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'WHISPERS OF IMMORTALITY' IN THE WASTELANDS OF T.S. ELIOT AND FRANCIS SCOTT FITZGERALD

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‘WHISPERS OF IMMORTALITY’
IN THE WASTELANDS OF
T.S. ELIOT
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the substance of this dissertation is entirely the result of my investigation and that due reference or acknowledgment is made, whenever necessary, to the work of other researchers.

Date: ……

Signed: ……

To my dear parents,

To my beloved sisters,

To my dearest, loveliest nieces Houda and Ikram,

To my brother-in law

And

To all my family and friends.

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Abstract

The present dissertation attempts to provide a reflection on modernity, disenchantment and nostalgia in archetypal works in American modernism that rendered the crisis of the modern age. The primary sources of this research consist in *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Hollow Men* (1925), written by the modernist poet Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 - 1965), and *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender Is the Night* (1934), belonging to the American novelist Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896 - 1940).

My aim is to demonstrate, through Walter Benjamin's analysis of Baroque aesthetics in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), through his reading of Charles Baudelaire and Marcel Proust in "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire" (1939), as well as through his concept of the 'aura' he developed in *The Storyteller* (1936), how modern men's cult of decadent beauties led to their estrangement from a unified universe of tradition and harmony. At the same time, it is their contact with archaic beauties that helps them restore the link with a distant realm of harmony identified with purity, virginity and childhood innocence, that is to say, only with the past.

The research tries thus to demonstrate how the wastelands of Eliot and Fitzgerald, sterile worlds reduced to a state of ruin and fragmentation, are not devoid of harmony since it is precisely the contact with the ruin that brings the protagonists back to ancient times of timeless beauties. In what follows, we will see how the crumbled universes of Eliot and Fitzgerald parable a state of melancholy and disenchantment at the same time as they reflect in the ruins and rubbles, the timeless beauties of the past. We will see precisely how, in the works of both American artists, the ruin becomes a complex image that conveys both the horror and the glory of human existence.

Contents

Introduction

The old Romantic concept according to which 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty'[1] ceases to function in a world where moral standards are inappropriate in the face of the beautiful. When beauty disengages from morality, when ethics bows to aesthetics, and when a spirit of humanity gives way to a spirit of fashion, the values of the world detach themselves from a traditional and more unified pattern. In fact, while ancient societies viewed an intimate relationship between ethical standards and the perception of beauty, decadent societies cultivated new modes of beauty whose criteria obeyed solely to aesthetic authority. Gradually a dissociation between the realms of morality, religion and ethics and the conception of beauty led to a fragmentation of the values of the world. What we regard as beautiful is no more related to what we conceive to be truth, provided that the latter represents the original values of the world, ones that are connected to a divine order and which, pure and unadulterated, remain immune to the decadence of the modern world.

The present study demonstrates how modern men's cultivation of decadent beauties led to their alienation from a harmonious universe of traditional and established values. At the same time, it is their contact with sites and monuments of ancient splendours that allows them to restore the link with a romantic and harmonious past identified with purity and innocence. The authors selected for my analysis are Thomas Stearns Eliot (1888 - 1965) and Francis Scott Fitzgerald (1896 - 1940), influential figures in American Modernism that brilliantly rendered the decadence of their age. In fact, while many critics regard Eliot's poems as archetypal works of modern alienation and disenchantment, Fitzgerald's prose has often been considered as a most representative literature of melancholy and nostalgia. In "The Function of Nostalgia," Wright Morris argues that if nostalgia is the "subject" of Wolfe, Hemingway and Faulkner, it is left to Fitzgerald, "the

[1] John Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", *English Romantic Poetry, An Anthology*, NY: Stanley Appellbaum, Dover Publications, 1996.

aesthete of nostalgia,"[1] to render the wistful song of yearning proper to the age of decadence and disenchantment. My choice of the authors is also due to the interesting dialogue Eliot and Fitzgerald share as both belong to the same era and both tell the crisis of the modern age. Thus I wish to focus my study on four major works, namely Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Hollow Men* (1925) and Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925) and *Tender Is the Night* (1934).

What is meant by 'modern world' is a universe in which objects and experiences lose their referents as they distance themselves from their original meaning. Thus the 'modern age' is not linked to a specific era but to the state of 'modernity' which is a state by which objects and experiences have no stable meaning as this is divided as a result of the multiplicity and the disparity of modern life, an experience essentially identified with the diversity and dynamism of the modern city. In *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth Century American Literature*, Dana Brand defines modernity as a state by which "the phenomenological character of experience is less unified, coherent or continuous than it was in earlier historical periods."[2] This suggests that modernity becomes assimilated to movement and dynamism, to change and variation, or, as Charles Baudelaire puts it in "The Painter of Modern Life", to "the transient, the fleeting, the contingent…the one half of art, the other being the-eternal and the immovable."[3] In this sense, modernity becomes a state by which values distance themselves from an original and traditional pattern.

Similarly, what is meant by 'romantic past', not one specifically linked to the Romantic age, but a unified past that secures the harmony between man and nature, between subject and object, between the idea and the reality or as Richard Lehan suggests, a universe in which nature mirrors an inner soul so that "to read the universe [is] to read the unfolding of nature and to understand the correspondences

[1] Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia," Arthur Mizener (ed), *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1963, p 25.
[2] Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth Century American Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p 2.
[3] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 403.

that [exist] between man and (say) the animal world."[1] The romantic past will refer thus to an age of innocence, which may be the harmonious childhood of the individual or the unified past of a whole community. In the work of Fitzgerald, for example, the modern world is one concerned with city life with its turbulence and agitation, the romantic past, on the other hand, refers to the harmonious childhood of the protagonists much like those blessed years of boyhood and college years the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* evokes in the closing paragraphs of Fitzgerald's book.

Thus the experience of modernity is closely related to city life with its dynamism and variety. In *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*,[2] Richard Lehan draws a close relationship between urban life and modernity, an experience characterized by movement and variation, hence a detachment from a traditional pattern of old values, these being vanished, lost somewhere in the bustle of the metropolitan crowd or absorbed by the suffocating atmosphere of the rotten fog. The modern city suggests thus a falling away from an ideal, a place of falling towers, much like the crumbled towers of 'Jerusalem', 'Athens', 'Alexandria', 'Vienna' and 'London' in Eliot's poem. Quite the same idea may be found in Northrop Frye's reading of Eliot[3] where the author suggests a close relationship between the urban world of Eliot and the horror of Dante's *Inferno* and Baudelaire's decadent Paris where the commuters of Eliot's unreal city become assimilated to the walking shades of Dante's *Inferno* or to the spectral crowd of Baudelaire's 'fourmilliante cité' in "Les sept vieillards".

Yet it seems like the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald are not so disenchanted since the ruins and rubbles of the wasteland seem to conceal a hidden sense of unity. In "The Death of Europe,"[4] Hugh Kenner suggests a hidden message of harmony in the very form of Eliot's *Waste Land* where the "heap of broken images" is also a superb mosaic of timeless quotations constructed upon the ruins of older poems. Besides, the contact with places of harmony identified with nature and the

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[1] Richard Lehan, "*Sister Carrie*: The City, the Self, and the Modes of Narrative Discourse," *Cambridge University Press*, 1991, p 66.

2 Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998.

[3] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot An Introduction*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963.

[4] Hugh Kenner, "The Death of Europe", Bloom, Harold (Ed), *The Waste Land: Modern Critical Interpretations*, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 1986, www.questia.com.

innocence of childhood, Northrop Frye suggests in his analysis of Eliot's poems, will bring the protagonists into contact with a distant realm of innocence close to God and to the Garden of Eden. Likewise, in 'Patterns of Alienation and Unity in T. S. Eliot's Poetry: From the 'Heap of Broken Images' to the 'Complete Consort Dancing Together,"[1] Dr. Foued Djemai suggests a dual character in Eliot's imagery so that behind each image of alienation one may find a hidden sense of unity. This duality is represented at best in the image of the 'cactus' in Eliot's *Hollow Men* where the very symbol of dryness and sterility may also express a hidden sense of redemption since the element itself contains water, the essence of life and the symbol of fertility. Thus in the works of both Eliot and Fitzgerald, behind the wasteland's song of desolation, the reader may perceive the measures of an unheard song of innocence hidden in the timeless monuments that adorn the deserts of the wasteland or concealed among the leaves of the artists' bounteous gardens.

The questions one may ask is how do Eliot and Fitzgerald recreate the romantic past in a fragmented modern world? Do their writings partake of the last spell of Romanticism in an era of disenchantment? Does Fitzgerald's 'foul river' in the 'valley of ashes' preserve the purity of Thomas Cole's *Catskill Creek*? Does Eliot's 'dull canal' in "The Fire Sermon" still reflect the glory of Spencer's *Sweet Thames* in *Prothalamion?* Does it still shed the glow of Wagner's *Rheingold* in *The Twilight of the Gods*? How does Wagner's opera reverberate with the 'horns and motors' of Eliot's 'unreal city'?

In what follows, I will try to demonstrate how Eliot and Fitzgerald bring harmony out of the desolate landscapes, polluted waters and industrial wastes of their modern urban worlds. We will see, more precisely, how the authors restore, from the present world of waste and disorder, the link with a distant realm of innocence identified with purity and virginity. The fact is that they oscillate between those opposed realms whether these are expressed in Dante's terms of

[1] Foued Djemai, 'Patterns of Alienation and Unity in T. S. Eliot's Poetry: From the 'Heap of Broken Images' to the 'Complete Consort Dancing Together,'' Magister's Degree Dissertation, Department of English, Institute of Foreign Languages, University of Algiers, Algiers, 1992. (Unpublished)

Inferno and *Paradiso,* in Williams Blake's songs of experience and innocence, or in Baudelaire's states of *spleen* and *ideal*.

