate que me movió a la traducción no era el de mi afinidad hacia su obra poética, sino todo lo contrario: el de mi divergencia, no lejanía, que aún existe, hacia su entidad. Ejercicio o disciplina que ampliaron y cambiaron la órbita de mi conocimiento del lenguaje y de mi experiencia vital."

This approach to Eliot's oeuvre categorically differs from that of other Spanish poets of his generation –Biedma and Valente– and their unwavering fascination with the Anglo-American writer. In this case, it is the original "divergence" of the two poets' poetic principles that motivates Rodríguez's enduring perception of Eliot. To that effect, in the 1971 interview with Federico Campbell, the Spanish poet expressed himself even more categorically: "For me, Eliot's translation has been a mental exercise. I would have rather translated another kind of poet. All of Eliot's ideological, literary principles are opposite to what I thin ... Consequently, my translation cannot be vibrant. I cannot take an objective position on Eliot... In contrast, Dylan Thomas and I are quite like-minded in the irrational, magical view of reality" (Yubero 2004, 224).[8]

There seems to be a change between these dismissive remarks from 1971 and the more appreciative tone in the note to the 1988 publication in *ABC*. Even if Eliot's influence on Rodríguez was exerted by means of a *via negativa*, his constant attention to Eliot's poetry, which continued until his death in 1999, is evidence of an alternative ("divergent") story of poetic affinities and counter-affinities. According to Luis Ingelmo, "[Rodríguez's translations] reveal a translator in a permanent state of alert to his own words, not so much because they were the reproduction of Eliot's poetry as because he was fully aware that he had created an unusual creature, that is, a genuinely Claudian creation" (2007, 64).[9]

To prove his point, Ingelmo focuses on the second part of Rodríguez's introduction to his *ABC* translations, where the poet explains his own linguistic choices. Following the crucial statement that translating Eliot meant for him an "exercise or discipline that enlarged and changed the orbit of my knowledge of the language and of my vital experience," Rodríguez continues: "Now that I reread these translations, I think that I have invaded too much with my Castilian linguistic habits, especially regarding the fluency of reading. Anyway, let them serve as accompaniment to the great poet, to the everlasting poetry."[10]

Rodríguez's translations of Eliot differ from those of other poets and translators in one other way: except for the poems published in *ABC*, Rodríguez's unpublished translations of Eliot's poems cannot be considered finished "texts," which poses an added problem to their interpretation. Instead, they must be

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[8] "Para mí la traducción de Eliot ha sido un ejercicio mental. Yo hubiera preferido traducir otro tipo de poeta. Todos los presupuestos ideológicos, literarios, de Eliot son lo contrario de lo que yo pienso [...]. De ahí que mi traducción no pueda ser vibrante. No puedo tener una posición objetiva respecto a Eliot [...]. En cambio, Dylan Thomas es muy afín a mí en la visión irracionalista, mágica de la realidad."

[9] "...presentan a un traductor en permanente estado de alerta con sus propias palabras, y no tanto porque fueran la reproducción de la poesía eliotiana como por tener plena conciencia de haber gestado una criatura insólita, es decir, una creación genuinamente claudiana."

[10] "Ahora que releo estas traducciones creo que he invadido demasiado con mis hábitos lingüísticos castellanos, sobre todo en la fluidez de la lectura. En fin, sirvan como acompañamiento al gran poeta, a la poesía imperecedera." Faithful to his elusiveness, Rodríguez does not explain exactly what he has "invaded."

conceived as "ante-texts," as the term is known in pre-textual or genetic criticism (*crítica genética*), which is very different from textual criticism (Blasco 2011). Unlike the finished oeuvre, a corpus of ante-texts comprises all the versions available in the "writer's workshop," obviously of a provisional nature. Ante-texts are valid for the exploration of the process of creation and translation, which means that writing or translating is an unfinished process, not a goal. They cannot be assessed by critics in the same way in which they approach published work. With this in mind I am going to compare the first part of "The Burial of the Dead" ("El entierro de los muertos") as it appeared in the *ABC* 1988 edition, with the only ante-text of this section available in the Claudio Rodríguez's archive:

I. The Burial of the Dead

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.
Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke's,
My cousin's, he took me out on a sled,
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
In the mountains, there you feel free.
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you
Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (Eliot 2015, 55).

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I. El entierro de los muertos[11]

El más cruel de los meses es abril, que hace brotar
lilas en la tierra muerta, tejiendo
memoria y deseo, dando vida
con la lluvia de primavera en las perezosas raíces.
Nos abrigó el invierno, mientras cubría
la tierra con nieve olvidadiza, nutriendo
una pequeña vida con tubérculos secos.
Y el verano nos sorprendió, llegando en el Starnbergersee
con un aguacero; nos metimos en los soportales,
y luego seguimos bajo el sol, y entramos en Hofgarten,
tomamos café, y durante un rato hablamos.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch
Y siendo niños, pasando una temporada en casa de mi primo el Archiduque
me llevaban en trineo,
y yo tenía miedo. María, le decía,
agárrate bien, María. Y nos deslizábamos por las pendientes.
Una se siente libre en las montañas.
Leo casi toda la noche, y me voy al sur cuando llega la noche.

¿Qué raíces arraigan, qué ramas crecen
en estos pétreos escombros? Hijo del hombre,
tú no puedes decirlo, adivinarlo, porque sólo conoces
un montón de imágenes rotas, donde el sol reverbera,
y el árbol muerto no cobija, ni el grillo da solaz,
ni da rumor de agua la árida piedra. Bajo
esta rojiza roca sólo hay sombra,
(entra bajo la sombra de esta roca rojiza)
y así te enseñaré algo que es diferente
tu sombra siguiéndote de prisa por la mañana
o tu sombra alzándose al atardecer para hallarte;
y te mostraré el miedo en un puñado de polvo,
. . . .

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The translation includes the same typo in the version published in *ABC* and in the ante-text: a comma after "polvo" ("dust") instead of a full stop. In addition, there is a telling discrepancy between the ante-text and the published version: while the ante-text translates the phrase "and go south in the winter" as "me voy al sur cuando llega el invierno," the published version, inexplicably, introduces what can only be considered as a transcription error: "me voy al sur cuando llega la noche." Apart from that, only two expressions differ in both documents. For the translation of "the cricket [gives] no relief," the published version translates "ni el grillo da solaz,"

[11] Extracts from the translation published in *ABC* in 1988.

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I. El entierro de los muertos

El más cruel de los meses es abril, que hace brotar
lilas en la tierra muerta, tejiendo
memoria y deseo, dando vida
con lluvia de primavera a las perezosas raíces.
Nos abrigó el invierno, mientras cubría
la tierra con nieve olvidadiza, nutriendo
una pequeña vida con tubérculos secos.
Y el verano nos sorprendió, llegando en el Starnbergersee
con un aguacero; nos metimos en los soportales,
y luego seguimos bajo el sol, y entramos en el Hofgarten
tomamos café, y durante un rato hablamos.
Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
Y siendo niños, pasando una temporada en casa de mi primo el archiduque,
me llevaban en trineo,
y yo tenía miedo. Me decía:
agárrate bien, María. Y nos deslizábamos por las pendientes.
Una se siente libre en las montañas.
Leo casi toda la noche, y ~~cuando llega el invierno voy al sur~~
me voy al sur cuando llega el invierno.

¿Qué raíces arraigan, qué ramas crecen
en estos pétreos escombros? Hijo del hombre,
tú no puedes decirlo, adivinarlo, porque solo conoces
un montón de imágenes rotas, donde el sol reverbera,
y el árbol muerto no cobija, ni el grillo da consuelo,
ni da rumor de agua la árida piedra. Bajo
esta rojiza roca solo hay sombra,
(entra bajo la sombra de esta roca rojiza)
y así te enseñaré algo que es diferente
tu sombra siguiéndote deprisa por la mañana
o tu sombra alzándose al atardecer para hallarte;
~~en un puñado de polvo te diré: he aquí el miedo.~~
¡te enseñaré el miedo en un puñado de polvo.

Figure 1: Document CR 20/023 from the Claudio Rodríguez collection, Jorge Guillén foundation archive (ante-text), page 1 of 3 (unknown date).

while the ante-text reads "ni el grillo da consuelo." Likewise, "I will show you fear in a handful of dust" is translated as "te mostraré el miedo en un puñado de polvo" in the published version, while the ante-text reads "te enseñaré el miedo en un puñado de polvo." These minor differences allow us to conclude that the ante-text provides a significantly advanced state of the translation while still subjected to final modifications closer to the moment of publication –possibly decades later– and that it basically served as the model for the published text. Unfortunately, the remaining parts of *The Waste Land* survive only as ante-texts and cannot be contrasted with published versions.

Concerning the translation style of these opening lines of *The Waste Land,* Rivero Taravillo (2018) affirms that they reflect Rodríguez's own poetic style by their combination of personal poetic choices of rhythm and meter. The predominance of the 11-syllable rhythm in longer lines that incorporate enjambment ("El más cruel de los meses es abril, / que hace brotar / lilas en la tierra muerta, tejiendo"), plus the concepts rendered in pairs ("memoria y deseo") and the use of parallel expressions ("y tomamos café, y durante un rato hablamos") sound Eliotian and Claudian at the same time, and can be compared with the following verses from *El vuelo de la celebración*, equally based on paired concepts and structures:

> Llega otra vez noviembre, que es el mes que más quiero
> porque sé su secreto, porque me da más vida...
> ("Noviembre")
>
> Esta iluminación de la materia,
> con su costumbre y con su armonía...
> ("Salvación del peligro")

Bearing in mind Rodríguez's original "divergence" from Eliot's poetry, a further matter of debate would be to what extent his translations of Eliot have influenced his own poetry. Barón (1996) highlights some Eliotian traits in three poems from Rodríguez's last book, *Casi una leyenda* (1991); namely, "Nocturno de la casa ida" ["Nocturne of the House Gone"], "Manuscrito de una respiración" ["Manuscript of a Breathing"] and "El robo" ["The Theft"]. According to Barón, Eliot's influence manifests itself merely as a slight accent ("un cierto deje") not found in Rodríguez's previous books (116). In turn, Miguel Casaseca (2014) has established a more definitive connection: he has studied the imprint of "The Hollow Men" in Rodríguez's "El robo." Based on the parallel analysis of stanzas in both poems, Casaseca confirms that Rodríguez appropriated the technique of the "dramatic monologue" from "The Hollow Men," which he incorporated into the structure of his poem. Both in Eliot's and in Rodríguez's verses, the main characters share identical features: "a tense tone, imprecations and commands to the split "you," run-on sentences, chaotic enumerations, questions and exclamations, a structure in which the discourse is undone in a state of almost systematic doubt" (IV).[12]

Inversely, the trace of Rodríguez's poetic lexical preferences is visible in some of his translations of Eliot. The ante-text 20/025 of "El sermón del fuego" ("The Fire Sermon") translates the Spenserian line "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song" as "Suave Támesis, fluye mansamente, hasta que acabe mi canto." The predominant choice for the translation of "song" in most of the Spanish versions of *The Waste Land* is "canción," although the option "canto" is also present. In Claudio Rodríguez's case,

---

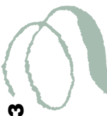
[12] "[T]ono tenso, imprecaciones y órdenes al 'tú' desdoblado, oraciones suspendidas, enumeraciones caóticas, interrogaciones y exclamaciones, una estructura en la que el discurso se desdice en un estado de duda casi sistemático."

there can be no doubt about his reasons for using "canto," since this is a crucial term in all his books and in his conception of poetry. Indeed, it is precisely in the book that he finished while he was focused on Eliot's translations, *El vuelo de la celebración* (1976), that Rodríguez writes, in Hölderlinian fashion: "Miserable el momento si no es canto" ("Miserable is the moment, if it is not a song"). Confirming this idea, in a 1995 interview with Juan Carlos Suñén, Rodríguez asserts: "In the song I am a prisoner of words, but at the same time I am free in them" (Yubero 2005, 231).[13] By "song," Rodríguez conceives a whole system of breathing, paced by the human step –he "wrote" his first book, *Gift of Inebriation*, while going for long walks in the surroundings of his hometown– which conforms with the musicality of the poem. Spenser's famous line, transplanted to *The Waste Land* to offer due contrast between the past harmony of the river and the gloom of the present, keeps in its "run softly" cadence the foundational roots of Rodríguez's conception of "canto."