The theoretical approach that will be used to explore the different issues of my study will draw from different schools. New Criticism is a basic approach that will support my reading of Eliot's and Fitzgerald's texts. For the New Critics, the 'text itself' establishes an 'organic unity' and its formal elements collaborate to convey the overall meaning of the work, which the New Critics call the 'theme', and which is supposed to have a "universal human significance" that "transcends the historical time and place"[1] of the work. Since my study will explore an important range of timeless and universal themes, it seems to me that a New Critical reading of the texts selected for my study will help identify those themes. If we consider, for example, *The Great Gatsby*, one of the novel's major topics is 'nostalgia' which is a timeless theme of the human condition. So a New Critical reading of *The Great Gatsby* will help explore how the formal elements of the book convey Fitzgerald's 'deathless song' of yearning. Besides, it seems that an analysis of Eliot's and Fitzgerald's works would be incomplete if we do not examine the significance of the figurative language of the works. Imagery and symbolism are, in fact, of fundamental importance. In the case of *The Great Gatsby,* for example, it is the text's powerful imagery that evokes the state of despair and disenchantment found in *The Waste Land*. It is also the text's wistful imagery that evokes the "melancholy lyricism of the author's favourite poet, John Keats."[2]

The intersection of different texts by different authors will thus appeal to my second approach which is Intertextuality. According to the Intertextual approach, there is no original discourse and each utterance echoes a previous utterance. Not only will the approach help define the relationship between the authors selected for the study, but it will also explore the influence of major writers such as Charles Baudelaire, Joseph Conrad and Marcel Proust on both Eliot and Fitzgerald. Intertextuality will thus help explain the meanings of Eliot's and Fitzgerald's works

[1] Lois Tyson, *Critical Theory Today: A User-Friendly Guide*, NY: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006, p 150.
[2] Ibid, p 150.

as their texts are closely entangled with other influential texts. It will help, for example, explore the theme of 'alienation' which is deeply rooted in the work of Joseph Conrad, an author to whom both Eliot and Fitzgerald showed a deep response. Yet, in the case of Conrad, the characters' alienation is often linked to the modern state. Many critics link it to the Weberian concept of 'anomie' which is a result of what Max Weber defined as "the disenchantment of the world", the modern process of rationalization that annihilates the human quality of the individual.[1] In this sense, perhaps the Frankfurt School approach (or Critical Theory) will be useful to study the effects of modernity on the human individual.

Critical Theory, or The Frankfurt School, is the approach concerned with the critique of "modernity, modernization and the modern state."[2] The school's major figures are Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno whose *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944) is considered as the founding text of the School. Critical Theory will thus bring the theoretical material to analyse what the school might call "the alienation of modernity." To support my reading of the literary texts chosen for my study, I selected the work of Adorno's colleague, Walter Benjamin who, in his project on the Parisian arcades, depicted the quintessential figure of modernity, the *flâneur*. Benjamin's *Arcades Project* offers, indeed, a most subtle tableau of modern man "adrift in the city, in thrall to a constant barrage of people, objects, and commodities."[3] The work is, in fact, a meditation on a wide range of topics (such as 'boredom', 'eternal return', 'idleness', 'dream city' and 'fashion') closely related to Eliot's and Fitzgerald's works.

Benjamin's analysis of 17th Century Baroque aesthetics in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* (1928), a work in which he stresses the powerful relationship between the world of the baroque and allegory, will provide material to analyse the dialectical character of the images of modernity. According to Benjamin, modern values are not represented in the harmonious symbol that secures

[1] Andrew M. Koch, "Rationality, Romanticism and the Individual : Max Weber's "Modernism" and the Confrontation with 'Modernity'", *Canadian Journal of Political Science, Vol 26, N 01*, Canadian Political Science Association and the Société québécoise de science politique, 1993, pp 123-144.
[2] Gregory Castle, *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p 65.
[3] Ibid., p 68.

the link between the image and its content but in the fragmented allegory whose meaning is divided. The modern world becomes thus assimilated to a field of ruins that cannot be reassembled in any coherent form. Yet it is the smallest object, the amorphous particle, writes Benjamin, which "appears to be a symbol of some enigmatic wisdom." (*OGT* 140) Thus in Benjamin's sense, where there is material fullness one may find nothing but emotional vacuity, just as the profusion of objects, images and commodity will provide nothing but emotional void and melancholy. At the same time it is the ruin, the amorphous detail that restores harmony in the modern world.

Benjamin's reading of Baudelaire will help identify the mood of modernity which is essentially identified with the French poet's state of *spleen*. We will see that the characters' alienation in the works of the American artists finds its roots in the feeling of modern *ennui* that pervades the streets of Baudelaire's Paris. Also the quest for the *ideal* will become a major concern of the characters of both Eliot and Fitzgerald. Benjamin's reading of Marcel Proust will finally provide material to analyse the possible restoration of Benjamin's figure of the storyteller in the works of the American artists. The storyteller, that personage who, careful to secure the transmission of richness and tradition, recreates experience as faithfully as this originally happened, restores the web of meaningful experience by recreating the whole context and circumstances in which it occurred and creating, therefore, 'correspondances' that allow an encounter with an earlier life.

Last but not least, Northrop Frye's analysis of Eliot's imagery in *T.S. Eliot: An Introduction* as well as his theory of literary archetypes he developed in *Anatomy of Criticism* will help identify recurrent archetypes such as the 'desert', the 'city' and the 'garden' to be found in the works of both Eliot and Fitzgerald. These settings in particular will constitute major landscapes that will symbolize significant moods, feelings and emotions in the works of both artists. The chapters of the present research will be thus organized according to the three major landscapes, namely, the 'desert', the 'city' and the 'garden', which form the artwork of both American artists.

In the first chapter, entitled *The 'Dead Land', The 'Cactus Land' or The Landscape of Desolation*, I will analyse the symbolic landscape in the works of Eliot and Fitzgerald. This, assimilated to a waterless desert, suggests that the modern world is reduced to a state of ruins and rubbles. At the same time, it is the ruin that will secure the link with a distant and harmonious past. We will see that the ruin is less an image of despair than a site of hope and regeneration since it is an echo from ancient times. The ruin becomes thus the ultimate refuge of tradition since it contains the essence of human life.

In the second chapter, entitled *'Unreal City' or the Song of Experience*, I explore the urban landscape in the works of both American artists where the protagonists' cult of the worldly and the fashionable leads only to their impoverishment and to the profanation of their universe. Drawing essentially from Baudelaire's model in *Tableaux parisiens*, I will try to examine the extent to which Eliot's and Fitzgerald's works can be read as portraits of modern life with Baudelairean themes of decadence and modern *ennui*. We will see precisely how Eliot and Fitzgerald expressed the 'boredom' and the 'horror' of modern urban life; how they depicted the fogs and crowds of Baudelaire's *fourmilliante cité* and how precisely they caught the mood of Baudelaire's *spleen* in their *unreal* cities.

In the last chapter, entitled *The 'Rose Garden' or the Unheard Song of Innocence*, I will analyse the rural landscape in the works of both American artists. We will see precisely how Eliot's and Fitzgerald's characters finally find moments of harmony through memory, through their quest for Baudelaire's *ideal* and through the revival of the tastes and scents of the past. It is, in fact, through their communion with Baudelaire's 'previous life' that they revive lost moments of unity identified with nature and childhood innocence. We will see that harmony is to be found only in the depths of human existence as the protagonists' quest will lead them back to the depths of their life, to their early childhood, to the childhood of the whole community, back to the childhood garden of Marcel Proust in *Du côté de chez Swann* where the flowers of *Méséglise* and the 'madeleine' of Aunt Leonie are strong vehicles of memory.

Thus the main argument of my research is to demonstrate how modern men's spiritual battle assumes the form of a spiritual odyssey where they conjugate what Eliot calls the 'boredom', the 'horror' and the 'glory' of modern life. Through a crossing of the fragmented desert, the demonic city and the serene garden, the characters of Eliot and Fitzgerald keep on 'mixing memory and desire' as they oscillate between two opposed realms – a demonic state of fragments and modern sterility identified with the present urban world and a paradisal state of innocence, cultural coherence and potency which is not so much a future or eternal life as the lost cherished past.

Chapter I

The 'Dead Land', the 'Cactus Land'

or

The Landscape of Desolation

I. 1. Modernity and Disenchantment: An Aesthetic of Lamentation

I. 2. Ruins and Rubbles: An Aesthetic of Redemption

Introduction

As a tableau of a ruined post-war world, the works of Eliot and Fitzgerald have often been regarded as ones that epitomize all forms of chaos and disorder. They not only express the waste and world-weariness of a modern world torn up by war, but they also depict the ‘darkness’ and the ‘horror’ of the human heart such as described in the quintessential figure of human depravity, Conrad’s Kurtz, whose last words (“The horror!, the horror!”) Eliot once had had as an epigraph for “The Waste Land”. Indeed, Eliot’s and Fitzgerald’s fragmented languages, their demonic imagery as well as their dark themes of modern alienation place their works as archetypal works of modern sterility and disenchantment. However, for all the ruins and fragments of the artists’ worlds, it would perhaps be inappropriate to assume that their works are devoid of any harmony. In what follow, we will see how the rocky and waterless deserts of Eliot and Fitzgerald reflect the disenchantment of modern life at the same time as they hide, among the ruins and rubbles, the timeless beauties of the past.

I. 1. Modernity and Disenchantment: An Aesthetic of Lamentation

Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie
N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,
Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie
Et mes chers souvenirs sont plus lourds que des rocs.

Charles Baudelaire – « Le Cygne »

In a series of landscape paintings of the Hudson River School, the American Romantic painter, Thomas Cole (1801-1848), depicted sublime panoramas of the Catskill wilderness in which he crystallized the tints of the American Landscape as "a union of the picturesque, the sublime and the magnificent."[1] (See figure I) The pictures included all the characteristics of the American sublime the romantic painter defined in his "Essay on American Scenery" (1836) as an encounter of the wilderness and the forest ("the savage breast…clothing with every variety of tint of green, and every variety of light and shade") the river and water, ("a rich and boundless theme…without which every landscape is defective,") as well as the sky which is, according to Thomas Cole, "the soul of all scenery." Such pictures were to visualize what the Western world saw as the site of bliss, fecundity and regeneration which was the new world, a 'rich and boundless theme' that has entertained the American mind since the Age of Discovery, and what the literary imagination sealed in volumes of scriptures from Thoreau through Twain to Fitzgerald and Hemingway. It was an ideal clearly figured in the American mind, clearer than the Catskill Creek, more transparent than Walden Pond. It was a 'poetic idea' deeply rooted in American life, "deeper than the Mississippi and the Big-Two Hearted River, down to that sunken island that once mythically flowered for Dutch sailors' eyes":[2]

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[1]Thomas Cole, "Essay on American Scenery", *American Monthly Magazine 1*, (January 1836) 1-12.

[2] Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia", Arthur Mizener, *F. Scott Fitzgerald, A Collection of Critical Essays*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1963, p 25.