The translation options for *The Waste Land* by Claudio Rodríguez can be added to the countless versions already published and analyzed by critics. At the same time, they join the tradition of Spanish major poets and translators of different generations who have fallen under the sway of T.S. Eliot as one of the most recognizable influences of the twentieth century. Moreover, from a textual perspective, Rodríguez's corpus of Eliotian translations can only be considered as ante-texts, so their provisional status documents Eliot's influence on the Spanish poet as well as the traces of Rodríguez's own poetic style in his translations.

Claudio Rodríguez's translations of *The Waste Land* and, for that matter, of the rest of Eliot's poetry, deserve critical attention primarily for one unusual reason: that the perspective through which Claudio Rodríguez approaches this translation assignment –which has been termed as "conceptual divergence"– differs utterly from that of other Spanish poets. Rodríguez belongs to the lineage of the visionary poets: Blake, Wordsworth, Rilke, Hölderlin, and Rimbaud. In his poetry we do not find Eliot's sorrowful Philomel, but Shelley's invisible lark, or the wise owl that gives access to the ineffable during its long vigils (Carbajosa 2020). At the same time, Eliot's impersonality, sifted through Juan Ramón Jiménez's poetic principles, reflects the main ontological challenges present in Rodríguez's poetry, which are refined in his final book, *Casi una leyenda* (1991), in which he simultaneously approaches innocence vs. knowledge, death vs. regeneration, the domestic vs. the mythic. As Rodríguez expressed in 1992 upon entering the Royal Academy of the Spanish Language, in a speech entitled "Poesía como participación: Hacia Miguel Hernández," "[t]he poet must give up his personality and, undoubtedly, his originality, even if he remains unaware of it" (2004, 134).[14]

Given Eliot's influence on a series of generations of Spanish poets, the unique, intriguing nature of this literary relationship between two central poets of



[13] "En el canto, yo estoy preso en las palabras, pero al mismo tiempo, en ellas, soy libre."

[14] "El poeta necesita, aunque no lo sepa, renunciar a su personalidad y, desde luego, a su originalidad."

contemporary Western poetry is worth a closer look. To that end, the translation of *The Waste Land* by Claudio Rodríguez, a poet whose uniqueness within Spanish contemporary poetry remains unquestioned, seems an appropriate point of departure.

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THE WASTE LAND IN SPANISH TRANSLATION (1930-2022)*

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Abstract

Between 1930 and 2022, no fewer than 35 people (including professional translators, scholars and amateurs) met the formidable challenge of translating into Spanish either *The Waste Land* in full or only some of its sections. With varying degrees of success, these translations found their way into the pages of single books, anthologies, literary magazines or journals both in Spain and in Hispanic-American countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Santo Domingo. Undertaking a close analysis of all these versions not only provides an excellent opportunity to revisit T.S. Eliot's best-known poem on the centenary of its publication, but may also contribute to the study of the complex process of its retranslation over more than nine decades.

Keywords: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, *La tierra baldía*, *La tierra yerma*, literary translation.

THE WASTE LAND EN ESPAÑOL (1930-2022)

Resumen

Entre los años 1930 y 2022 al menos 35 personas (profesionales de la traducción, del mundo académico y aficionados) afrontaron el reto de verter al español *The Waste Land* en su totalidad o únicamente algunas de sus secciones. Con diferentes grados de éxito, estas traducciones aparecieron en forma de libro independiente o se incluyeron en antologías o en revistas tanto en España como en diversos países hispanoamericanos, entre los cuales se cuentan Argentina, Chile, Colombia, México, Perú y Santo Domingo. Realizar un análisis detallado de todas estas versiones no solo ofrece una excelente oportunidad de reconsiderar en sí mismo el más famoso poema de T.S. Eliot cuando se conmemora el centenario de su publicación, sino también la posibilidad de contribuir a estudiar el complejo proceso de su traducción durante más de nueve décadas.

Palabras clave: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, *La tierra baldía*, *La tierra yerma*, traducción literaria.

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The first two Spanish translations of *The Waste Land* were both published in 1930. The earliest was brought out in Spain by the Puerto Rican professor, polyglot translator, prolific editor and literary critic Ángel Flores (1900-1992). The second, by the poet and diplomat Enrique Munguía (1903-1940), was released in Mexico. T.S. Eliot's correspondence proves his eagerness to have his poem translated into a language he did not master. On 30 January 1928 Flores, then a lecturer at Rutgers University, sent his version to Eliot, who replied on 22 February regretting that his knowledge of Spanish was "not adequate for expert criticism," unhesitatingly authorizing its publication and expressing his satisfaction as follows: "I should be indeed honoured if your translation could appear in either the *Revista de Occidente* or *Gaceta Literaria*, but particularly glad if it appeared in the *Revista de Occidente* with the editors of which I have always had the most sympathetic relations" (2013, 63). However, this translation did not appear in any of the two journals suggested by the poet, but as a small volume issued in Barcelona by Editorial Cervantes, a publishing house to which Flores acted as a literary advisor. When Enrique Munguía, in an undated letter, requested permission to publish his prose version of the poem, Eliot replied with a letter dated 8 October 1930 letting him know about the former translation by Flores. Moreover, Eliot was very specific, literally requesting: "as a necessary condition to let me see a copy of it, for suggestions, before publication" (2014, 334). In fact, by that time Munguía's free rendering of *The Waste Land* had already come out in the July/August 1930 issue of the short-lived (1928-1931) Mexican cultural magazine *Contemporáneos*.

In a letter of 20 November 1930, Flores reminded Eliot that he had sent him a dozen copies of his Spanish translation a few months earlier and complained to him about the printing of Munguía's translation in *Contemporáneos*, arguing against it: "this so-called prose translation will harm you and the circulation of the Spanish edition which, incidentally, has been warmly received in Spain" (Eliot 2014, 420 n2). On 9 December, Eliot apologized to Flores for having failed to thank him in due time, praised his Spanish version (though pointing out his misinterpretation of the term 'City Directors'[1]) and clarified his position as to Munguía's:

> The author of the Mexican translation had some claim upon me, being introduced by a mutual friend. I could see no reason why another translation should not be made, especially as it was for a Mexican periodical, or why it should compete with

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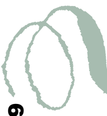
[1] Eliot explained: "I have only found one error myself: 'City Directors' are not political representatives like aldermen, but are directors of public limited companies, registered in the City" (2014, 420). Far from being corrected, Flores's mistranslation of "the loitering heirs of City directors" (line 180) by "los perezosos herederos de empleados municipales" remained intact in subsequent editions of his translation (Flores 1944, 378; 1973, 45; 1977, 37). Jaime Gil de Biedma mocked this blunder, which he singled out as the only memory he kept of Flores's work (1994, 356-357).

yours. I agree that there are a number of mistranslations. As a matter of fact, I had stipulated that the translation should be submitted to me before publication, and this was not done. I shall be writing to protest. (2014, 420)

Such a letter of protest may not have survived, or perhaps it was never written. In any case, there is no trace of it, nor further evidence of any correspondence regarding this matter of contention in the eight extant volumes of *The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, which have been carefully edited. Flores was only mentioned once again in these volumes, about one year later, when Eliot gave what sounds like his honest opinion in a letter of 16 December 1931, addressed to Erik Mesterton: "The Spanish translation of Flores also seemed to me good although there were a few definite mistranslations; but I was not in such close contact with Flores as with Curtius and Menasce" (2014, 778).[2]

As a matter of fact, while Flores's translation has been widely circulated,[3] the one signed by Munguía has remained almost unknown outside the translator's home country, where it was reprinted in book form by the Mexican publishing house El Tucán de Virginia in 2014 and again in 2017, together with a more recent version signed by another translator, Gabriel Bernal Granados, who entitled it "La tierra baldía." Furthermore, Flores's version became much more influential than Munguía's, partly because it was included in anthologies such as *Antología de escritores contemporáneos de los Estados Unidos*, compiled by John Peale Bishop and Allen Tate in 1944. Each of these two early translations made a deep impression on a different famous poet: Flores's on Federico García Lorca (who had access to the drafts when he met Flores in New York in 1929), and Munguía's on the seventeen-year-old Octavio Paz, although the latter would end up preferring Flores's version to that of Munguía's (Paz 1988a, 42).

Ángel Flores chose to translate *The Waste Land* as *Tierra baldía*, which would become the most common title of the poem in Spanish (generally with the addition of the article *La*, as omitted by Flores), whereas Munguía named it *El Páramo*, a title never to be used again.[4] Flores had received some advice in this respect from Eliot, who in his first reply remarked that the title was not "The Wasteland," but "The



[2] Eliot was referring to the versions in German (*Neue Schweizer Rundschau*, 1927) and in French (*L'Esprit*, May 1926), which were already available when the two Spanish versions came out. In a 1944 letter addressed to Kathleen Raine, Eliot called his friend Jean de Menasce "the only really first-rate French translator I have ever had" (2012, 895).

[3] It was reprinted by Emecé Editores in Buenos Aires in 1954, by Llibres de Sinera in Barcelona in 1973, five times by Premià Editora in Mexico between 1977 and 1989, and by Fontamara also in Mexico in 2007, 2013 and 2016.

[4] In his acceptance speech for the T.S. Eliot Prize awarded to him by the Ingersoll Foundation in 1987, Octavio Paz praised Munguía's introduction, which he had come across when he was an enthusiastic seventeen-year-old reader of poetry and had not learned English yet (1988b, 40). Nevertheless, in "Rescate de Enrique Munguía" Paz not only objected to Munguía's translation of the title and to his inability to render the tone of Eliot's poem, but also commended Flores's choice of the title *Tierra baldía* and celebrated his translation as "the best-to-date" version (1988a, 42).

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Waste Land," and confided to him that his French translator Jean de Menasce had found "too late to use in his version" what the poet considered was "absolutely the exact equivalent as it alludes to the same mediaeval fiction": 'La Gaste Lande' [*sic*] (2013, 63). The theologian and philosopher Jean de Menasce made this discovery after he had published his version under the title of "La Terre mise à nu" in *L'Esprit*. Therefore it was too late to change it to "La terre gaste" so as to recover the allusion to the Grail legend, mentioned by Eliot in the opening paragraph of his notes to *The Waste Land* as one of his main sources of inspiration (2015, 72). The poet referred to Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* (1920), a book of anthropological and mythological scholarship of which most French readers would not have heard. Conversely, they would have been familiar with Chrétien de Troyes, who used the words "terre gaste" in his verse romance *Perceval, or the Story of the Grail* to describe the surroundings of Blanchefleur's castle. Over the years Flores never changed the title he had first chosen, "Tierra baldía" (without the article), which was also adopted by Octavio Castro López (1973). However, most translators (at least 21 so far) preferred "La tierra baldía," which has become the canonical title of the poem in Spanish (Bartra 1952; Aguirre 1965; Valverde 1978; Avantos Swan [pseud.] 1982; Álvarez Amorós 1983; Vargas 1989; Rivas 1990; Montebruno 2000; Malpartida 2001; Palomares 2005; Alvarado Tenorio 2005; Puel de Cristo 2012; Cassara 2013; Jaume 2015; Fernández Biggs, and Villavicencio 2017; Bernal Granados 2017; Caballero Cebrián 2017; Rey 2017; Doce 2018; Sanz Irles 2020; Carbajosa 2022).