> Most of the big shore places were closed now and there were hardly any lights except the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound. And as the moon rose higher the inessential houses began to melt away until gradually I became aware of the old island here that flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes - a fresh, green breast of the new world. Its vanished trees, the trees that had made way for Gatsby's house, had once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams; for a transitory enchanted moment man must have held his breath in the presence of this continent, compelled into an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder. (*GG* 171)

As the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* nostalgically figures in the closing paragraphs of Fitzgerald's book, the virgin continent, as perceived by the first settlers, offered for the last time in history a proper object to the dream that had nourished the European imagination since Virgil. The dream was to return to a Garden of Eden and to enjoy a Virgilian retreat to a green landscape where purity, fertility and moral regeneration should meet. As Elise Marienstras demonstrates in her work, *Les mythes fondateurs de la nation américaine*, the image of pastoral America in the mind of the Europeans may be explained by their nostalgia for a bygone paradise, a paradise, however, not irrecoverably lost since it may be found again in the new continent, a place where man could find the virgin quality necessary for a new beginning:

> Chez Jefferson…l'énumération minutieuse des « rivières et ruisselets », des « montagnes », des « cascades et des grottes », des « minerais et autres richesses souterraines », etc., dans les douze premières sections des *Notes sur la Virginie* crée le climat particulier à la Pastorale. La Virginie y apparaît dans la richesse de sa végétation, dans la douceur de paysages apparemment non encore touchés par l'homme, dans la puissance latente d'une nature bienveillante, où l'homme vit dans l'innocence première…[1]

What Jefferson saw as a most essential quality in American life is the labour of the land and the contact with the soil: "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God," he says creating thus an ideal of a 'domesticated garden' where agriculture becomes a most essential activity. In fact, the 'fresh green breast' of Fitzgerald was already the 'broad lap' of Crèvecoeur in *Letters of An American Farmer*, a book that bestows the virgin continent with all qualities of freshness and abundance (Here nature opens her broad lap to receive the perpetual

[1] Elise Marienstras, *Les mythes fondateurs de la nation américaine*, Paris: François Maspero, 1976, p 81 ; 85.

accession of new comers, and to supply them with food.)[1] And as the human imagination saw in America the 'Garden of the World', the heart of the continent became, Henry Nash Smith writes in *Virgin Land: The American West Symbol and Myth*, "The master symbol of the garden [that] embraced a cluster of metaphors expressing fecundity, growth, increase, and blissful labor in the earth..."[2]

Soon the agrarian dream started to be threatened by the shadow of modernity as America, along with the whole Western World, was entering an era of 'improvement' parallel to a phase of moral decadence. This Thomas Cole expressed as early as in his "Essay on American Scenery" (1836) in which he cannot but include in the canvas a pessimistic note:

> Yet I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes are quickly passing away…the most noble scenes are made desolate…The wayside is becoming shadeless, and another generation will behold spots, now rife with beauty, desecrated by what is called improvement...[3]

In his series, *The Course of Empire* (1830), in which he depicts the development of an imagined Roman civilization from wilderness through pastoral to empire, Thomas Cole not only shows the danger of capitalism and imperialism as a threat to moral standards but he also predicts an apocalyptic destiny for America. Such prophecies are perhaps not without foundation since Cole's words seem to have found expression less than a century later in a sinister area of land not far from New York:

> ABOUT half way between West Egg and New York the motor road hastily joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile, so as to shrink away from a certain desolate area of land. This is a valley of ashes - a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke and, finally, with a transcendent effort, of men who move dimly and already crumbling through the powdery air. (*GG* 26)

Indeed, the pristine vision of the Dutch sailor in *The Great Gatsby* was only "for a transitory enchanted moment" during which the trees had already "vanished"

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[1] J. Hector St John De Crèvecoeur, *Letters form An American Farmer* (1782), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997, p 15.
[2] Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land: The American West Symbol and Myth*, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1950, p 123.
[3] Thomas Cole. "Essay on American Scenery". *American Monthly Magazine 1*, (January 1836) 1-12.

and the “lights” fainted to “the shadowy, moving glow of a ferryboat across the Sound.” Contemporary America could hardly offer a proper object to the first immaculate vision of the new world, and the pastoral setting is now succumbing to the powers of industrialisation and urbanisation. The “fresh green breast” that “flowered once for Dutch sailors’ eyes” is now nothing more than a “solemn dumping ground” which lies under Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s eyes. In other words, as John Rohrkemper puts it in his essay, “The Allusive Past: Historical Perspective in ‘The Great Gatsby’”, the valley of ashes stands for the corruption of the Jeffersonian agrarian dream and Doctor T. J. Eckleberg becomes an “anagram for Doctor Thomas Jefferson’s Disgusting City.”[1] In the valley of ashes, indeed, the farm is ‘fantastic’, the garden ‘grotesque’ and the wheat, the ridges and the hills are shaped only by ashes, and Jefferson’s agrarian dream becomes now lost “in that vast obscurity beyond the city, where the dark fields of the republic rolled on under the night.” (*GG* 171)

Thus in *The Great Gatsby*, the ‘car’, the ‘motor road’, the ‘railroad’ and the ‘chimney’ become ultimate images of sterility and corruption. They represent the ‘machine’ that darkens the “fields of the republic” and corrupts the minds of its inhabitants. They are also the “foul dust floated in the wake of [Gatsby’s] dream,” (*GG* 8) Nick says. The same atmosphere of decay and barrenness is depicted in Fitzgerald’s last finished novel, *Tender Is the Night*, where the world of the machine is not divorced from that of the ‘foul dust’:

> Abe left from the Gare Saint-Lazare at eleven - he stood alone under *the fouled glass dome*, relic of the seventies, era of the Crystal Palace; his hands, of that *vague gray color that only twenty-four hours can produce*, were in his coat pockets to conceal the trembling fingers. (*TN* 91) (Italics mine)

In an excellent book which describes the tensions between technology and the pastoral ideal, *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx shows, in fact, how in the modern fable, the old pastoral myth is “obsolete” and even if Eden is briefly incarnated its effect is “ironic and bitter.” To Leo Marx, Carraway’s final vision in

[1] Cited in John Rohrkemper, “The Allusive Past: Historical Perspective in "The Great Gatsby"”, *College Literature*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring, 1985), p 159.

The Great Gatsby, is "a mere salute to the memory of a vanished America" and the American hero, like in "*Walden*, *Moby Dick* and *Huckleberry Finn*", is "either dead or totally alienated from society, alone and powerless like the evicted shepherd of Virgil Eclogue."[1] In *The Great Gatsby*, indeed, the dream of Arcadia is nothing more than a beautiful tapestry: "The living-room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it, so that to move about was to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles." (*GG* 31)

The corrupt milieu of *Gatsby*, the 'foul dust', the American scenery of early Twentieth Century may be now, to Thomas Cole, the apocalyptic one of *Desolation* (1836), a picture of a single column encircled by vines and tendrils, an extraordinary allegory of the fall of civilizations with the ultimate return of nature (See figure II). It can be also his *Landscape with a Dead Tree* (1828), a parable of moral degeneration yet with a light of redemption. However, in the 'valley of ashes', "There is no Light" save the dim green light from Daisy's dock.[2] Indeed, the barren landscape of *Gatsby* is not Cole's *Desolation*, not even his spectral *Landscape with a Dead Tree* which still contains a promise of redemption, but Eliot's 'dead tree' which "gives no shelter."

> 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.
>
> "The Waste Land" (19 - 24)

In fact, the true mood of Fitzgerald's stories is rather one of desolation, reinforced through his depictions of settings of waste and decay. As early as in the second chapter of *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald establishes the general atmosphere of his story and the parallels with the cracked and waterless desert of "The Waste

[1] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, p 364.
[2] An echo of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," (But here there is no light / Save what from heaven is with the breezes blown,) a poem which provided both a title and an epigraph for Fitzgerald's last finished novel, *Tender Is the Night* (1934).

Land" become unmistakable: Fitzgerald's 'valley of ashes' becomes Eliot's 'dead land' with its 'arid plains,' 'dull roots', 'dried tubers' and 'dusty trees'. *Gatsby*'s 'foul river' becomes Eliot's 'dull canal', and as "ashes grow like wheat into ridges and hills and grotesque gardens" in *The Great Gatsby*, in Eliot's realm, "branches grow/ Out of…stony rubbish." In *Tender Is the Night*, Fitzgerald's association of dust imagery ("fouled glass dome") to the atmosphere of fear ("trembling fingers") in the passage above is also Eliotian (I will show you fear in a handful of dust.) And it is worth noticing how perfectly the pattern corresponds to Northrop Frye's archetypes of 'demonic imagery'[1] where the world of 'ruins and catacombs' is not detached from that of pain and melancholy.

Such associations suggest that the disenchantment Fitzgerald expressed in his works is more than a reflection of the world-weariness of the post-world war years or a chronicle of the lost generation as many critics seem to suggest. To limit such a mood to a single decade is perhaps to overlook a major part of the American novelist's works as these seem more concerned with the artist's disenchantment with modern life. What Fitzgerald's settings picture, in fact, is "that immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history." [2] Like Eliot's, they reflect the chaos and the moral vacuity of the modern age. Both artists lament the passing of an old order of traditional and established values, what they expressed through their nostalgia for a healthy and unified past whose values are now vanished, somewhere buried amid the catacombs of the tragic fields of the war, or lost in the rush of the metropolitan crowd.

The past the modernist artists mourn is, however, difficult to locate. To Eliot, the past may be the Elizabethan Age evoked in the opening of "The Fire Sermon" when the narrator remembers the innocent times of Spencer's Prothalamion (Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song), or the more innocent past of Chaucer's days, the time when April still evoked moral and spiritual regeneration. The past

[1] Northrop Frye, "Archetypal Criticism: Theory of Myths," *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957, p 147.
[2] T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth", *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, quoted in James W. Tuttleton, "T. S. Eliot and the Crisis of the Modern," *Modern Age*, (1987:Summer/Fall), p.282.

may be also for Eliot the relatively innocent one of the Belle Époque evoked in the episode of Pre-war Germany in “The Burial of the Dead”:

> 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.
>
> “The Waste Land” (8 - 11)

Though set on the eve of World War I, the episode, which pictures the days of an older and refined Europe, remains one of a transitory state of innocence reinforced by the image of childhood liveliness and exuberance of the following episode: (And when we were children, staying at the archduke's, My cousin's, he took me out on a sled...) Such happy moments are, however, quickly passing away since the children, as well as the whole Western world, are placed in a decadent phase of a cycle (Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.)

As for Fitzgerald, the time he longs for may be one of the wondrous pastoral America he recreates in the closing paragraphs of *The Great Gatsby*, or the romantic and harmonious past of Antebellum America he hints to in the opening chapter of the book, or the longed-for Jeffersonian America whose ‘fields’ are now ‘darkened’ by the spirit of capitalism and materialism that invaded the Republic after the Civil War. The longed-for past may be also for Fitzgerald the Victorian past of traditional and established moral, religious, social and familial values. These the American novelist evokes as early as in the opening chapters of *Tender Is the Night* when during a car trip around the French Riviera, the party, driven by a former Russian aristocrat, perceives among the dashing worlds of Cannes, Nice and Monte Carlo, the ‘whispering’ of an era that vanished in the war:

> The chauffeur, a Russian Czar of the period of Ivan the Terrible, was a self-appointed guide, and the resplendent names—Cannes, Nice, Monte Carlo—began to glow through their torpid camouflage, whispering of old kings come here to dine or die, of rajahs tossing Buddha’s eyes to English ballerinas, of Russian princes turning the weeks into Baltic twilights in the lost caviare days. Most of all, there was the scent of the Russians along the coast—their closed book shops and grocery stores. Ten years ago, when the season ended in April, the doors of the Orthodox Church were locked, and the sweet champagnes they favored were put away until their return. “We’ll be back next season,” they said, but this was premature, for they were never coming back any more. (*TN* 23/24)

Less than fifty pages later, it is Dick Diver who conducts us to the 'tragic hill of Thiepval', one of the theatres of the Battle of the Somme, to evaluate the magnitude of the catastrophe that witnessed the contemporary age. In a most solemn farewell address, perhaps as solemn as the sermons of his clergyman father, he reminds us of the values to which contemporary history put a tragic end:

> This took religion and years of plenty and tremendous sureties and the exact relation that existed between the classes…You had to have a whole-souled sentimental equipment going back further than you could remember. You had to remember Christmas, and postcards of the Crown Prince and his fiancée, and little cafés in Valence and beer gardens in Unter den Linden and weddings at the mairie, and going to the Derby, and your grandfather's whiskers…All my beautiful lovely safe world blew itself up here with a great gust of high explosive love, Dick mourned persistently. (*TN* 67/68)

Though distant, the different periods Eliot and Fitzgerald long for share, at least, one aspect: They belong to a vanished era. Moreover, they belong to a life prior to the modern age. The question one may ask is what is meant by modernity? To what historical period does the modern age correspond? As early as in the 18th Century the German Romantic poet Fredrick Schiller (1759-1805) considers his age modern when he contrasts the fragmented lives of his contemporary men to the relatively unified ones of the Greeks:

> At that first fair awakening of the powers of the mind, sense and intellect did not as yet rule over strictly separate domains; for no dissension had as yet provoked them into hostile partition and mutual demarcation of their frontiers. Poetry had not as yet coquetted with wit, nor speculation prostituted itself to sophistry. Both of them could, when need arose, exchange functions, since each in its own fashion paid honour to truth. However high the mind might soar, it always drew matter lovingly along with it; and however fine and sharp the distinctions it might make, it never proceeded to mutilate. It did indeed divide human nature into its several aspects, and project these in magnified form into the divinities of its glorious pantheon; but not by tearing it to pieces; rather by combining its aspects in different proportions, for in no single one of their deities was humanity in its entirety ever lacking. How different with us Moderns! With us too the image of the human species is projected in magnified form into separate individuals - but as fragments, not in different combinations, with the result that one has to go the rounds from one individual to another in order to be able to piece together a complete image of the species. (Fredrick Schiller – *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* (1794))

Later, in the Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1801), the English Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850) draws a more precise definition

of modernity when he associates the modern experience to the "accumulation of men in cities":

> A multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies. (William Wordsworth, *Preface to Lyrical Ballads*)

In *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth Century American Literature,* Dana Brand associates modernity to a set of historical events and cultural phenomena as diverse as the development of the railroad, the invention of photography or the weakening of the influence of religion. To that list, one may add the fall of aristocracy and the decrease of religious institutions, the decline of social and familial structures, the progress of science and technology, the development of cities, as well as the destruction of the natural universe.

Indeed, if there is one main aspect of modernity upon which universal thought agrees, it is the deterioration of the natural world caused by modernity, urbanism and the advances of technology, a central theme to be found in works as disparate as Richard Llewellyn's *How Green Was my Valley* (1939) or Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (1904). This latter, in particular, offers a typical jeremiad of an aristocratic family who must abandon the family estate to a wealthy businessman who envisages to transform the orchard into a hamlet of summer cottages. In a sense, Chekhov's orchard, which makes way for Lopakhin's cottages, becomes like Fitzgerald's 'fresh green breast' whose 'vanished trees' had made way for 'inessential houses'. Chekhov's play finally laments the passing of a lost order, of a lost garden as well as the death of the pastoral world of the Russian nobility. The play ends with the bitter words of farewell when the family, overcome with a feeling of loss and exile, leaves the estate leaving behind their lost pastoral world of innocence. In the end, the curtain is pulled down on their idyllic world, and the audience is left with nothing but a terrific silence accentuated by the even more throbbing sound of an axe chopping down the trees of the orchard.

More painful is “that sound high in the air/Murmur of maternal lamentation” in “The Waste Land” evoking the lamentations of Rachel for her children, the exiled Jews on their way to Babylon after the fall of Jerusalem in *The Old Testament.* Such lamentations are equally present in “The Fire Sermon” as the narrator weeps by “the waters of Leman” echoing the psalmist weeping by “the rivers of Babylon” when the once glorious City of God was remembered. Also by the waters of the Thames, the narrator sits down and weeps because now “The river sweats/Oil and tar.” Similarly, the ‘Thames-daughters’ recall the ‘Rhine-daughters’ who mourn the lost beauty of the Rhine River in Richard Wagner’s *The Twilight of the Gods*. *The Old Testament*’s prophets long for the lost healthy past in the same way the narrator does in “The Fire Sermon” when:

> A rat crept softly through the vegetation
> Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
> While I was fishing in the dull canal
>
> “The Waste Land” (187 – 189)

Eliot’s association of the contemporary world to Ezekiel’s valley of dry bones reinforces the idea of a lost paradise on earth, of a lost Canaan, the fertile land promised by God to Abraham, and whose loss *The Old Testament*’s prophets lament. In this sense, the ‘dead tree’ of Eliot in “The Waste Land” parables, in fact, the death of a pastoral order. Such associations also suggest that the feeling of modern man, as he is pried from his natural shell, is one of loss and exile.

In fact, the feeling of modern man becomes one of rootlessness and impermanence, what the French poet Charles Baudelaire develops in “The Swan”, a poem that represents the same state of transience: “Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie/N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,/Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie...” In the poem, the narrator witnesses the transformation of the French capital under Baron Haussmann and looks back on an older Paris with pain and nostalgia. As his surrounding world becomes a set of ‘chapiteaux ébauchés’, of ‘bric-à-brac confus’, the whole poem stresses the idea of exile, rootlessness and melancholy proper to the modern state: “Aussi devant ce Louvre

une image m'opprime: /Je pense à mon grand cygne, avec ses gestes fous, /Comme les exilés, ridicule et sublime."

Closely related to the modern state, is the feeling of melancholy where the individual is overcome with a sense of loss due to the multiplicity and variety of the modern experience. In fact, confronted to an abundance of images and objects, the modern man experiences a sense of loss, which is essentially the loss of meaning behind the spectacle of commodities. The profusion of images, graphics, photographs and objects in the modern world leaves little room for meaning because there are too many signifiers for very few referents. Drawing from the works of a number of theoreticians of modernity, namely, Wordsworth, Marx, Nietzsche, Benjamin, Foucault, Lefebvre and De Man, Dana Brand finally provides an accurate definition of modernity as a state in which "the phenomenological character of experience is less unified, coherent or continuous than it was in earlier historical periods…it has become harder to assign a stable meaning or value to individual things and experiences." Experience, Dana Brand considers, has become "more various and more immediately stimulating, at the same time as it appears less substantial and meaningful."[1] In this sense, the modern state is one in which objects and experiences represent values that are distant, elusive, and even absent.

Central to Walter Benjamin's concept of allegory is the idea of elusiveness of meaning at the centre of modern experiences. In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Walter Benjamin develops his theory which draws upon the universe of seventeenth-century Baroque and suggests an idea of elusiveness and distance of meaning in the modern world. In his work, Benjamin distinguishes between the stable and 'self-contained' romantic symbol, connected to a divine order and characterized by "clarity, brevity, grace and beauty" (*OGT* 164), and the 'mobile' and 'dynamic' allegory characterized by "ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning." (*OGT* 177) Modern values, Benjamin seems to suggest in his analysis of baroque aesthetics, are not represented in the 'romantic symbol' that secures the link

[1]Dana Brand, *The Spectator and the City in Nineteenth Century American Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, p 2.

between idea and object, but in the amorphous allegory whose meaning is vague and distant: "Allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things," (*OGT*, 178) says the German philosopher. This may suggest that the modern world is a universe in which history, tradition and values are ruined. The modern world becomes a field of ruins that cannot be reassembled in any coherent form. In other words, the modern state becomes an allegorical world in which objects and phenomena represent values that are no more because allegory, writes Benjamin, "means precisely the non-existence of what it represents." (*OGT*, 233) The modern world becomes, in fact, a state in which individual objects and experiences have no stable meaning and in which there is, as a result, a shade between ideas, ideals and the reality, what Baudelaire represents, in "The Swan", in that "muraille immense de brouillard."

In this sense, the modern state is one well known by Eliot's hollow men, those pathetic figures without meaning at the core and whose emptiness is precisely the effect of a 'shadow' which is placed between each conception and its object (Between the idea/And the reality/Falls the shadow.) The poem shows clearly how ideals, ideas and conceptions fail to find any commensurate object in the modern world as all process of incarnation fails.

> Between the desire
> And the spasm
> Between the potency
> And the existence
> Between the essence
> And the descent
> Falls the Shadow
>
> "The Hollow Men" – (84 - 90)

The 'shadow' between idea and reality may also represent what Baudelaire would consider the 'veil' produced by the tears of nostalgia[1] as Eliot's poem stresses the same idea of mourning and lamentation. This is suggested by the image of desolation represented in the sterile landscape of the poem evoking the desert of

[1] Walter Benjamin, « On Some Motifs in Baudelaire, » *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 187.