The second most popular choice presents variants which include the term *yermo* (derived from the Latin word *eremus*, meaning 'uninhabited' or 'uncultivated'), with overtones ranging from the eremitic life of the Desert Fathers of the Christian monastic tradition (*Padres del Yermo*) to the barrenness of the protagonist of García Lorca's *Yerma* (1934). This term also evokes what Eliot actually had in mind: the land laid waste by knightly warfare, a literary image to be found in many chivalric narratives of Arthurian fiction. Significantly, in Martín de Riquer's Spanish translation of *Perceval ou le Conte du Graal* (*Perceval, or The Story of the Grail*), the protagonist, who had lived with his mother in a "Yerma Floresta Solitaria" (Troyes 25), rode on until he caught sight of a castle and noticed how outside its walls there was nothing but "sea and water and wasteland," that is, "mar, agua y tierra yerma" (Troyes 63). Accordingly, if Eliot endorsed Jean de Menasce's rendition of the English title by the exact words employed by Chrétien de Troyes in the twelfth-century French original (*terre gaste*), then there is no reason to object to the use of *tierra yerma*, since they are the corresponding words in the Spanish translation of *Perceval*.

Seven translators of *The Waste Land* selected one of the following three variants: "El yermo" (Manent 1948; Álvarez 1987; Eslava Galán 1991), "La tierra yerma" (Rodríguez Palomero 1979; Girri 1988; Rodríguez 1988) and "Tierra yerma" (Núñez Nava 2008). The other five Spanish titles, each chosen by a different translator, were: "La tierra estéril" (Tello 1962), "La tierra desechada" (Levine 1964), "La tierra devastada" (Revol 1976), "Tierra Asolada" (Álvarez 2008), and "La tierra agostada" (Silva-Santisteban 2010). All the translators maintained their initial choice of title, with the exception of José María Álvarez, who switched from "El yermo"

(1987) to "Tierra Asolada" (2008), following the preference of Jorge Luis Borges.[5] Only one translator, Rolando Costa Picazo, kept the title in English both on the book cover and above the epigraph, although he referred to the poem as "La tierra desolada" in his preface to the volume (2012).

I had an opportunity to address the controversial issues faced by any attempt to translate the title of *The Waste Land* when, back in 1987, I presented a paper at the *XI AEDEAN Conference* in which I compared most of the Spanish translations of the poem available at that time (Gibert 1989).[6] Apart from the title of the poem, I approached other topics which had also caused important divergences among the translators: proper nouns (e.g., names for people, churches, streets, rivers and cities) in English and in other languages, personal titles, quotations in languages other than English, onomatopoeia, allusions, abbreviations, idiomatic expressions, lexical choices, and the rendering of various types of speech register. Some readers interpreted the title of my paper as an undiscriminating and harsh condemnation of all the translators who had contributed to the poem being "rudely forced." Actually, I made clear distinctions between, on the one hand, occasional minor lapses or small inaccuracies and, on the other, recurrent major flaws, which in one instance had already been exposed by an indignant reviewer (Dietz 1983). One of the most surprising oversights I spotted was the failure to provide the Spanish equivalent of one of the most common examples of animal onomatopoeia, *quiquiriquí*, in accordance with the spelling of the *Diccionario de la Lengua Española*. Leaving *co co rico co co rico* (line 392) untranslated creates an undesirable comic effect, because the sound evokes the call of a street vendor selling "delicious coconut" (Castro 1973, 138; Bartra 1977, 25; Álvarez 2008, 31). As to gross faults, one of the most stunning occurred when lines 308-311:

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> Burning burning burning burning
> O Lord Thou pluckest me out
> O Lord Thou pluckest me
>
> burning

became:

> abrasando, abrasando, abrasando, abrasando
> Oh, Señor Tú, me estás desplumando
> Oh, Señor Tú, desplumas
>
> abrasando

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[5] Although Borges did not publish a translation of *The Waste Land*, he called it *La tierra asolada* in his contributions to *El Hogar* (1986, 142).

[6] I had no chance to correct the numerous misprints which appeared in the conference proceedings, most of which seem to be due to overzealous copyediting by someone unfamiliar with *The Waste Land*. For instance, the name of Philomel in Spanish, *Filomela*, was systematically replaced by *Filomena*. On a more positive note, I should add that the difficulties of access I mentioned in my 1987 conference paper 35 years ago no longer exist, so that at present most of the published versions are available to any researcher in this field.

It is most unfortunate that “Thou pluckest me out” was translated by “Tú me estás desplumando,” which literally means “Thou pluckest my feathers,” and figuratively “you fleeced me” (Flores 1944, 388; 1973, 59; 1977, 48-49). The image conveyed in Spanish is that of a chicken complaining about being scalded and plucked by hand in a grotesque scene befitting a joke or a fanciful tale. Rather than amusing, this blatant mistake is irritating because it destroys the dignified atmosphere underscored by the quotations from Buddha and St. Augustine at the end of “The Fire Sermon.” Similarly, the translation of “The jungle crouched, humped in silence” (line 398) as “La jungla se acurrucó, se jorobó en silencio” (Valverde 1978, 92) or as “La selva se dobla y se joroba en silencio” (Alvarado 2005, 69) is wrong, because *jorobar* is a colloquial verb meaning *bother* or *pester*, and *jorobarse* is a rather vulgar equivalent of *grin and bear* it or *lump it*. This regrettable blunder would have been easily avoided by resorting to the verb *encorvarse*, as most translators did.

Some errors are not the result of carelessness but illustrate the tremendous pitfalls along the translator’s path. Expertise is put to the test, for instance, when confronting the term *dull* in “dull roots” (line 4) and “dull canal” (line 189). In 1994 Fernando García de la Banda devoted an entire conference paper to a deep analysis of the dissimilar renderings of the word in these two contexts, comparing seventeen translations into different Romance and Germanic languages. He explained that he had chosen this example because it seemed to him a case of “impossible translation” (1995, 285) though he ended up proposing a couple of alternatives to satisfy those who are ready to accept one distinct word for each of the two contexts, “yertas raíces / turbio canal,” and those who insist on using the same word on both occasions, “yertas raíces / yerto canal” (296). The disparities in the case of the seven Spanish translations he examined are the best evidence that discrepancies are inevitable whenever there is an almost insurmountable problem. Translators with various cultural backgrounds, linguistic skills and literary tastes only coincide when there are no difficulties.

One of the hardest passages to translate is the conversation in the pub (lines 138-172). Translators should resort to effective strategies to indicate that the English text deviates from standard speech. They must re-create the degree of (in)formality and resolve any conflicting demands between form and content to preserve the register of the original. For instance, formal expressions such as “se lo dije sin subterfugios” and “se lo dije sin ambages” should be avoided when translating “I didn’t mince my words” (line 140). On the contrary, using slang may be risky because colloquialisms tend to become soon outdated, so that what is easily understood at one point in time may sound awkward or utterly antiquated at another, and then be completely misunderstood or even incomprehensible some years later. Additionally, we should bear in mind that not all Spanish-speaking readers share the same cultural context. The adoption of a particular translation strategy may be suitable in one social or geographical context and completely inadequate in another. When Jaime Tello translated the crude cockney talk reported by Lil’s female friend in the pub, he resorted to the *voseo* paradigm, which consists in addressing somebody as *vos* instead of using the informal second-person pronouns *tú* and *ti*. Thus, “And if you don’t give it him” (line 149) became “Y si no lo divertís vos” just

as “You *are* a proper fool” (line 162) became “Vos *sos* una perfecta idiota” (1962, 51). Tello’s procedure was easily understandable for the readers of *Zodíaco*, a journal published in Caracas, since the sociolinguistic phenomenon of *voseo* is well known not only in Venezuela, but across the whole of Hispanic America, though its usage differs greatly from country to country. In some of them, *voseo* tends to be restricted to rural areas and is a marker of social class in urban areas, whereas in others it is accepted by all social classes. Whether it is considered contemporary standard or else substandard, and whether it is privileged over *tuteo* or not, *voseo* is commonly used to express familiarity rather than formality in all the Latin American dialectal varieties which have incorporated it. In contrast, *vos* disappeared in Spain over time, and its contemporary usage as a deferential form of address is restricted to extremely solemn occasions or as an archaism when deliberately recreating the language of the past. Thus, the role of *voseo* in *The Waste Land* is likely to be misunderstood in Spain, where Lil’s friend could be identified as an Argentinian speaker. In Walter Cassara’s version, published in Buenos Aires, Lil’s friend also sounds Argentinian when she says “hacete una linda dentadura,” “pensá en el pobre Albert” and “hacé lo que quieras” (2013).

Other examples can be put forward to demonstrate how critical assessment can go in the opposite direction, illustrating a negative perception from the other side of the Atlantic. Applauding the adverse criticism by the Mexican poet Roberto Vallarino, Octavio Paz objected to José María Valverde’s translation, in which he believed there were too many typical features of the kind of Spanish spoken in Spain, and more specifically in the center of Madrid (1988a, 42).[7] If we judge by the number of reprintings, Valverde’s version was highly successful, although it has also been attacked in Spain, albeit for different reasons. The case deserves to be looked into because it is unique in the history of *The Waste Land* in Spanish translation. In 1978, Valverde’s version of the poem was brought to light by the prestigious publisher Alianza Editorial in a volume of Eliot’s collected poems. The following year, Luisa Fernanda Rodríguez Palomero published her own translation, preceded by an introduction focusing on those general aspects of Valverde’s version she found fault with. In order to express her views more precisely, she added 156 notes in which she quoted words or lines from her predecessor and commented upon the amendments she had explicitly referred to in her subtitle: “Enmiendas a una traducción.” Although such amendments would have greatly improved the version submitted to such a careful scrutiny, Valverde disregarded all of them.[8] In this sense, the case is far from being exceptional, as attested by Flores’s uncorrected mistranslation of “City directors” mentioned above. What is most striking in the

[7] Octavio Paz’s exact words were: “empedrada de españolismos y madrileñismos que convierten a Eliot en un poeta castizo de la Puerta del Sol” (1988a, 42). Paz did not give any examples, and I cannot find any.

[8] In 1996 Emilio Barón Palma called attention to the fact that Valverde did not modify his text in the following editions of his work (99).

instance of Flores is that Eliot himself had pointed out the mistake long before the same translation was sent to press again and again.

The subsequent editions of most Spanish versions prove that they are generally reproduced with no revision. Perhaps it was this negligent attitude on the part of certain translators that dampened Eliot's willingness to help those who, at first sight, seemed to him not rigorous enough. In the preface to his Spanish version of *The Waste Land*, José María Aguirre recalled the letter he addressed to Eliot, fearing at the time that the poet would deem his queries too "silly" (Aguirre 1965, 57). According to Aguirre, Eliot's reply confirmed that his fear was well founded; only a couple of his questions were answered, and these were the least interesting for him. Eliot ended his letter by saying that Aguirre was trying to understand an area in which understanding was not pertinent (57). As a result, the translator decided to qualify his own notes to the poem as "impertinent" when he entitled the last section of his book "Notas impertinentes a *La tierra baldía*" (57-90).

Aguirre's notes are clearly detached from his translation of those appended by Eliot (36-41), and the two sets are even separated by a section devoted to an analysis of the poem (45-56). The extreme opposite is exemplified by Jaime Tello, who caused a confusing effect by mixing Eliot's notes with his own. Most translators include the Spanish version of Eliot's notes at the end of the poem. The omission of such notes is sometimes briefly justified by the translator, but on other occasions it goes unexplained. Apart from Eliot's notes, some Spanish versions provide scholarly introductions and editorial notes written either by the translator or by another author. The Mexican philosopher and literary scholar Octavio Castro López, for example, prefaced his translation with a lengthy study of Eliot's poem, so that his book was appropriately entitled *Examen crítico de T.S. Eliot. Tierra baldía* (1973). Viorica Patea's 2005 bilingual edition of *La tierra baldía* has been rightly acclaimed by reviewers such as Mário Avelar, an experienced translator and a professor of English and American Studies, who praised this "remarkable work of scholarship" consisting of a 163-page introduction and a good number of extensive footnotes. In the 2022 edition of the book, Patea's introduction, bearing the title "Eliot, *La tierra baldía* y la épica de la modernidad," has been updated and enlarged to 208 pages. For the sake of readability, the former footnotes have been turned into 167 endnotes, improved and adapted to the new translation by Natalia Carbajosa, which has replaced that of 2005. No other edition of *The Waste Land* in Spanish contains such a detailed and comprehensive critical apparatus to facilitate a close reading of the poem. Some editions are not bilingual, and many lack any guidance on how to approach the text. Most of them present *The Waste Land* in full, but at least five translators have published only some of its sections (Manent 1948; Revol 1976; Álvarez Amorós 1983; Rodríguez 1988; Doce 2018). In 2020 Piero Montebruno translated the lines which Eliot had deleted from the final version of *The Waste Land* and which were included in the 1971 facsimile transcription of the original drafts. Ten years earlier Ricardo Silva-Santisteban had translated the typescript, which he published alongside his Spanish translation of the definitive text (2010, 71-129).