The Old Testament. Here again the hollow men's valley also becomes Ezekiel's 'valley of dry bones':

> This is the dead land
> This is cactus land
> Here the stone images
> Are raised, here they receive
> The supplication of a dead man's hand
> Under the twinkle of a fading star.
>
> "The Hollow Men" (39 – 44)

As it is suggested in the title of a minor poem by Eliot that stresses the idea of mourning for a 'golden vision', "Eyes that last I Saw in Tears," the 'eyes' associated to tears suggest an idea of weeping for a golden past or a 'lost kingdom.' In this context, the poem's aesthetic becomes one of lamentation and the poem's 'eyes,' the weeping eyes of Jeremiah who laments the loss of the city of God in *The Old Testament* (This broken jaw of our lost kingdoms.) Thus the images of the 'fading star,' the 'dying star,' the 'broken column,' or the 'broken stone' in "The Hollow Men" become associated to the fall of mankind and the fall of humanity and civilizations, echoing the 'falling towers' of 'Jerusalem,' 'Athens,' 'Alexandria,' 'Vienna,' and 'London' in "The Waste Land."

Similarly in the fiction of Fitzgerald, the atmosphere is one of weeping and lamentation which suggests the same sense of loss and exile. In *The Great Gatsby*, "The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath." (*GG* 15) In *Tender Is the Night*, the atmosphere is also one of mourning as the weeping motif is similarly pervasive evoking the psalmist weeping by 'the waters of Leman' in "The Waste Land": "Switzerland was an island, *washed* … by the *cataracts* along the Somme and the Aisne." (*TN* 129) (Italics mine) In *Tender Is the Night*, in fact, the narrative often pauses to concentrate on moments of meditation on America's heroes:

> They came out of the neat restored trench, and faced a memorial to the Newfoundland dead. Reading the inscription Rosemary burst into sudden tears…a red-haired girl from Tennessee whom they had met on the train this morning, come from Knoxville to lay a memorial on her brother's grave. (*TN* 68)

> There was a party at the next table that …gave the impression of a unit…Dick looked at them again; in their happy faces, the dignity that surrounded and pervaded the party, he perceived all the maturity of an older America. For a while the sobered women…had come to mourn for their dead, for something they could not repair… (*TN* 113)

The protagonists' distance from their homeland reinforces their feeling of exile. The whole atmosphere becomes thus pervaded by a feeling of impermanence and rootlessness. The characters know no stability as their lives are marked by incessant travels from the French Riviera through Switzerland to Amiens and Paris. Throughout the book, the protagonists move from place to place, from station to station, from hotel to hotel, unable to settle in a permanent place. As such, they become embarked in an endless process of movement and agitation. Such state of transience and uncertainty becomes thus reflected in their own lives as they will know no permanent feeling save pain and melancholy.

In *Tender Is the Night*, even the landscape is one of melancholy: "In November the waves grew black and dashed over the sea wall onto the shore road—such summer life as had survived disappeared and the beaches were melancholy and desolate under the mistral and rain." (*TN* 188) The passage occurs shortly after Nicole's insanity is revealed, and Dick starts to realize that he no longer loves her. The passage marks the decline of Dick and Nicole's relationship symbolizing thus the passing of the romantic past. In the passage, the landscape bears the colour of mourning and Fitzgerald mourns a lost America, an America gone mad and symbolized in Nicole. The narrative abounds in words of farewell ('Good-by, Gstaad, good-by!'; 'Good-by, my father—good-by, all my fathers', 'good-by Nicole'), and Nicole is indeed "far away… Walking in the garden ... [Dick] remembered once when the grass was damp and she came to him on hurried feet, her thin slippers drenched with dew." (*TN* 220) Like the hyacinth girl in "The Waste Land," Nicole now belongs to the realm of memory, and Dick is asked only to remember her: "Think how you love me," she whispered. "I don't ask you to love me always like this, but I ask you to remember." (*TN* 220)

In this context, the rain imagery becomes rather one of disintegration as characters "pursue their eternal dissolution under the warm rain." (*TN* 70) In fact,

like Eliot's 'hollow men', Fitzgerald's characters (or 'ash-grey men') are fragmented. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick Carraway is torn between the East and the West, between the 'orgastic future' and the innocent past, between 'memory and desire'. He is soon "within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life." In *Tender Is the Night*, both Rosemary and Nicole are fragmented identities. As an actress, Rosemary possesses too many selves: "Rosemary…was not yet unified and she was absorbed in playing around with chaos; as if her destiny were a picture puzzle." (*TN* 117) As for Nicole, she is medically declared as a "divided personality": "Nicole's world had fallen to pieces, but it was only a flimsy and scarcely created world." (*TN* 159) As William E. Doherty puts it in his essay, *Tender Is the Night and the "Ode to a Nightingale,"* Nicole is "the dream without real referent. She has no existence outside the mind of the dreamer"[1]:

> When I talk I say to myself that I am probably Dick. Already I have even been my son, remembering how wise and slow he is. Sometimes I am Doctor Dohmler and one time I may even be an aspect of you, Tommy Barban. (*TN* 179)

In the fiction of Fitzgerald, indeed, everything is confused like the "violent confusion" that bursts from Gatsby's parties. Gatsby has seen his life "confused and disordered" since the day he knew Daisy; Myrtle confuses Jordan with Daisy; Tom confuses between Lothrop Stoddard and 'Goddard'; Nick confuses New York Fifth Avenue with the pastures of his Middle West; Wilson confuses Doctor T.J. Eckleberg with God; Gatsby confuses between reality and his reveries, and Daisy cries out, "on the verge of tears": "But it's so hot…and everything's so confused…!" (*GG* 113) In the Plaza Hotel scene, Mendelssohn's Wedding March is confused with Jazz Music, and Tom bursts out: "Civilization's going to pieces!" (*GG* 18) But Tom and Daisy are themselves "careless and confused...they smashed up things and creatures and then retreated back into their money or their vast carelessness, or whatever it was that kept them together, and let other people clean up the mess they had made. . . " (*GG* 170)

[1] William E. Doherty, "*Tender Is the Night* and the 'Ode to a Nightingale,'" *Explorations of Literature*, Ed Rima Drell Reck, Louisiana State University Press, 1966, n.pag.

The book is finally read in terms of chaos and disorder as it is a set of disconnected images where everything disintegrates. The narrative is full of fragments, 'amputated wheels' and broken human parts: Tom rips a front wheel off his car and the girl with him gets her arm broken. Myrtle gets her nose broken. Her puppy's biscuits "decomposed apathetically in the saucer of milk all afternoon." (*GG* 31) Later, at the fatal accident, her left breast is "swinging loose like a flap." (*GG* 131) Meyer Wolfshiem wears human molars by way of cuff buttons. Gatsby's letter to Daisy is reduced to "pieces like snow." (*GG* 74) Later he breaks "like glass against Tom's hard malice." His identity is even more decomposed, for he is all together, 'cousin of Kaiser Wilhem', 'German spy', 'bootlegger', 'Oggsford man', 'young rajah', 'Trimalchio' and 'son of God'. In *The Great Gatsby*, in fact, the characters are dislocated; the relationships barren; nature is ravaged; the whole story is remembered as "a fragment of lost words…uncommunicable forever":

> Through all he said, even through his appalling sentimentality, I was reminded of something—an elusive rhythm, a fragment of lost words, that I had heard somewhere a long time ago. For a moment a phrase tried to take shape in my mouth and my lips parted like a dumb man's, as though there was more struggling upon them than a wisp of startled air. But they made no sound, and what I had almost remembered was uncommunicable forever. (*GG* 107)

Such images stress the idea of petrifaction of the modern world as this becomes a universe in which everything disintegrates, and the 'elusive rhythm' and the 'fragment of lost words' will remind us of a major piece of poetry which depicts so marvellously the same image of a multiverse of ruins and fragments and the same image of decay on the verge of disaster:

> 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
> Falling towers
> Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
> Vienna London
> Unreal
>
> ("The Waste Land" – 366 - 376)

In Rama Rachel weeps “for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not” (*The New Testament*, Matthew, 2: 18); likewise in the modern world, modern men weep for values that are no more. The modern state becomes one in which meaning is exiled from the core of objects and experiences, and modern values become represented less in the fresh and the blooming than in the putrid and the overripe, what Benjamin would call “a petrified, primordial landscape” (*OGT*, 166). This is also an image Eliot brilliantly renders in “The Waste Land” where everything is reduced to a state of ruin and petrification. In the poem, the land is cracked, the people fragmented, the relationships fractured, the voices split, the episodes disconnected, the language broken and the lyrics corrupted (Twit twit twit/Jug jug jug jug jug jug/So rudely forc’d/Tereu.) In Eliot’s poem, as well as in the whole contemporary world, the healthy past has vanished and the values of love, marriage, family, religion are lost. People are “neither /Living nor dead” because spiritually dead; relationships are barren because marriage has lost its traditional sense. The land is dry and waterless because life and meaning have deserted the material world. What is left in the scene is nothing more than a “heap of broken images” where you “can connect /Nothing with nothing.”