Apart from book reviews, some academic research has been conducted on the Spanish translations of *The Waste Land*. Howard T. Young (1993) did not focus

exclusively on this poem, but also on others by the same author which were translated into Spanish between 1927 and 1940. Both in this article and in his introduction to *T.S. Eliot and Hispanic Modernity, 1924-1993,* Young drew special attention to the impact of Eliot's poetry upon the creative works of his early translators, who included some of the most famous writers of that time. Margarita Garbisu (2017) surveyed the role played by Eliot in the publication of the first two Spanish translations of *The Waste Land* into Spanish. In *DA / Datta: Teaching "The Waste Land"* (a special double issue of *CIEFL Bulletin*) I gave an account of my use of Eliot's poem in translation workshops (Gibert 2001). It was a very enriching pedagogical experience, one in which I tried to encourage students to concentrate on their own efforts at practicing the art of literary translation and test their skills rather than wasting their energy on the facile condemnation of the flaws of others. In trying their own hands at translating such a difficult text, they learned to become spontaneously respectful towards those who had previously attempted this arduous endeavor, even if their struggles had not always been rewarded by success.

Respect and generosity are needed to analyze the work of those who have met the formidable challenge of translating *The Waste Land* into Spanish. We can safely assume that each act of re-interpretation and re-creation was undertaken with the best of intentions. The enormous task involved in all the retranslations[9] was presumably attempted with the expected aim of improving the quality of the previous ones by overcoming their deficiencies, correcting their mistakes, avoiding their failures and offering better solutions to the problems inherent in the translation of such an intricate source text. However, the poem has generally been retranslated without prior achievements and shortcomings being taken into account. Perhaps translators feel the need to break away from their predecessors in order to gain freedom. As a result, they refrain from reading preceding versions lest they are led to unconsciously repeat the same renderings, or for fear they may be constrained to look for different ones so as to avoid similarities with already published versions.

Since I presented my 1987 conference paper, many other Spanish versions have been published. At this moment in time, my long-term objective is to reappraise the extant versions with a view to ascertaining to what extent they differ, and to determine how far they have progressed in the never-ending goal to achieve the "great translation" –the optimal version which should make all future retranslations superfluous. Yet, while pursuing the endless, unattainable goal of perfection, one must be aware that there can be no definitive translation, because although the source text remains unaltered, both the target language and the readers' cultural context keep on evolving. The best we can hope for, therefore, is a relatively accurate rendering that suits each community of readers, who will judge each new

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[9] I am using the term 'retranslation' not in the sense of a mere revision of a former translation, but as defined by Kaisa Koskinen: "a new translation produced in the same language where a previous translation of the same text already exists" (2018, 317).

version of the translated poem and eventually accept or reject it according to their own criteria.

SPANISH VERSIONS OF *THE WASTE LAND*

Translator name order

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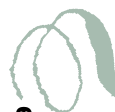

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CREATION

POEMS

The centennial commemoration of *The Waste Land* includes not only literary studies but also creations in the domain of visual arts and music. In the artwork section two well-established poets, multi-prized Spanish Antonio Colinas, and Mexican Jeannette Lozano Clariond, pay their homage to Eliot. They are accompanied by startling poetic voices of those who are more known as scholars and who reveal now their less known facet as poetic craftsmen, such as, Paul Scott Derrick, an eminent Americanist at the Universitat de València, and Gerardo Rodríguez Salas, a promising writer and professor at the Universidad de Granada.

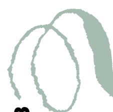
Antonio Colinas

De Pound a Eliot, en el más allá

¡Éramos tan distintos, ya
desde aquel pelo suyo engominado
y desde aquel mío salvaje
por el que se me iban las ideas
peligrosas, rebeldes,
mis versos como alambres eléctricos,
mis versos como rayos!

Cuando usted me pasó el original
de su *The Waste Land*
tuve la osadía de reducirle
un tercio de la extensión del manuscrito.
¡Pero luego usted fue tan cercano
y generoso con mi dolor,
cooperando para poder sacarme
del agujero aquel
del manicomio-criminal!
A mí acaso me perdía
el rigor necesario y extremado
que se debe tener
para ser un poeta verdadero,
pero su inteligencia
brillaba en el espíritu de algunos versos suyos,
como esquirlas de oro
que yo le respeté.

Discúlpeme,
me tocó cuando estaba en el mundo
ayudar mucho a muchos
en lo que pude.



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Mas lo que hoy importa
ya sólo son sus versos y mis versos,
aquellos que aún se puedan salvar,
esas esquirlas del oro o lágrimas de sangre
contra el tiempo y la muerte.

¿También para mis versos
llegará la guadaña?

From Pound to Eliot, in the Hereafter

We were so different, your
slicked-down hair
and mine growing wild
through which my dangerous,
rebellious ideas slipped out
and my verses were electric wires,
my verses were rays of light!

When you let me read
the manuscript of *The Waste Land*
I was bold enough to cut
Out a third of its length.
But you were so kind
and generous in my pain,
helping to get me out
of that hole of an asylum
for the criminally insane!
Maybe somewhere I lost
the consummate rigor
you have to have
to be a true poet,
but your intelligence
shone like scintillas of gold
in the spirit of some of your lines,
and I respected you.

Forgive me,
When I was in the world
I helped a lot of people
as much as I could.
But all that matters today
Are the poems, yours and mine,
those that can still be saved,
those scintillas of gold or tears of blood
against time and death.

Will the reaper also come
for my lines?

(Translated by Paul Scott Derrick)

Jeannette Lozano Clariond

Herida de sol

Y es que somos así.
Y es que nací ciega de tanto sol.
Y te arrancan la piel de la espalda
y te dicen cómo debes responder. Y eso no es humano.
No, no lo es.
Lo humano es mostrar la herida.
Dejar que tu rostro sea triste, tristísimo si le da la gana, tal vez uno que otro día
pueda sonreír. Mas una sonrisa sabia, la que ha conquistado
sin dejar de padecer...
Aquel sol no cesa de rozar mis espaldas, de quemar
mis brazos, de traspasar el cristal cuyos rayos
se incrustaron en mi piel.
Somos humanos y así vivimos, como una Babel en llamas.

Wounded by the Sun

Well, that's how we are.
I was born blind from so much sun.
They rip the skin off your back
and they tell you how to answer. And that's not human.
No, it's not.
What is human is to show the wound.
To let your face be sad, extremely sad if you feel like it, maybe one day or other
you can smile. But a wise smile, one that has conquered
without ceasing to suffer...
That sun doesn't cease to brush my back, to burn
my arms, to pierce the glass whose rays are embedded in my skin. We are
human and that's how we live, like a Babel in flames.

(Translated by Paul Scott Derrick)

REVISTA CANARIA DE ESTUDIOS INGLESES, 85; 2022, PP. 243-250

Paul Scott Derrick

Waste

so many words / and
broken images / to tell / the
time is out of joint

*

I
April came and went
A hundred years – ticked away
Seems like you were right

II
All things downward slide
Dazzling queen to frazzled bride
What a fall was here

III
I can only trace
the pathways of destruction:
nothing to be done.

IV
You cannot stand in this.
It wants to destroy us all.
The word – whisper it.

V
No third beside you now
Visions of falling cities
Vain – the recipes

*

Your word-collage burned
the soul of a century.
What grace awaits us?

Baldío

tantas palabras / e
imágenes rotas / dicen / tiempo
descoyuntado

*

I
Abril vino y se fue
Cien años – minuto a minuto
Parece que tenías razón

II
Todas las cosas cuesta abajo
De gran reina a novia exhausta
Qué caída hubo aquí

III
Tan solo trazo
Caminos del destrozo:
No se puede hacer nada.

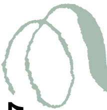
IV
No puedes estar en esto.
Quiere destruirnos a todos.
La palabra: susúrrala.

V
No va un tercero a tu lado
Visiones de ciudades en declive
En vano... las recetas

*

Tu palabra-collage quemó
el alma de un siglo.
¿Qué gracia nos aguarda?

(Traducción de Natalia Carbajosa)



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Gerardo Rodríguez Salas

En esta isla de cetros

Hoy narra el tapiz de la diosa
augustas verdades con hebras de lumbre,
trenzados azares de herido clangor.

Hoy cantan milicias que fingen ser hombres,
que buscan amor en cristales de brujos,
que arengan soldados con débiles talles.
Un beso, dos besos, tres besos,
los hombres se besan
si hallan la fosa del rey que los hizo,
si blanden acero en las manos de húmedas damas,
si evitan el golpe en la nuca
y velan arcanos obsequios
que lucen jinetes con verdes relinchos.

Hoy clama la estirpe guerrera,
adánico sueño de *bobbies* en *wellies*,
de Ziggy Stardust en su roja cabina,
de *double deckers* y vagones de metro,
monótonos tumbos,
vulgares turistas que son los Carontes de nuestra ciudad.

Mind the gap.
        El hueco.

Admiren la plaza de nuestra victoria
–*et domine salvam fac reginam nostram*.
La Corte al oeste, al sur la Abadía,
al este las Casas, al norte el Gobierno,
la brújula signa un destino,
hay sólo una armada invencible y no es española.

Last orders!

Hoy tañe la historia, la pérfida Albión,
los largos sollozos de aquellos violines.
Honrad a las doce deidades de nuestro británico Olimpo,
la gran dinastía de la Commonwealth,
honrad las figuras de quienes fundaron la patria,
modélicos moldes de insignes galanes
y de una mujer.
¿Os da acaso náuseas este faquir?
¿También la señora que quiso mi podio
en mayo, ese mes que me olvida?

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No room for you, Maggie.

Hoy unjo mi historia,
yo muevo los hilos,
las hebras de acero.
Tú teje
y calla.

The party is always right (right?).

Abril será cruel y radiante.
La lluvia ha llegado a este reino de exactos relojes.

Hoy darán las trece también en tu mente.

In this Sceptred Isle

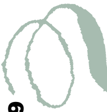
Today the tapestry of the goddess tells
august truths through strands of fire,
random braids of injured clamor.

Today militias pretending to be men are singing,
they search for love in warlocks' crystal balls,
haranguing soldiers with weakened bodies.
One kiss, two kisses, three kisses,
they kiss each other
if they find the grave of the king who made them,
if they wield steel in the hands of moist ladies,
if they avoid the blow to the neck
and watch for arcane gifts
that exhibit riders with green whinnies.

Today the warrior lineage cries out,
Adamic dream of bobbies in wellies,
of Ziggy Stardust in his red cubicle,
of double-decker buses and underground wagons,
monotonous jolts,
vulgar tourists who are the Charons of our city.

Mind the gap.
The gap.

Admire the square of our victory
–*et domine salvam fac reginam nostram*.
The Court to the west, the Abbey to the south,
the Houses to the east, the Government to the north,
the compass marks a destiny,
there's only one invincible armada and it isn't Spanish.



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Last orders!

Today, perfidious Albion, history tolls,
the long sobs of those violins.
Honor the twelve deities of our Britannic Olympus,
the great dynasty of the Commonwealth,
honor the figures of those who founded this fatherland,
exemplary molds of distinguished gallants
and of a woman.
Does this faquir maybe make you sick?
And the lady who wanted my podium
in May, that month that forgets me.

No room for you, Maggie.

Today I anoint my story,
I pull the threads,
the strands of steel.
Weave
        and be silent.

The party is always right (right?).

April will be radiant and cruel.
Rain has come to this kingdom of accurate clocks.

Today it will also be thirteen o'clock in your mind.

(Translated by Paul Scott Derrick)

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VISUAL ARTS

This issue also includes a selection of artwoks by the German artist Wolfgang Hunecke and a digital collage by the Spanish artist and designer, professor at the University of Salamanca and curator of many exhibits, Carlos Fortes.

1. Wolfgang Hunecke, “A current under sea.” (woodcut print)

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2. Wolfgang Hunecke, "Then Spoke the Thunder." (oil painting)

3. Carlos Fortes, “La tierra baldía / The Waste Land.” (digital collage)

MUSIC

"Then Spoke the Waste Land; Songs and Fragments" is a recital performed by the UNED English Faculty Group; it premiered in Madrid, April 6, 2022, at the 34th European Association for American Studies Conference (EAAS).

The recital is a combination of music and verse. Passages from *The Waste Land* are read, interspersed with comments from Eliot's friends, such as Ezra Pound and Virgina Woolf, or his wife, Vivien Haigh-Wood. These voices emerge from different texts, letters, novels, even autobiographies, and all reflect on the poem. We can even hear William Carlos Williams's reaction to the poem when it was published, as he annotated it in his *Autobiography.* They perform against a musical backdrop which ranges from Wagner to popular song.

The poem is recited thematically, rather than in an orderly fashion from beginning to end. Passages are grouped around seven main motifs. Beginning with a Prologue / Overture, it continues with: "Spring and Love," "The City," "Here is Belladonna," "Dry Desolation," "Death By Water," "Distant Spirituality."

The recital is available at: https://canal.uned.es/video/624ea08db6092302c6288f02. What follows are brief introductions of each section, as well as the fragments and music included in each of them.

1. PROLOGUE / OVERTURE

The recital opens with the song "Twentieth-Century Blues," which Noël Coward wrote for the American musical film *Cavalcade* (Frank Lloyd, 1931). Its lyrics ("Why is it that civilized humanity / Can make the world so wrong?") resonate with the historical context from which *The Waste Land* emerged –and sadly, with our own. Although Eliot initially thought of Coward's plays as mere entertainment, he came to appreciate them as he wrote his own drawing-room comedies in the 1950s. Curiously, the protagonist of Eliot's *The Confidential Clerk*, Colby, was, like Coward, born in Teddington.

Music: "Twentieth Century Blues" (Noel Coward, *Cavalcade*)
Fragment: "Then in 1914 ..." (T.S. Eliot, *Letters of T.S. Eliot*, vol. 1)

2. SPRING AND LOVE

The song "It Was a Lover and His Lass" (from Shakespeare's *As You Like It*) evokes spring as the ideal setting for the fulfilment of love. The first lines of *The Waste Land* negate traditional spring openings and, in subsequent scenes, we find

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examples of thwarted love. The melancholy frustration of the hyacinth garden lovers is associated with the sailor's song in Richard Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* ("Frisch weht der Wind"). The so-called "neurasthenic woman" and her aloof partner, likewise, seem painfully unable to communicate.

Music: "It Was a Lover and His Lass" (T. Morley & W. Shakespeare, *As you like it*); "Frisch weht der Wind" (Richard Wagner, *Tristan und Isolde*)
Fragments: "April is the cruellest month...", "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago...", "My nerves are bad tonight..." (*The Waste Land*)

3. THE CITY

The Waste Land is a markedly urban poem. Eliot's Unreal City can be identified with London and with Dante's Inferno, where "death had undone so many." The poetic speaker, like a *flâneur*, walks its streets, visits its landmarks, and talks to its people –Mr. Eugenides or Stetson, who performs a frustrated fertility rite. The Unreal City is also the setting for the encounter between the typist and the "young man carbuncular," witnessed by the prophet Tiresias. The musical background for this section is the popular Flannagan and Allen song "Underneath the Arches," which comically evokes the squalor of modern cities.

Music: "Underneath the Arches" (Flannagan & C. Allen)
Fragments: "For having lived in Westminster..." (Virginia Woolf, *Mrs. Dalloway*); "Unreal city... winter dawn," "Unreal city... winter noon," "At the violet hour...," "This music crept by me upon the waters..." (*The Waste Land*)

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4. HERE IS BELLADONNA

The song "When I Take my Morning Promenade," with its teasing lyrics on the changes in women's fashion, was made famous by Marie Lloyd, the "Queen" of London music hall. In 1922 (the year of publication of *The Waste Land*), Eliot wrote an obituary essay on Lloyd and the popular vitality of the music hall, which he always admired. With this song we are introduced to various female voices / portraits in *The Waste Land*: Madame Sosostris, "famous clairvoyant," the "neurotic woman," Lil and her friend chatting at the pub, the typist at home "at the violet hour," and finally Ophelia.

Music: "When I Take My Morning Promenade" (A.J. Mills & B. Scott)
Fragments: "Perhaps not even you can imagine..." (Vivien Haigh-Wood, *Letters of T.S. Eliot*, vol. 1); "Here is Belladonna...," "In vials of ivory and coloured glass...," "When Lil's husband got demobbed...," "The typist home at teatime..." (*The Waste Land*)

5. DRY DESOLATION

In *The Waste Land*, the Thames "runs softly," but carries debris and waste. As one would expect, the poem is rich in images of natural decay and drought. "The nymphs are departed," although we can hear the singing of the Rhine maidens from Wagner's *The Twilight of the Gods* ("Weialala"). As an ironic contrast to hopeless desolation, "Thanks to These Lonesome Vales" (an air from Henry Purcell's opera *Dido and Aeneas*), evokes an idyllic pastoral setting, where "Diana's self might resort" –Dido, Aeneas and Diana are indirectly alluded to in the poem.

Music: "Thanks to These Lonesome Vales" (Henry Purcell, *Dido and Aeneas*); "Weialala leia" (Richard Wagner, *Das Rheingold*)
Fragments: "What are the roots that clutch...," "The river's tent is broken...," "A rat crept softly through the vegetation...," "The river sweats...," "Here is no water but only rock...," (*The Waste Land*); "Then out of the blue..." (William Carlos Williams, *Autobiography*)

6. DEATH BY WATER

Early in the poem, Madame Sosostris sees "death by water" on her tarot cards. Phlebas the Phoenician has drowned. It is uncertain whether his body will metamorphose "into something rich and strange," as Ariel sings to Ferdinand (who believes his father has died in the shipwreck) in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Viewing Phlebas's death as an absolute end or as a promise of resurrection is probably the key to interpreting *The Waste Land*. Ezra Pound, who reduced the original "Death by Water" to only ten lines, considered this section the heart of the poem.

Music: "Full Fathom Five" (R. Johnson & W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*)
Fragments: "Here, said she...," "I remember...," "Phlebas the Phoenician..." (*The Waste Land*); "Various critics have done me the honour..." (T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land. Facsimile*)

7. DISTANT SPIRITUALITY

Eliot became interested in Hinduism as a student at Harvard. He took the parable of the voice of thunder from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (the Upanishads are foundational texts of Hinduist theology). The thunder's message (*data, dayadhvam, damyata*) is to "give, be compassionate, and control yourself." Despite the final pandemonium of quotes in different languages, *The Waste Land* closes with a benediction in Sanskrit: "Shantih shantih shantih." Because of its spiritual longing and Hinduist background, George Harrison's "My Sweet Lord" (1970) seems an apt musical background for this section.

Music: "My Sweet Lord" (George Harrison)

Fragments: “Ganga was sunken...,” “DA Datta: what have we given?...,” “DA Dayadhvam: I have heard the key...,” “DA Damyata: The Boat responded...,” “I sat upon the shore ...” (*The Waste Land*)

MISCELLANY

MARGINALISING WITHIN THE MARGINS: THE EVOLUTION OF DALIT WOMEN'S (MIS)REPRESENTATION IN NARENDRA JADHAV'S *UNTOUCHABLES: MY FAMILY'S TRIUMPHANT JOURNEY OUT OF THE CASTE SYSTEM IN MODERN INDIA* (2005) AND BABY KAMBLE'S *THE PRISONS WE BROKE* (2008)

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Abstract

Dalit women have traversed a long path over the last four decades. During this time their consciousness has evolved in many ways as reflected in Dalit writing. Life narratives function as the locus of enunciation where agency and self-identity are attended and asserted by Dalit women, through different approaches. As the social location determines the perception of reality, this paper attempts a look at how Narendra Jadhav and Baby Kamble tackle and bring to the centre the gendered nature of caste and the power-relations that still affect Dalit women. Form, language and subject matter are some of the resources that Dalit women use to defy generic conventions, depart from imposed identities, and build up resistance against an enduring double oppression which insists on homogenising Dalit body politics.

Keywords: Dalit Studies, Caste System, Gendered Casteism, Feminist Studies, Dalit Female Consciousness.

MARGINACIÓN EN LOS MÁRGENES: LA EVOLUCIÓN DE LA (MAL)INTERPRETACIÓN DE LAS MUJERES DALIT EN *UNTOUCHABLES: MY FAMILY'S TRIUMPHANT JOURNEY OUT OF THE CASTE SYSTEM IN MODERN INDIA* (2005) DE NARENDRA JADHAV Y *THE PRISONS WE BROKE* (2008) DE BABY KAMBLE

Resumen

Las mujeres Dalit han recorrido un largo camino en las últimas cuatro décadas. En este tiempo su conciencia ha evolucionado en muchos aspectos tal y como se refleja en la escritura Dalit. Las autobiografías funcionan como el punto donde las mujeres Dalit afirman su voluntad e identidad propia, a través de diferentes enfoques. Dado que la ubicación social determina la percepción de la realidad, este artículo pretende observar cómo Narendra Jadhav y Baby Kamble abordan y enfocan la naturaleza de género de la casta y las relaciones de poder que aún afectan a las mujeres Dalit. La forma, el lenguaje y los temas tratados son algunos de los recursos que las mujeres Dalit utilizan en su intento de desafiar las convenciones genéricas, esquivar las identidades impuestas y forjar resistencia contra una doble opresión persistente que insiste en homogeneizar al 'Dalit'.

Palabras clave: estudios Dalit, sistema de castas, casteísmo de género, estudios feministas, conciencia femenina Dalit.

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INTRODUCTION

The caste structure in India has privileged the upper castes and disempowered the lower and outcaste populations through a form of social stratification of hierarchically arranged strata. One is ascribed to a stratum by descent, thus leaving no scope of individual capabilities, inclinations or choices. This has led to the establishment of a pair of opposing counterparts of upper and lower castes and to the creation of a 'purity/pollution' polarity in the Indian mindset. The most notorious corollary of this dualism is the conception of 'untouchability' vested in the Dalit communities and their subsequent otherising.[1]

Yet casteism has not only divided individuals in terms of their descent and hierarchy, but has also created gender divisions that reinforce the former. Conversely, gender ideology in India has legitimated not only the patriarchal structure, but also the very organisation of caste (Liddle and Joshi 1989, 69). This specific overlapping of patriarchy and caste is what the feminist historian Uma Chakravarti has coined as 'Brahminical patriarchy' (2002). Leela Dube, in her book *Anthropological Explorations in Gender: Intersecting Fields* (2001), explores the intermeshing of caste and gender and notes that casteist principles inform the specific nature of sexual asymmetry in Hindu society; in turn, the boundaries and hierarchies of caste are inevitably articulated and shaped by gender (Rao 2003, 242). The question arises, however, whether gender overrides caste, or caste simply intensifies gender relations. Dalit author Baby Kamble extensively addresses this additional layer of discrimination to casteism in her critically acclaimed text *The Prisons We Broke* (2008). She argues: "Just as the chaturvarna system created castes and sanctioned discriminatory practices, the cunning creator of the world established the practice of making women dependent on men. Men have therefore dominated women ever since" (Kamble 2008, 102).