I. 2. Ruins and Rubbles: An Aesthetic of Redemption

> *Certains esprits qui aiment le mystère veulent croire que les objets conservent quelque chose des yeux qui les regardèrent, que les monuments et les tableaux ne nous apparaissent que sous le voile sensible que leur ont tissé l'amour et la contemplation de tant d'adorateurs, pendant des siècles.*
>
> **Marcel Proust – *Le Temps retrouvé***

As discussed in the previous section, the artwork of modernist literature is one of a mosaic of fragments. Also in the works of Eliot and Fitzgerald has the whole world cracked up and become assimilated to a dead land of 'falling towers' and 'broken columns'. Like Ezekiel's 'valley of dry bones', Eliot's 'dead valley', as well as Fitzgerald's 'valley of ashes', picture a multiverse of fragments in which everything is reduced to a state of ruin and disintegration:

> After that they got in their car and started back toward Amiens. A thin warm rain was falling on the new scrubby woods and underbrush and they passed great funeral pyres of sorted duds, shells, bombs, grenades, and equipment, helmets, bayonets, gun stocks and rotten leather, abandoned six years in the ground. And suddenly around a bend the white caps of a great sea of graves. Dick asked the chauffeur to stop.
>
> "There's that girl—and she still has her wreath." (*TN* 137)

Like a painting by Nicolas Poussin (1594 - 1665) which often pictures an austere tomb or a dead head in the heart of Arcadia, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's backdrops are not devoid of elegiac elements. Also are their grounds always dotted with ruins and catacombs only to evoke the death of an old and traditional order, just as Poussin's *Et in Arcadia ego* suggests the death of the pastoral dream. Likewise in the universes of Eliot and Fitzgerald, such a picture is nothing more than the representation of the values of the modern world which are also threatened by the shadow of decadence. Modern values stand on the canvas in the shades of evanescence, and this suggests that the universes of Eliot and Fitzgerald are places in which all values are ruined as these do not assume the form of a budding nature

so much as that of decay and decrepitude. In fact, the values of the modern world, Walter Benjamin seems to suggest in his analysis of baroque aesthetics, are represented not so much in “bud and bloom” as in “a petrified, primordial landscape.” (*OGT*, 166) In Benjamin’s sense, modern values are represented not in harmonious symbols that secure the link between the image and its content but in amorphous allegories characterized by ambiguity and elusiveness of meaning. “Allegories are, in the realm of thought, what ruins are in the realm of things,” (*OGT*, 178) writes Benjamin in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, and this suggests that Eliot’s and Fitzgerald’s settings, like the Paris of Baudelaire in “The Swan”, picture a world in which all objects become allegory: “Paris change! mais rien dans ma mélancolie/N'a bougé! palais neufs, échafaudages, blocs,/Vieux faubourgs, tout pour moi devient allégorie...” In other words, the aesthetics of Eliot and Fitzgerald represent a universe in which values are embodied in images which represent ideas that are no more because allegory, Benjamin writes, “means precisely the non-existence of what it represents.” (*OGT*, 233) Thus the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald become universes of chaos and disorder where nothing survives save a deep void:

> 'What is that noise?'
> The wind under the door.
> 'What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?'
> Nothing again nothing.
> 'Do
> 'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
> 'Nothing?'
>
> (“The Waste Land,” 117 - 123)

However, since nature (as well as human nature) abhors a vacuum, the ruins and catacombs of the modern world will soon turn to images of harmony as they will become the last refuge of anterior splendors. Indeed, if we consider Walter Benjamin’s theory of dialectics between fullness and vacuity, it is possible to consider a hidden sense of unity in the fragments of the modern world, for if it is accepted that abundance in images conveys an idea of vacuity of meaning, Benjamin suggests that emptiness in objects may convey a sense of fullness. What baroque culture demonstrated is that if melancholy originates from a state of

material fullness and abundance - what they expressed through a strong relationship between "mourning and ostentation" (*OGT* 140) - it may be overcome through a state of material vacuity because "the most simple object," writes Benjamin, "appears to be a symbol of some enigmatic wisdom." (*OGT* 140) In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin develops his theory which draws upon the universe of seventeenth-century Baroque and suggests an idea of redemption in "the extreme decay, the forlorn squalor, the hollow-out vacuity of the material world."[1] To Benjamin, "ruins, rubble, human skulls, overripe fruit, and decaying trees" may contain the "imprimatur of an anterior richness,"[2] perhaps because they bear traces of human hands, perhaps because they still "retain something of the gaze that has rested on them,"[3] perhaps because they are "allotted a place on which man has bestowed the imprint of his soul." [4] This explains the baroque cult of the ruin where "every feeling is bound to a priori object," (*OGT* 139) and where amorphous details are kept as objects of contemplation. The ruin becomes the most cherished object of the melancholy man whose self-alienation is distilled through his contemplation of the most insignificant objects. This is an image most brilliantly represented in Albrecht Dürer's *Melencholia I,* a work that pictures the most trivial tools of everyday life as objects of contemplation. (See Figure III)

The question one may ask is how can a ruined object convey such a sense of harmony? To examine this conception let us reflect first on what Benjamin refers to in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* as the 'truth' of an object. In the prologue of the German *Trauerspiel,* Benjamin distinguishes between 'truth' and 'knowledge'. While the latter has no prior existence and represents the content imposed by consciousness upon an object and whose understanding entails its possession, the former is the essence of the object; it is pre-existent, and it is neither imposed nor possessed. Its meaning resides in the form of the object, that is to say

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[1] Mary Caputi, "American Overabundance and Cultural Malaise: Melancholia in Julia Kristeva and Walter Benjamin," *Mary Caputi and The Johns Hopkins University Press*, 2000, § 25.

[2] Ibid., § 25.

[3] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 188.

[4] Ibid., p 186.

its self-representation. The 'truth' of an object suggests, therefore, that form and meaning are one, and that the 'shadow' between idea and form is dissolved. To put it simply, the 'truth' of an object may be its eternal value, the one connected to a divine order and that cannot be grabbed by man. 'Knowledge', on the other hand, is connected to the tangible and to the mutable world, and it is, therefore, subject to the abuse of time. Quite the same idea is developed by Charles Baudelaire in his essay, "The Painter of Modern Life" (1863) in which the author distinguishes between eternal and ephemeral beauties in a work of art:

> Beauty is made up, on the one hand, of an element that is eternal and invariable though to determine how much of it there is is extremely difficult, and on the other, of a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion.[1]

What may be significant for our analysis is that the 'truth' of an object, Benjamin considers, is revealed through a process that leads to the destruction of the ephemeral envelope of the object:

> [Truth], however, does not appear by being exposed; rather it is revealed in a process which might be described metaphorically as the burning up of the husk as it enters the realm of ideas, that is to say a destruction of the work in which its external form achieves its most brilliant degree of illumination. (*OGT* 31)

Thus the 'truth' of an object is revealed through the incineration of the object, a process by which the object reaches its highest point of luminosity. At the same time, its revelation entails its destruction so that all ephemeral beauties disappear. It becomes most apparent once the form of the object is commensurate to its eternal value. In the end, what is left is nothing more than a ruin, a ruin, however, that contains the essence of the object, that is to say its 'truth', its eternal beauty. In fact, the remnant of an object, however ruined it may be, is here only to assert itself as an eternal beauty. Thus the ruin contains an authenticity which will secure the eternal ingredient of the material world. It is, therefore, the ruin that will

[1] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 392.

restore the link with a bygone universe of harmony and suggests a promise of reunion with an anterior world close to God and to the Garden of Eden.

The 'truth' of an object is thus revealed through a process of destruction. In this sense, death becomes the most decisive moment of its brilliance because death, writes Benjamin, "digs most deeply the jagged line of demarcation between physical nature and significance." (*OGT* 166) With death, the 'shadow' between idea and reality is dissolved, and the object enters a realm of ideas. It is stripped of all ephemeral quality, but remains secure in eternity. Such analysis demonstrates how significant, indeed, is the image of death to convey a sense of redemption, and how much of modernist literature expressed precisely the same idea; how much of Eliot's and Fitzgerald's imagery represented death as an image of salvation. There is no need to mention that in the works of both Eliot and Fitzgerald, the idea of death is never without a sense of harmony.

The idea of redemption associated to death suggests a sense of duality often encountered in the poetry of Eliot where death is often the state in which man recovers his spirituality or, as suggested by Northrop Frye in his introduction to the American poet, "the point at which one enters a spiritual community."[1] In "The Hollow Men," for example, the hope of empty men emanates from a state of deadness, from 'a dead man's hand,' from a 'broken column', from a 'twinkle' of a 'fading star'. In the end, Eliot's hollow men do reach an upper world of virtue after having crossed the stages of damnation. The vision of the 'multifoliate rose', which stands for a vision of paradise, occurs after the hollow men had traversed the desert of the 'dead land,' the 'cactus land'. This suggests, Grover Smith writes in *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, that the poem's "pattern of descent and ascent implies that having plunged into hell, the hollow men may find paradise."[2] In "The Hollow Men," indeed, "damnation itself is an immediate form of salvation - of salvation from the ennui of modern life."[3] What Eliot seems to suggest here is that since the modern world is a world of decadence, all value is

[1] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot An Introduction*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, p 62.
[2] Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays : A Study in Sources and Meaning*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950, p 106.
[3] T.S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," *Selected Essays*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, p 389.

subjected to decay. Death secures it from decadence. Thus, in Eliot's poem, it is death which saves the hollow men from the decadence of the modern world, and allows them, therefore, in a realm of innocence, the realm of 'the multifoliate rose'. Likewise in "The Waste Land," it is death which liberates Phleblas from the 'boredom' and the 'horror' of modern life. By contrast, the commuters of Eliot's 'Unreal City' are caught in a death-in-life state, a terrestrial hell, which only death can liberate. As Cleanth Brooks puts it in his essay *The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth*, in Eliot's poetry, "life devoid of meaning is death; sacrifice, even the sacrificial death, may be life giving, an awakening to life."[1] In fact, Phleblas, as he dies, gets rid of his body and detaches himself from worldly needs. He forgets his life of worldly pleasures and sensations, (He passed the stages of his age and youth) and surrenders to the redeeming powers of death. His soul is secured in eternity. In a sense, Phleblas is delivered from his ephemeral envelope, and stands, therefore, as a ruin.

In "The Waste Land," the hell of modern life is also one witnessed by Tiresias, another ruin of the times that "Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest." From ancient Thebes to modern London, Tiresias underwent all forms of experience. His actual blindness suggests that his body is now ruined. His inability to see the objective world also supposes that he has no understanding of modern and urban complexities. Tiresias is in a sense dead, but immune to the decadence of the modern world. His blindness becomes part of his timelessness as now he sees only the "substance of the poem." Tiresias is a timeless figure who perceives the 'substance' of human life, that is, the 'truth', the eternal beauties of humankind.

Likewise in the fiction of Fitzgerald, the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* is ruined by the experience of the 'valley of ashes.' As another Tiresias who cannot discern the perverted values of the modern world, Nick also seems unable to 'see' the 'distorted' lives of the East, these being beyond his "eyes' power of correction." (*GG* 167) Nevertheless, it is the same experience which leads him to seek in the end

[1] Cleanth Brooks, "The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth", *TS Eliot: The Waste Land*, Casebook Series, C. B; Cox and Arnold P. Hinchliffe, London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd, 1968, p 129.

of the book a purer life in the pastures of the Middle West, he regards now as "the warm centre of the world" (*GG* 9): "So when the blue smoke of brittle leaves was in the air and the wind blew the wet laundry stiff on the line I decided to come back home." (*GG* 167) In a sense, Nick becomes like Eliot's hollow men who reach paradise after having crossed the stages of damnation. Similarly, the hero of *The Great Gatsby* knows the same pattern of death and rebirth, and his damnation is also a form of salvation since, after his death, he is acknowledged "worth the whole damn bunch put together," (*GG* 146) and that "he turned out all right at the end." (*GG* 8) Like Phleblas in "The Waste Land," he experiences, in a sense, 'death by water'[1] not simply because he dies in his pool but also because he is buried on a rainy day. "Blessed are the dead that the rain falls on," (*GG* 166) someone murmurs at his burial.