The institution of caste has established a clear dichotomy 'man' versus 'woman' and has, at the same time, positioned Dalit women at the bottom of the three dominant power structures, namely, caste, class and patriarchy. As a result, Dalit women have unequivocally become 'the Dalits among the Dalits'. Dalit author

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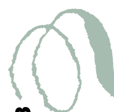
[1] 'Untouchability' has often coincided with the notion of 'impurity', both in social and literary contexts, due to the fact that the ancient and highly influential Hindu religious text *Manusmriti* establishes several sources of impurity –such as birth, death, menstruation, occupation and gender (Bühler 1886). However, the concept of 'untouchability' referred to under Article 17 of the Indian Constitution is theorised as distinct from the 'impurity' described in the *Manusmriti*: while untouchability is permanent, impurity is occasional –as soon as the duration of impurity is over or the stain is removed, no one is expected to observe it; untouchability is observed in respect of a whole caste, whereas impurity is more individualistic, irrespective of one's caste; finally, in Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar's words, "while the impure as a class came into existence at the time of Dharma Sutras, the untouchables came into being much later than 400 A.D." (Ambedkar 2003, xiv). The desire to define oneself by defining what one is not has been a powerful influence on the initiation and continuation of the caste system. Edward Saïd resorted to the theory of the Aryan invasion and the creation of an 'other' to explain the origin and creation of the caste structure in India (Saïd 1978).

Meena Kandasamy also discusses the conflation of womanhood and Dalithood in her texts and claims: "For a man, the woman is the Dalit of the house" (Kandasamy 2008, webpage).[2] It is imperative, thus, to understand and address the interaction of these three structures, to analyse the particular form of oppression they cause –often different from both upper-caste women's and Dalit men's– and the way they have shaped the life experience of female Dalits, both individually and collectively.

GENDERED CASTEISM

Indian womanhood has suffered in general from patriarchal oppression which, apart from generating gender-based inequalities, has established a particular imagery of the 'good Indian woman'. According to that notion, Hindu women had to cover themselves modestly and behave as proper chaste women. This image contrasted with that of low-caste females who were portrayed as loud, uncouth, shameless, immoral and flagrantly sexual figures, which strengthened Dalit women's devaluation and 'otherness'. Consequently, the crass representations of the Dalit female body, juxtaposed to the demure demeanour of the secluded upper-caste female body, have constructed and institutionalised stable categories of womanhood in India.[3]

The image of Dalit women as loose led Dalit men to try to counter it by granting their women less liberty of movement, forbidding them to go to certain places or do certain activities, and by asserting control over their bodies; all done in an effort to restore Dalits' –especially men's– dignity. This progressively changed the perception of Dalit women from polluting and lascivious to silenced and vulnerable victims of a particular casteist exploitation and living under conditions of circumscribed rejection, marginalisation and poverty. This image of suffering passive bodies eventually allowed for a conceptualisation of the ideal Dalit woman as a romanticised, submissive and mute being, which largely resonated in literary



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[2] In fact, her first collection of poems, entitled *Touch* (2006), focuses on the casteist but also gendered basis of issues of 'touchability' and 'untouchability'.

[3] Several scholars, such as Uma Chakravarti, have demonstrated that the repetitive transmission of negative images of Dalit women have their roots in ancient cultural traditions, such as the *Manusmriti*, *Ramayan* and *Mahabharat*, in which Dalit and Dravidian women were often depicted as vulgar, treacherous, dangerous, polluted and evil 'others'. The figure of Surpanakha –literally meaning 'sharp', 'long nails', and the sister of the Dravidian king Ravana in the *Ramayan*– was that of a savage woman who embodied all that was ugly and fearful. Many researchers have initially read the mutilation of Surpanakha's body, at the hands of Lakshman, as punishment meted out by an Aryan male to a lustful Dravidian woman. In the *Mahabharat*, Hidimbi, a low-caste woman, is also epitomised as a lustful being, full of uncontrollable desire. The *Manusmriti* also dehumanises the Dalit woman labelling her as 'fierce, untouchable' with the permanent power to pollute (Chakravarti 2002). Va Geetha highlights that the "*Manusmriti* lumps together animals, Shudras and women and considers all of them equally unclean, polluting, fit to be subdued and controlled by men of upper castes" (Geetha 2002, 41).

productions such as Narendra Jadhav's *Untouchables: My Family's Triumphant Journey Out of the Caste System in Modern India* (2005).

Moreover, the patriarchal social set up has conceptualised different gender roles for men and women. In this gender stereotyping –which begins at birth and continues throughout one's life– men are assigned superior and decision-making roles, whereas women are discriminated against and relegated to the margins of different spheres of the social, cultural and private life. Leela Dube (2005, 224-227) understands Indian women's work at large as a substantial contribution to the continuity of traditional occupations that are closely tied to caste. This has a significant impact on Dalit women in particular since the majority of Dalit jobs are linked to the land or traditionally low occupations (Deliège 1999, 117). Being the downtrodden among the downtrodden (Omvedt 1979), Dalit women have remained at the lowest ebb of their rank, and have been entrusted with the most undesirable occupations, both inside and outside the household such as the processing of hides and leather, the removal of dead animals, scavenging, cutting hair or laundering (Deliège 1999, 116-145).

This gender stereotyping is heavily based on the Indian scriptures which compare females to the goddess *Sita*, who is the incarnation of compassion, the provider of food, and the destroyer of evil (Chakravarti 2003).[4] The myth of *Sita* has become a stereotype in the popular imaginary and the epitome of all womanly virtues in a Hindu woman, which compels women to abide by the patriarchal norms of wifely devotion, chastity and forbearance. Hindu socio-religious values also preached a degraded status of Hindu women, and demanded from them almost total self-abnegation, self-denial and submissiveness, conditions that unmistakably benefited the paternalistic joint-family and the rigid caste structure. Culturally, the expected role of the Dalit female is fundamentally equivalent to that of every Indian woman, yet magnified by her casteless status.

The insignificance of women in a Dalit household is continuously illustrated by Jadhav, mostly through the figure of his mother: "My man would hastily pull me [...]. I was exhausted, but how could I complain to my man? [...] In the beginning, I tried talking to him, asking him where we were going. His only answer was silence" (Jadhav 2005, 29). Dalit women were not only invisible to the rest, but they actually tried to be as discreet as possible. They "tried to make themselves as inconspicuous as possible, hiding themselves from others", as Kamble explains in *The Prisons We Broke* (2008, 54).

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[4] Unlike monotheistic religions, such as Christianity and Islam, which profess God as male or metasexual, the Hindu pantheon is replete with goddesses venerated as counterparts of the male deities. However, the abundance of female deities does not translate into female empowerment or an egalitarian status for women in Hindu society. In fact, Wendy Doniger argues that "the more intrinsically powerful, and hence dangerous, goddesses are perceived to be, the more intrinsically powerful, and hence dangerous human women are perceived [...], and [...] greater the need to keep [them] far away from the actual use of any power in the world" (Doniger 2014, 280). She labels this as the 'Clytemnestra Syndrome'.

Dalit women have survived and conformed themselves with a submissive domestic position, always mindful not to overstep the social boundaries dictated by their status. They have usually been dissuaded from working outside the limits of the household and encouraged, instead, to focus on domestic chores. Jadhav describes this from the wife's standpoint: "My man was unhappy that Najuka and I had to work. [He was] hurling abuse at me" (Jadhav 2005, 171-173). He then shifts to the husband's perspective: "To make matters worse, I had bitterly scolded Sonu when she told me of her various plans to bring home some money. That was more than I could bear: my wife going out to make money" (191). As demonstrated by Jadhav, among Dalit women's many duties, service to others –especially their husbands– and biological reproduction are the basic and the only ones usually available to them.

All these precepts represent the hegemonic and patriarchal social view imposed and followed, above all, by caste Hindus. However, the practice of 'Sanskritisation' –or the principle according to which lower castes imitate higher ones in the hope of raising their status and mounting the steps of the caste hierarchy– makes the seclusion of women an ideal shared by all.

EXTRA/INTRA-PATRIARCHY

The patriarchal social framework has definitely governed the Indian public sphere. Yet life inside the home –generally regarded as a safe and private space– rather than relaxing its codes, has revealed itself as equally brutal, unjust and oppressive as the one outside. Once their life purpose of getting married was completed, Dalit women's predicament would not end; on the contrary, it would magnify. Kamble underscores the importance of getting married in Indian society as well as in the Dalit community: "we lay our lives at the feet of our husbands. We believe that if a woman has her husband she has the whole world; if she does not have a husband, then the world holds nothing for her" (Kamble 2008, 41). She explains the difference between a married woman and a widow, especially in terms of the amount of labour imposed on each one:

> For married women whose husbands were alive, Tuesdays and Fridays in the month of Aakhad were full of activity. A lot of work had to be done. The poor daughters-in-law would really benefit from the grace of goddesses like Lakshmi Aai and Mari Aai. It seemed as if ten days of this month [...] were reserved specially for them by the goddesses. (21)

Akin to the principle of submission on the name of caste, the hegemonic gender ideology in India would make them accept their subservient position in marital relations. As both Jadhav and Kamble evince in their texts, Dalit families unequivocally follow a male-dominated structure, and the violence stemming from within the family reinforces the casteist violence at the hands of upper castes at large. This resolves in a coordinated oppression in which caste and gender are linked to such an extent that it is difficult to decipher whether the oppression is due to one or the

other. One of the most recurrent aspects put forth by Kamble is, in fact, the domestic violence inflicted on Dalit women: “The furious husband would beat her to a pulp with a stick and drive her out of the house. She was an easy prey. Anybody could torture her as they wished” (Kamble 2008, 97). She poignantly adds: “Husbands, flogging their wives as if they were beasts, would do so until the sticks broke with the effort. The heads of these women would break open, their backbones would be crushed, and some would collapse unconscious” (98).

As for Dalit menfolk, they have easily assimilated these categories as images of power that they play out in relation to their fellow women whenever possible. They treat the women of their community as their ‘other’ –just as the upper castes treat Dalits as their social ‘other’– duplicating thus the oppressive pattern. Historians and anthropologists, such as Charu Gupta (2010) and S. Anandhi (2002), have evinced the logic whereby Dalit men, robbed of their masculinity through economic and caste-based hierarchies, often seek to reassert it by enforcing patriarchal structures and wielding excessive control over women’s movements and sexuality. As a result, women are abused by their husbands on account of their gender, but also to counteract men’s feelings of failure and emasculation.[5] Many of such domestic fights combine with males’ excessive drinking and result in physical and emotional abuse, which creates an environment of continuous violent behaviour (Rege 1995). This is how Kamble tackles her mother’s case: “My aai must have felt so oppressed, so suffocated! And that must have made her so insensitive, so cruel towards the others. She could never maintain good relations with her relatives [...]. She could never get along with people” (2008, 6).

The fear that Dalit girls could be corrupted or harmed as long as they were still unmarried or occupied at school reinforced parents’ preference for speedy marriages; otherwise, both the family and the girl would be subjected to extreme criticism and dishonour, and the daughter, in particular, would be labelled as promiscuous. Moreover, recurrent instances of abductions, rape and molestation generated insecurity among Dalit girls and their families, and this further dampened the enthusiasm of both parents and girls in pursuing education beyond a certain age, which bounded girls to their homes.

In tune with this, the general Indian (Brahminical) belief that women’s intrusion into the fortresses of knowledge –besides disrupting the matrix of domination– would pollute it with their inferior status, legitimised their inaccessibility to the written text, both as readers and writers.[6] Thus, social structures, cultural

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[5] When nationalism was at its peak, reformist Indians extensively applied a discourse of inferiority on their women so as to balance out the one imposed on them by the colonial agenda. In an effort to break down the images of passive and effeminate –used by the British rule so as to justify their exclusion from positions of power– Indian reformers imposed a patriarchal standard of behaviour on their fellow women, thus bringing them more under men’s control (Gupta 2010).

[6] The connection between women and pollution is persistent. In fact, the belief that women’s bodily processes contaminate has been shared to such a point that the expulsion of a woman from home during her monthly menstruation has been commonly adopted across India. Dalit women’s

forces and the educational system operated together to constrain the thoughts and actions of Dalit girls. Jadhav's text, for instance, is an intermeshing of memories from both Damu and Sonu's perspectives; but while Damu's chapters are written by Damu himself, Sonu's recollection is reproduced and constructed by Jadhav from what he had seen and heard, given that Sonu was illiterate.

Casteism and Hinduism have been so adamant in their instructions that even women themselves believed in the senselessness of being educated. Jadhav puts forth this reality, from a women's perspective:

> I remember the story Tau Master had told us about Mahatma Phule, and how he had faced society's wrath to educate Savitri, his wife. 'Sonu, do you know that Savitri started a school for women, teaching them to read and write? People threw stones at her and abused her when she walked to the school. But she went on teaching undeterred.' That managed to spark [my] interest, and soon [I] was learning too. [...] Initially, [my mother-in-law] just shot us a few obnoxious looks. But after a few days, she could take it no more. 'Is Sonu going to be a barrister?' she asked contemptuously. 'No, but if she learns to read and write, she can make sure that our children become no less than a barrister,' [Sonu's husband] replied. 'Then teach your children. Why her?' (Jadhav 2005, 193-194)

This gender segregation and male superiority is reinforced from an early age and is internalised by all members of the community, which explains why many women are not aware of their oppression; in fact, they expect this as part of their role as women. As Tabish Khair adds, if female characters are ever able –or dare– to confront the patriarchal/male-dominated structures, in either the social, religious and economic areas, such a confrontation would be strongly contested by the (male) status quo (Khair 2001, 186).

PATRIARCHY AND MATRIARCHY

Apart from dictating most male-female interactions, caste and gender prejudices have also prompted one to look down on his or her own brethren. Furthermore, the creation and perpetuation of specific roles for each individual, and the retribution enacted on those who do not abide by them, have led to the assimilation of such roles. Uma Chakravarti, in *Gendering Caste through a Feminist Lens* (2003), exposes systematically the interface between caste and gender within the discourse on the female body. She elucidates that the mechanism of control upon women operates on three levels. The first one is the realm of ideology, in which women are made to internalise patriarchal stereotypes and control their own sexuality, as they would not only gain power and respect in return, but they would also achieve

bodily pollution meets its doctrinal illiteracy in the *Manusmriti*, which defines them as polluted and polluting.

their own salvation. The second level of control is related to kinship, and it represents the kinsmen's right to discipline an errant woman. Lastly, the ultimate level of law empowers the state to punish women for recalcitrant behaviour. Chakravarti regards this as "a masterstroke of genius" of the Hindu normative order, since it enables iniquitous and hierarchical structures to be reproduced and sustained with the complicity of women themselves (Chakravarti 2003, 72-74).

Men's supremacy and female subjugation are, therefore, not only shaped and reinforced by men, but also by women. There is an interplay of patriarchy and matriarchy in Indian society that results in renewed oppression of Dalit women. Women's internalisation of patriarchal values is displayed in many texts; not as self-deprecation *per se*, but rather as an indication of the acknowledgement that one's life is important only in relation to others –particularly the males upon whom the woman depends. The figure of Sonu, the wife in Jadhav's text, is especially illustrative on this matter: "It had been a long time since I had seen my man smile. I mustered up courage and asked" (Jadhav 2005, 63). She adds:

> 'Why is *fate* determined to treat us so badly?' I asked [...]. '*Fate* is what we make of ourselves. It is entirely up to us,' [her husband] said [...]. '*You are my fate* ever since the day you made me your woman.' [Sonu] smiled shyly. '*My fate is following Babasaheb*'s teachings and fighting to claim dignity for our community.' (63; emphasis added)

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At home, mothers acted as matriarchs, instructing and restricting girls while their husbands were away for work. Kamble dexterously depicts Dalit girls being disciplined by their own mothers on their secondary position in a Dalit household: "She often told me, 'Baby, you have only one brother. It is your duty to help him!' She would go on and on like this" (2008, 6).

Outside the home, women would continue to oppress one another, both as a way of exerting some kind of control and as the only revenge available to them. In order to counteract the oppression meted out against them at home and to exercise the power denied to them in their domestic space, older Dalit women would often turn aggressive and violent against younger ones. Once married, the female Dalit was subjected to yet another layer of abuse at the hands of her in-laws, particularly her mother-in-law. The dynamics of Indian patriarchy and the pattern of patrilocality brought about the traditional Indian residence practice of moving in with the husband's lineage in an extended family network. In India, the household is administered by the mother-in-law and all daughters-in-law must comply with her domination. Because of this strong cultural tradition and the combined effect of economic poverty, many young wives cannot set up their autonomous households.

As Kamble explains, the members of the Dalit community were influenced by the joys of enslaving others, imitating thus the callous nature of casteist subjugation (2008, 87). As they had no one below them to show their dominance, they began to enslave the weaker sex; their own spouses, mothers, daughters, and especially daughters-in-law: "The other world had bound us with chains of slavery [but] we too desired to dominate, to wield power. [...] So we made our own arrangements to find

slaves –our very own daughters-in-law!" (87). Kamble epitomises the objectification of daughters-in-law by arguing that "she was not a human being for her in-laws but just another piece of wood" (99). She vividly describes the level of abuse inflicted on them at the hands of their mothers-in-law or on account of their influence:

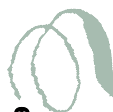
> In those days, at least one woman in a hundred would have her nose chopped off. [...] It's because of the sasu [mother-in-law], who would poison her son's mind. These sasus ruined the lives of innocent women forever. [...] The entire day, the poor daughter-in-law would serve the entire household like a slave. [...] Even her brother and father would flog her mercilessly and ask her in-laws to take her back. [...] 'Cut her into pieces then and there! [...] Never mind if you have to go to prison for six months! You must chop off your wife's nose and present it to her brother and father.' [...] Then her sasu would happily arrange a second marriage for her son with some divorced woman with a couple of children. She would feel elated that the harassment she had suffered was being finally compensated for. An innocent girl would thus be sacrificed to atone for the sasu's suffering. (98-101)

A Dalit woman has been, therefore, only a servile figure in marital relations, an object of lust fulfilment, and an unpaid servant for whom marriage meant nothing but calamity.

GENDERED ESSENTIALIST REPRESENTATION

Writing signifies for contemporary Dalit literature the staging of identifications in a process of protesting and empowerment. But, as Linda Hutcheon puts it, "Representation legimitizes and privileges certain kinds of knowledge" (1988, 53-54). Undoubtedly, the dynamics of literary assertion laid bare in Dalit literature delineates a mainstream body of texts around which a trend has been developed of looking at it in unitary terms. However, a simplistic interpretation of the 'difference' of Dalit writing from more mainstream literary categories is not at all reflective of its nuanced, complex and diverse literary reality. The Dalit identity does not constitute a homogenous or unified identity, neither now, nor in the past. When discussing caste in India then, the mistaking of a part for the whole is highly problematic and oblivious. As Sarah Beth contends, no individual can truly represent the wide variety of identities held by every member of the community s/he claims to represent (2015). There exists a plurality of voices, life experiences and perspectives that often find themselves at odds with one another when trying to fulfil the demands of a mainstream audience for a recognisable, 'authentic' and even 'digestible' Dalit literary voice. The fact that not much attention has been paid to the historical specificities and material conditions around the interaction of caste with gender in negotiating Dalit boundaries and the assumptions of gender neutrality in Dalit writing have rendered Dalit women largely invisible, and have led to depictions of Dalits as a predominantly male category.

Female Dalit voices decry a double or even triple oppression within the patriarchal structures of casteist society, as well as within their own communities



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and homes, which underscores Dalit literature's narrow scope. At the same time, they call for a widening of perspective that would account for multiple realities, such as theirs. Laura Brueck states that this dismissiveness is seemingly wilful as part of a strategic campaign to protect the boundaries of Dalit literature from dissimulation into multiple, individual authorial approaches that could reduce their unified political impact (Brueck 2014, 7). In privileging a monolithic image of the 'Dalit selfhood', inner conflicts and divisions have been perceived as counter-productive to the larger movement, and have often been silenced. One such instance of silence and elision is the question of Dalit women.

From a general observation of Dalit writings, as well as the Dalit social sphere, one can appreciate a largely male-centric orientation. They concentrate on the efforts of Dalit men, and thus diminish or even exclude women's actions and aspirations. The proportion of representation of Dalit women's predicament in the works of male writers is insignificant. There abound only passing references to the ordeals endured by their womenfolk or, as Gopal Guru bluntly puts it, Dalit women make "only a guest appearance" in them (2008, 160). Guru explains this attitude arguing that it is not only caste and class identity but also one's gender positioning that decides the validity of an event (1995).

In addition to the generalised absence of Dalit women in Dalit writings, when they have been represented, this has been done inadequately. In Narendra Jadhav's *Untouchables* the predicament of Dalit women is expressed only in the chapters narrated by Sonu. However, even in those chapters, her husband's principles, beliefs and struggles are more dealt with than hers. More significantly, Sonu —and by extension, the general Dalit woman— is depicted as taking a more backward-thinking stance than her male counterpart:

> I could not understand what was so bad about taking our turn as Yeskar. [...] After all, scores of generations had done this duty; what was making him so angry? [...] I had not understood why he was not willing to conform to tradition. (Jadhav 2005, 31-33)

Given the importance that the figure of Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar has acquired for Dalits and their assertion movement, the most striking aspect of Sonu's portrayal is her blatant indifference towards him, which highlights the level of regression of her state of mind:

> My husband dragged me along with him to these lectures. 'Soney, take more interest in these talks instead of the song and dance you like to see. They are about our community and about the uplifting of our people.' I thought, even in our village, we had lived among the Mahars and no one had ever questioned the age-old system. [...] Sometimes, I got bored when he talked endlessly about Babasaheb's speeches. Of course, I dutifully followed him, but secretly I told myself, 'It is enough to have that social ghost sitting on my husband's head... I am better off without it'. (146-147)

Dalit male writers –and Indian male writers in general– have tended to present a distorted image of Dalit women, from polluting to victimised and from

lascivious to vulnerable individuals (Kumar 2010, 219),[7] or to romanticise them through their depiction in stereotyped female roles, such as those of sacrificing wives and mothers (Lokhande quoted in Rege 2006, 74-75). They have been framed in iconographies of sentimentality, sympathy and subservience, and narrated in condescending language. Their quotidian depiction as victims has concealed deep structures of inequality, and has helped maintaining the hegemonic and hierarchical caste order. "Representations in print", to quote Rancière, are often "embodied allegories of inequality" (2009, 12).

Apart from silent –and silenced– victims, Dalit women have frequently been discursively constructed as victims of rape and sexual violence at the hands of both upper-caste and Dalit men, on account of their body and beauty. This has undoubtedly added to the generalised denial of their subjectivity and political agency. Brueck points to a normative masculinist tendency in the employment of a 'rape script', or a discursive determinism of sexual violence, as singularly defining the experience of Dalit womanhood (Brueck 2014, 19). In this narrative tendency, female Dalit bodies have been depicted as readily available for their fellow Dalit men, but have also been appropriated by upper-caste men as a way to emasculate and control Dalit men. This, apart from reducing Dalit women to a hyper-symbolic state of victimhood through images of collective violence, customary access, and expropriation of women's bodies, has also rendered them impure and lacking in virtue. Their bodies are thus seen as collectively mute, and capable of bearing penetration. Brueck further denounces that these writings have legitimated rape and other forms of sexual assault in casteist society, and have predicated men as the subjects and operators of violence, while rendering women as the objects of it (159). Another interesting aspect that Brueck notices about these 'rape scripts' is that atrocities of this kind are often placed as a starting point of a story or an episode. By following this structure, the event works as a catalyst to drive the story towards the male agents' struggle to obtain justice and revolt against the upper-caste oppressors. Consequently, "The victimized women have little voice and are often left by the wayside as the narrative focus turns toward the male agents of the recuperation of honour" (Brueck 2012, 230). In such narratives, male authors speak on behalf of women, a phenomenon that undoubtedly deprives them of autonomy and agency.