The experience of death, and more effectively, 'death by water', makes the subject "suffer a sea-change" which cleanse his body from worldly needs. In the end, the drowned body is nothing more than a remnant of civilization, a relic, but also a rich deposit, a lode. In fact, the debris of the drowned body may turn to something more substantial; they may be transformed into a rich source of eternal beauties. In "The Waste Land," indeed, there is a strange conversation about a drowned sailor who sees his eyes transformed into pearls, (I remember/ Those are pearls that were his eyes) what Eliot borrowed from the following verses of Shakespeare's *Tempest*:

> Full fathom five thy father lies,
> Of his bones are coral made,
> Those are pearls that were his eyes.
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.
>
> Shakespeare -*The Tempest, I, 2*

[1] As both Robert A. Martin and Margaret Lukens demonstrated in their respective works "Gatsby and the Dutch Sailor" and "Gatsby as a Drowned Sailor," through Fitzgerald's use of water, rain and marine imagery in *The Great Gatsby*, along with some parallel images between Gatsby and the Dutch sailor, it would seem appropriate to view Gatsby as a 'drowned sailor.'

Eliot's reference to Ariel's song in "The Waste Land," Grover Smith considers, "foreshadows "Death by Water" and opposes to that death the regenerative "death" of Ferdinand's father, Alonso, whose eyes, according to Ariel, have been changed to pearls."[1] In Grover Smith's words, there is a "symbol of rebirth" in the very action of drowning because the relics of the body once engulfed into the depths of the ocean are transformed, themselves, into something deep and profound. In her introduction to Walter Benjamin's *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections,* Hannah Arendt, uses the metaphor of the 'pearl diver', (also borrowed from the same verses of Shakespeare's *Tempest*) and summarises Benjamin's theory of the ruin in the following lines:

> …although the living is subject to the ruin of the time, the process of decay is at the same time a process of crystallization, that in the depth of the sea, into which sinks and is dissolved what once was alive, some things "suffer a sea-change" and survive in new crystallized forms and shapes that remain immune to the elements, as though they waited only for the pearl diver who one day will come down to them and bring them up into the world of the living as "thought fragments" as something "rich and strange," and perhaps even as everlasting …[2]

The pearl diver pries from the bottom of the sea "the rich and the strange, the pearls and the corals." In the same way, the process of decay is nothing more than a process of distillation which erases the transient and brings into the surface the rich and the eternal. The ruin is thus something rich, profound and substantial because it contains the depths of history and the essence of human life.

Thus the 'drowned sailor' of the book of Fitzgerald is also someone who turns to something rich and profound. Gatsby, "who represented everything for which [one may] have an unaffected scorn," (*GG* 8) is also someone who envelops boundless beauties: "There was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life…it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic

[1] Grover Smith, *TS Eliot's Poetry and Plays : A Study in Sources and Meaning*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950, p 82.

[2] Hannah Arendt, "Introduction", Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations : Reflections and Essays,* New York: Schocken Books, 1968, p 51.

readiness[1]…" (*GG* 8) Shortly before his introduction to Nick in Chapter III, the whole atmosphere changes into something "significant, elemental, and profound." (*GG* 48) And it is in this context that his smile becomes significant because it possesses "a quality of *eternal* reassurance…It face[s] … the *whole eternal world* for an instant, and then *concentrate[s]* on you…" (*GG* 49) (Italics mine) There is, in fact, something eternal and substantial in the smile of Gatsby which reveals unlimited sources of precious treasures: "I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe - Paris, Venice, Rome - collecting jewels, chiefly rubies…" (*GG* 64) The melancholic hero of Fitzgerald collects all sorts of objects that may contain some human significance because collecting, writes Hannah Arendt, "is the redemption of things which is to complement the redemption of man."[2] Perhaps Gatsby's most considerable collection is found in his splendid Gothic library, with books "Absolutely real" (*GG* 47), what baroque culture would have regarded as most cherished objects of contemplation: "The 'Book of nature' and the 'Book of times' are objects of baroque meditation. In them it possesses something housed and roofed," (*OGT* 141) writes Benjamin in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*. The book serves, in fact, as "a permanent monument in a natural scene rich in literature." (*OGT* 141) In this sense, the books become the monuments that contain the depths of history; they are the 'ruins' in which the essence of human experience is concentrated. In *The Great Gatsby*, the library, "panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas," (*GG* 46) may represent the 'pearls and corals' of Gatsby's life, and, as such, it becomes one of the few elements of the universe of Gatsby (if not the only one) which contains authenticity. For the timeless beauties of the library are reflected in the old-

[1] It is interesting to mention that Fitzgerald's reference to Gatsby's 'romantic readiness' is perhaps an echo of the romantic concept according to which 'Truth is beauty, beauty, truth.' (Keats – "Ode on a Grecian Urn") This may suggest that the beauties Fitzgerald's hero envelops are commensurate to the inviolable truth, and are, therefore, free from any decadent quality. This Fitzgerald seems to confirm when he makes his protagonist tell 'God's truth': "I'll tell you God's truth." [Gatsby] right hand suddenly ordered divine retribution to stand by." (*GG* 63/64)

Also the Keatsian concept, some scholars state, may find its roots in Plato's *Symposium*, a book that suggests an intimate relationship between beauty and morality. Again in *The Great Gatsby*, the concept seems to find embodiment in the character of Jay Gatsby since he is said to have sprung from a 'Platonic conception of himself'.

[2] Hannah Arendt, Ibid., p 42.

fashioned quality of his character.[1] Detached from the sophisticated world of the East, the anachronistic hero of Fitzgerald is preserved in a transcendent universe, or more precisely, in a 'Platonic' universe. As such, Gatsby is in a sense ruined and dead but immune to the decadence of the modern world.[2] What makes the significance of the library, indeed, is the fact that its 'substance' is witnessed by Owl Eyes, another Tiresias figure[3] who is perhaps one of the most important characters of Fitzgerald's novel because, like Tiresias, "what [he] sees, in fact, is the substance" [4] of the book: "Absolutely real - have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard." (*GG* 47)

Thus in the deserts of Eliot and Fitzgerald it is the ruin that will bear the traces of the past. The ruin becomes less an image of alienation than an echo of ancient beauties. In this sense, the rocky and waterless desert of "The Waste Land" reflects less a state of despair than a possibility for regeneration, just as the wasteland rock, Nancy Duvall Hargrove suggests in her work, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, is less a symbol of fragmentation than a form of stability[5] and protection, "a kind of refuge, even some hope for salvation."[6] Thus the ruin becomes the haven of tradition, the last refuge of ancient grandeurs, and, as such, it becomes a site rich in memory and tradition. In the works of both Eliot and

[1] Gatsby, often confused for a man of fashion – considering his dashing life style and fashionable parties – seems more likely to get close to the romance hero as many critics have shown. Aloof and socially uncomfortable, he seldom takes part to his parties. Also polite and ceremonious, he shares little with the contemporary world in which he stands in "complete isolation." (*GG* 56)

[2] It is worth noticing that in Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, the more stylish Dick Diver, a character who knows a spectacular decline in the book, burns for fuel "almost a hundred textbooks." (*TN* 130) His act may suggest that he reduces tradition and old values into ashes.

[3] In her work, "The 'Waste Land' Myth and Symbols in *The Great Gatsby*," Letha Audhuy draws an interesting parallel between Tiresias and Owl Eyes. The latter who is, in a sense blind (since he wears enormous spectacles) seems to be the most perceptive character of the book since he is able to see 'substance' in Gatsby's library and, therefore, in his life: He is the only one of Gatsby's former guests to attend Gatsby's funeral. He is the only one who pronounces the compassionate words: "The poor son-of-a-bitch." (*GG* 166) Also the fact that Owl Eyes knows "nothing about mechanics" (*GG* 55) makes of him, according to Audhuy, a timeless figure.

[4] Eliot's notes, "The Waste Land", *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Sixth Edition Volume D, Between the Wars 1914 -1945*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, p 1437.

[5] According to Duvall Hargrove, the association of 'rock' to stability may find its root in *The New Testament* where Peter is referred to as a rock.

[6] Nancy Duvall Hargrove, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1978, p 64.

Fitzgerald, it is the contact with ancient monuments of timeless beauties that will restore the tie with a bygone era of harmony. In "The Waste Land," for example, if there is one successful moment of remembrance, it is the one that brings the echoes of the glorious past:

> O City city, I can sometimes hear
> Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
> The pleasant whining of a mandoline
> And a clatter and a chatter from within
> Where fishermen lounge at noon: where the walls
> O Magnus Martyr hold
> Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.
>
> ("The Waste Land," 259 - 265)

Like in the Paris of Baudelaire where 'old quarters' are charged with memories "heavier than rocks," ("The Swan") in the London of Eliot, an old dock district carries the vestiges of a lost era of harmony. Once again in the poetry of Eliot, the observer has a beatific vision after having crossed the hell of modern life, the hell of the typist's apartment. It is worth mentioning how the passage evokes paradisal images of the 'city' ('Jerusalem' or 'the City of God'), the 'river' (the Thames) and the 'temple' (Magnus Martyr) such as analysed by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism*. What the protagonist catches in the passage, in fact, is a momentary vision of the timeless in a place where time seems to have been suspended: The tableau of fishermen resting at noon under the radiance of the medieval church and lulled by the pleasant sound of the nostalgic mandoline belongs to another century. As to the splendid 'Magnus Martyr', which "holds /Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold," it seems to represent the gem of the place, the 'pearls and corals' that contain the essence of human life, its interior, Eliot himself remarks, being "one of the finest among Wren's interiors."[1] As Nancy Duvall Hargrove suggests, the church, located in a place linked with "life-giving water" and whose own name suggests an idea of sacrifice and "surrender to God" is "a complex symbol of the significant, fulfilled life in Christ, in opposition to the

[1] Eliot's notes, "The Waste Land", *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Sixth Edition Volume D, Between the Wars 1914 -1945*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, p 1438.

commercial St Mary Woolnoth."[1] In his work, "The 'City Man' in The Waste Land: The Geography of Reminiscence," Robert A. Day argues that 'white' and 'gold' being "liturgical colors of Easter and of rejoicing, all this pomp is the physical expression of a spiritual reality."[2] The idea of spirituality would not be so explicit if it was not carried through the allusion to those who once were the faithful companions of Jesus Christ: The fishermen, with all that they may signify as pure and fertile, stand in the tableau as a "Christian symbol of spiritual fertility."[3]

What adds to the significance of the moment also is the fact that the echoes of the past are carried through the 'pleasant' sound of a 'mandoline'. To consider Walter Benjamin's theory of the auratic experience he developed in *The Storyteller, Reflections on the Works of Nicolai Leskov*, the art of storytelling, the art of reporting experiences as faithfully as these happened, recreating the whole context and circumstances in which they occurred, is an art nurtured in the craftsman atelier where listeners are weaving and spinning the fabric of a meaningful experience: "If peasants and seamen where past masters of storytelling, the artisan class was its university," (*Storyteller*, 85) says the German Philosopher. Moreover, the art of storytelling becomes itself "an artisan form of communication" (*Storyteller*, 91) as "traces of the storyteller cling to the story the way the handprints of the potter cling to the clay vessel." (*Storyteller*, 92) In Eliot's poem, such an image may be represented in the experience of the mandoline, which, contrasted to the impersonal gramophone of the previous scene, bears the traces of the musician's hands as well as the imprints of his soul. And as the musical composition becomes a harmonious stream rich in human experience, the whole soundscape of the place (including the "clatter and chatter" of joyful fishermen) carries a sacred quality, what forms a bitter contrast with the 'dead sound' of the commercial St Mary Woolnoth in "The Burial of the Dead," the spirited fishermen themselves acting as a vivid counterpart to the lifeless commuters of Eliot's 'Unreal City'.