Devaluation and vulnerability, together with spectatorial pity mingled with charitable benevolence, became a cornerstone in the representation of Dalit women. Their capacity for agency, criticality and ingenuity was systematically undermined, thus leaving them as subjects to be acted upon; to be written, thought, and talked about. This demonstrates that caste is irrefutably gendered, with gender as an added qualifier to it.

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[7] Uma Chakravarti demonstrates how repetitive negative images of Dalit women had their roots in ancient cultural traditions such as the *Manusmriti*, *Ramayan* or *Mahabharat*, in which Dalit women were often depicted as vulgar, treacherous, dangerous, polluted and evil (Chakravarti 2003).

Dalit women have been claimed by both Dalit and feminist movements across India, each demanding a de-emphasis on one aspect of their identity –gender or caste. Their voices have been lost in the hegemonic rhetoric of both movements, claiming either to speak on behalf of Dalit women or all women, respectively. The need was felt by women imbued with Dalit consciousness to represent their perspectives and lived experience in a genuine manner, to make a creative use of their marginality from their 'outsider-within' status.[8] On the basis of these factors, in 1995, an autonomous organisation known as the National Federation of Dalit Women (NFDW) emerged.[9] Drawing from the formation of the NFDW, Guru opened the debate on the use of 'difference' for a Dalit feminist, suggesting that Dalit women go through a 'differential experience' shaped by the contradictions between them and upper-caste women, as well as the patriarchal domination within Dalit communities (Guru 1995). There is, therefore, a 'politics of difference' that structures the articulation of the specificity of Dalit women's lives. Their sexuality, political awareness, self-assertion, experience of profession, violence, and suffering within the community justify their need to speak differently.

Dalit women writers' voices have emerged relatively late in the written literary traditions, gathering momentum in the second half of the 20th century. However, that does not preclude them from being articulate and forceful. As is the case of the rest of Dalit literature, life narratives have become a discursive arena for Dalit women, as it permitted them to represent themselves and tell their suffering from their own perspective. Sharmila Rege calls this the 'Dalit feminist standpoint' that takes into account, in short, the multi-layered problems and identities of Dalit women, which are at the intersection of gender, caste and ethnicity (Rege 1998, 45). She argues that Dalit feminism differs from Indian mainstream feminism in its demands and adds female emancipation to the Dalit movement. In that sense,

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[8] The term 'outsider-within' was first coined by Patricia Hill Collins (1986), and designates a special space of the experiencer made by his or her 'difference' or unique standpoint. 'Outsider-within' status was captured by bell hooks while giving an account of her small-town Kentucky childhood: "living as we did –on the edge– we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out [...] we understood both" (hooks 1984, vii). Their difference makes them conscious of patterns or social constructions that may be beyond the comprehension or sight of sociological insiders.

[9] The NFDW was formed as the result of a process that began in 1987 with a national consultation on the struggles and aspirations of Dalit women in Bangalore and then in Delhi and Pune. Several other groups, such as the All India Dalit Women's Forum, were also formed in the 1990s and, in recent years, the Dalit women question has also received international attention through the United Nations Conference against All Forms of Racism attesting to a forceful Dalit women contingent. The basis of the formation –and proliferation– of these autonomous groups was the argument that Dalit women were invisible, both in the women's movement and in the Dalit movement, because of which Dalit women needed a separate platform to forge their own identity and find solutions to their problems (Guru 1995).

the artistic and literary representations of Dalit feminism cannot be accommodated within either of these two conventional forms.

Laura Brueck agrees with Rege on the Dalit female need to move beyond the hegemonic and Dalit male writers' representations, especially in the case of the 'rape script'. Brueck brings to the fore the necessity to reconsider the ever-present threat of sexual violence as part of Dalit women's identities, and to contest the narrative determinism behind it. She advocates a feminist recuperation of the misogynistic and casteist rape narrative that she labels as 'rescripting rape' (Brueck 2014, 58); a sort of revenge narrative that would complicate and even rewrite the casteist rape script. Against the treatment of rape as merely a structural aspect in the narrative with the explicit mission to emphasise casteist oppression, this 'rescripting rape' narrative would focus on the sexual exploitation and eventual violent reprisal towards the woman, thus creating a woman-centred rape revenge. Moreover, it would disrupt the normative social script of sexual assault and the physically passive role prescribed to Dalit women.

Apart from documenting the plight of the women in their community and their everyday struggle to earn their livelihood and their ethos, Dalit women writers are also developing, in the course of their weave, alternative expressive spaces where they can voice resistance and re-imagine the representative norm. Their aim is to rescue female Dalit bodies from passive manipulations, and build alternative feminist agentic imaginings and narratives of survival where issues of identity, community, casteism and patriarchy are disclosed.

Resistance is creatively articulated in Dalit women's writings as an everyday resilience against daily casteism and oppression. Potentially mistaken with an indifferent stance towards hardships –or an attitude of accepting life as it is– Dalit women have learned through life-long experience that they cannot control their milieu; but they certainly can control their individual actions. As such, they have learned to use their instincts and their abilities to uncover ways so as to silently thwart the system. Kamble's *The Prisons We Broke*, for instance, is not only a revelation of the bitter reality of the social ills that Dalit women confront; it also brings to light their inner strength and vigour. The narrative abounds with stories of Dalit women who had the resilience and strength to negotiate their existence in a male-dominated society. It illustrates that even uneducated Dalit women working as field labourers have cunningly created ways of interpreting and asserting their identities. They refuse to be consigned to a state of hopelessness; instead, they strive to persevere. Kamble demonstrates through her text that, while some women endure the sufferings patiently, many others show perseverance and resistance, and even find new ways of coping with their wretched existence.

Rather than focusing on describing and analysing victimhood, most female Dalit writings shed light on the political engagement and agency of Dalit women. Kamble, for instance, considers it significant to voice the trials and tribulations of Dalit women, but she also firmly depicts them as agents in bringing about change, both in their own lives and in the lives of other Dalit women. She shows that Dalit women are far from being 'silent subjects' at the receiving end of humiliation. Instead, we see the emergence of a subject with critical agency who speaks up, writes

out and confronts outright (Guru 2009, 5). In fact, Sharmila Rege contends that it is precisely in the act of writing against humiliation that the active socio-political subjectivity and agency of Dalit women assume a concrete form (2006, 13). This demonstrates that the new generation of Dalit women is not willing to suffer as their elder generations did for hundreds of years. Bela Malik writes that "the younger women [are] most militant and less willing to tolerate the terms of their existence" (2005, 102). Kamble, for instance, is removed from the mainstream social paradigm for being a female and a Dalit; yet she compensates it all with the gift of her prose. The language is a tool at her disposal, and she uses it to defend as well as to attack.

Considering this mixture of resilience and defiance, Tabish Khair postulates that female Dalit writings should be read both as covert and overt gestures of subversion (2001, 178). This subversion is not only ideological, but also corporeal in nature. In contrast to the traditional image of Indian womanhood that supposedly upholds values such as modesty and shyness, Kamble showcases a different kind of woman that is independent, courageous and straightforward. In *The Prisons We Broke*, Dalit women resort to strong expletives in order to escape the brutal assaults on their bodies caused by their husbands. This is just an instance of how Dalit women use the limited material at their disposal to subvert hierarchies of gender and caste, and strive to turn the logic of subjugation back on their tormenters. In response to regulations and assumptions imposed on their bodies that render them polluted, Dalit women convert their 'polluting' bodies into sharp weapons that help protect themselves from domestic violence, both verbal and physical. Female Dalit writers, such as Kamble, include many aspects of their lives that are absent from men's writings, such as the experiences of menstruation, female sexual desire, and gendered violence, as instruments in their claim for a rightful social and narrative space. Moreover, in using their bodies as narrative weapons they contradict the paternalist conception that links women with the emotional and bodily, and therefore devalue their rational and intellectual capacities.

These writers vividly demonstrate their ability to craft intellectual productions, as women and as Dalits, and they do so without erasing their bodily and emotional experiences; precisely the contrary, they make sure to emphasise them. This evinces the mark of feminism in their voices and ideas as most of the women portrayed in *The Prisons We Broke*, for instance, are unmistakably feminist –without using or knowing the term– in their rebellions and support for each other. Their writings not only address the lacunae in the literary tradition of feminist representation in Indian writing, but also transcend the stereotype of 'narrative of pain and suffering' that has come to be associated with Dalit writing. The bodies and experiences of Dalit women, that have been marginalised and obliterated in the domain of mainstream Dalit literature, are now repositioned right at the centre, together with a strong collective affirmative stance.

CONCLUSION

As has been put forth, another substantial characteristic of the caste system is its gendered nature, which demonstrates that 'Dalit' is far from being a homogeneous category with fixed and universal layers of suffering. The caste system has constructed and shaped the image of the 'good Indian woman' and has distorted the image of the Dalit woman, as Jadhav and Kamble especially lay bare in their texts. Rendered as silent, submissive and passive, the Dalit woman has suffered from accentuated discrimination as the patriarchy ruling Indian society has added to the patriarchy that holds sway over Dalit households. Patriarchy has also coalesced with matriarchy, a fierce combination that has left its mark especially on the figure of the daughter-in-law. This patriarchal –and matriarchal– codification of caste has objectified and denigrated the Dalit woman and has converted her in the repository of male power and control, which has ultimately established a dreadful and irrefutable link between female sexuality and the preservation of the caste order.

The Dalit woman's predicament has been many-sided, intensified by many disparate forces and pervading every sphere of life. Yet, the element that constituted the repository of male power and oppression and strengthened her 'twice Dalit' state is her body. Gender has been central to the constitution of the caste system and there are specific ways in which women's experiences and bodies are structured into the caste order, indeed specific ways in which bodies are gendered. As a result, caste and patriarchy act together to gain control over the female body. Moreover, the prolonged exposure to multi-layered kinds of oppression complicates the ability to extricate oneself from the existing situation. For that reason, many scholars and writers on the Dalit question have critiqued the gender limitations of the Dalit consciousness as a dangerous rhetorical construction of collective identity formation and have warned against this discursive construct, unrepresentative of caste or gender pluralist identities and experiences. In doing this, they have argued that this discourse could potentially reduce Dalit women to a hypersymbolic state of invisibility, which is why a separation of the 'Dalit woman' within the Dalit community category is necessary.

The essentialism of the Dalit literary project has also affected it internally. It has legitimised narrow and gendered representations and has depicted Dalit selfhood as a monolithic image with a largely male-centric orientation. However, Dalit identity is neither homogeneous nor unified and, therefore, the correlation of a part for the whole is problematic and oblivious. The systematic assumptions of gender neutrality in Dalit literature over the decades have rendered Dalit women invisible. They have only been 'guest appearances' in Dalit texts (Guru 2008, 160), largely stereotyped as backward-thinking, silent and submissive victims, as put forth by Jadhav. The 'rape script' added to these stereotypes (Brueck 2014) by building a discursive determinism and further oppressing the Dalit woman's body and self. It accentuated her social devaluation, vulnerability, and the spectatorial pity crafted around her.

As both the Indian feminist movement and the Dalit movement itself failed to adequately engage with their predicament, Dalit women have resolved to take hold of the pen themselves, and reclaim the widening of the literary scope which

could alone shed light on their own Dalit realities. Standing at the intersection of ethnicity, caste and gender, Kamble not only presents a different side of the story, but she also feels the need to tell it differently, steered by her differential experience (Rege 1998). She attempts a Dalit feminist recuperation of the casteist and misogynistic narrative and a re-imagination of the representative norm, through both covert and overt agency and resistance. Most importantly, she testifies to the mechanisms of power, both among the powerful and the powerless.

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