[1] Nancy Duvall Hargrove, Ibid., p77.
[2] Robert A. Day, "The 'City Man' in The Waste Land: The Geography of Reminiscence," *PMLA*, Vol. 80, N° 3 (June 1965), p 290/291.
[3] Nancy Duvall Hargrove, Ibid., p76.

Likewise in the graveyards of Fitzgerald, the splendours of the past are equally dotted here and there, somewhere sheltered in those ancient monuments that adorn the desert of *Tender Is the Night*. As early as in the opening chapters of the book, the author hints to ancient beauties through his reference to the relics of Rome:

> It was pleasant to drive back to the hotel in the late afternoon, above a *sea as mysteriously colored as the agates and cornelians of childhood*, green as green milk, blue as laundry water, wine dark. *It was pleasant to pass people eating outside their doors, and to hear the fierce mechanical pianos* behind the vines of country estaminets. When they turned off the *Corniche d'Or* and down to Gausse's Hotel through the darkening banks of trees, set one behind another in many greens, *the moon already hovered over the ruins of the aqueducts*. . . .(*TN* 24) (Italics mine)

There is, indeed, an idea of a golden age (Corniche d'Or) behind the picture of the Riviera, suggested not only by the image of the Roman aqueducts but also by Fitzgerald's mention of 'childhood', the 'childhood' of the universe and the 'childhood' of the times, another allusion to a previous and harmonious age, what Baudelaire would call 'la Vie antérieure', a life anterior to modernity. In the passage, the 'agates and cornelians' recall the 'pearls and corals' of Ariel's Song in Shakespeare's *Tempest* and suggest, therefore, an idea of purification and crystallization. Moreover, the image of people "eating outside," refreshed by the country air, the trees and the "many greens," animated by the pleasing sound of the pianos, adds an organic quality to the place and suggests, therefore, an idea of rural refreshment. The piano, though mechanical, remains, to quote Walter Benjamin, "an artisan form of communication" since it is operated by human hands. In such a suave ambiance, indeed, the night cannot be otherwise than tender.

In more than sixty pages later, the scene shifts to another place where the echo of a glorious era is equally significant:

> Abe left from the Gare Saint Lazare at eleven—he stood alone under the *fouled glass dome, relic of the seventies, era of the Crystal Palace*; his hands, of that vague gray color that only twenty-four hours can produce, were in his coat pockets to conceal the trembling fingers. (*TN* 91) (Italics mine)

Once again in the fiction of Fitzgerald, the image of decay is not without a sense of hope. In fact, the Gare, the railway station, the ultimate location of the machine and the very symbol of technology and modernity, becomes a place of reminiscence as it is also the shelter of tradition. The relics may call for a sense of renewal since they evoke a traditional Victorian past, that of the "era of the Crystal Palace." Also, the Gare evokes both cultural and natural beauties since it is also the link between the Old World and the New World. In the book of Fitzgerald, in fact, it is at Saint Lazare that people take their boat train to America:

> Nearby, some Americans were saying good-bye…Standing in the station, with Paris in back of them, it seemed as if they were vicariously *leaning a little over the ocean, already undergoing a sea-change*, a shifting about of atoms to form *the essential molecule of a new people*. (*TN* 95) (Italics mine)

Once again the echo of Ariel's Song reinforces the idea of purification and regeneration. The travellers "suffer a sea change" to be cleansed and transformed into something 'essential'.[1] Also the station becomes a place of hope and enthusiasm as travellers are animated by happy feelings and expectations on their way to their homeland. There is a sense of pastoral retreat, a retreat to innocence and to a virgin continent or, in Fitzgerald's words, to "a fresh green breast of the new world": "Try to forget the past…Go back to America and be a débutante and fall in love - and be happy," (*TN* 159) Dick suggests to a depressed Nicole. The idea of resurrection is even more significant as the Gare is named after Lazarus, the man resuscitated by Jesus in *The New Testament*.

Perhaps nowhere else in the book of Fitzgerald is the idea of regeneration as eloquent as in the sad image of Amiens in Book One. To consider the apocalyptic depiction in the excerpt above, for example, the picture is not devoid of hope (See p 29). For if we consider Northrop Frye's archetypes of innocence, it would seem appropriate to consider a sense of redemption in the image of the little girl, of the flowers as well as in the image of rain, echoing the episode of the hyacinth garden in "The Waste Land," one of the few moments of harmony in Eliot's poem, where

[1] It is clear that Fitzgerald's statement in the passage is very ironical. America of the Twenties has nothing of a pure and innocent pastoral America, yet regeneration in the West was still possible.

the ‘hyacinth girl’ comes from the ‘hyacinth garden’ with ‘arms full’ and ‘hair wet’. The rain imagery suggests some sense of fruitfulness in the debris of the ruined Amiens. In fact, Amiens is devastated by the war, still it retains something authentic:

> Amiens was an echoing purple town, still sad with the war, as some railroad stations were:—the Gare du Nord and Waterloo station in London. In the daytime one is deflated[1] by such towns, with their little trolley cars of twenty years ago crossing the great gray cobble-stoned squares in front of the cathedral, and the very weather seems to have *a quality of the past, faded weather like that of old photographs.* (*TN* 69) (Italics mine)

The picture deserves to be immortalized in such old postcards to be collected in catalogues, say a ‘d’Antan collection’,[2] so to be preserved as an authentic work of art[3] (See figure IV). What the passage seems to suggest is that after the cataclysm of the war, the city had been stripped of all decadent beauty. Nothing could have more affirmed the magnificence of the old cathedral than the image of the rubbles. Perhaps more majestic than ever, the cathedral asserts itself, among the ruins and rubbles, as a timeless monument (See Figure V). What remains in the picture of Amiens, in fact, is the true character of the place, the old ‘trolley cars’, the ‘cobble-stoned squares’, the ‘cathedral’, the old-fashioned and the archaic, the picturesque and the timeless. In the passage, indeed, it seems like time has been suspended as the reader is now left with the image of a picturesque Amiens of the Belle Époque (See Figure VI). Fitzgerald’s reference to the ‘old photograph’ reinforces the idea of the timeless because “the photograph, like the souvenir, is the corpse of an

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[1] In the passage, ‘deflate’ may suggest a sense of retrogression in time.

[2] *D’Antan Collections* are collections of books illustrated by ancient postcards of cities and regions of the France of the Belle Époque.

[3] In “The Work of Art,” though Benjamin charges the photograph with the depreciation of the aura, he considers that this may appear for the last time in early portrait photography: “The cult of remembrance of loved ones, absent or dead offers a last refuge for the cult value of the picture. For the last time the aura emanates from the early photographs in the fleeting expression of a human face.” (“The Work of Art,” 226) Thus the melancholic face of Amiens as it may appear in an old photograph cannot be devoid of authenticity.

Also, John Ruskin, who charges photography with the debasement of art, appears, in his early writings, to see in the daguerreotype a solution to render the complexities of architecture. In his Preface to the Second Edition to *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, (1855) he grants the photograph as “the greatest service which can…be rendered to architecture.” His most complete collection of architecture photographs appears in *The Bible of Amiens* published in 1885.

experience."[1] As Benjamin suggests in "Central Park," the souvenir may be the ruin that derives from dead experience: "The relic derives from the corpse, the souvenir from deceased experience,"[2] says the German Philosopher. In this sense, associated to the souvenir, the photograph becomes the relic, the 'pearl' that derives from 'deceased experience'.

Another photograph from a *d'Antan collection* (See Figure VII) would have illustrated another passage from the book of Fitzgerald:

> . . . We travelled a lot that year—from Woolloomooloo Bay to Biskra. On the edge of the Sahara we ran into a plague of locusts and the chauffeur explained kindly that they were bumble-bees. The sky was low at night, full of the presence of a strange and watchful God. Oh, the poor little naked Ouled Naïl; the night was noisy with drums from Senegal and flutes and whining camels, and the natives pattering about in shoes made of old automobile tires. (*TN* 177)

More effectively, the episode of the Timgad expedition is another moment of harmony in Fitzgerald's novel since it is a moment that brings the protagonists into contact with a place rich in memories. Through the depiction of the 'primitive' Sahara, we can easily feel the authenticity of the place, the blessing of the atmosphere, the presence of a "watchful God." We are far from the 'horns and motors' of the modern city. Though noisy, the place is animated by acoustic and natural sounds; the timbre is one of drums, flutes, bumble bees and the 'whining' of camels (recalling the 'pleasant whining' of the mandoline in "The Waste Land.") The image of the "old automobile tires" signals, in fact, the failure of the technological experience. As such, the tableau becomes one of the gems of Fitzgerald's book, and it may be remembered as an authentic work of art. Indeed, the picture has much of the enchanted world of Nasreddine Dinet, (1861 - 1929) a painter who devoted a major part of his work to the depiction of the spirited lives of the Ouled Nail tribes of his beloved Bousaada. (See Figures IX and X)

[1] Eduardo Cadava, *Words of Light : Theses on the Photography of History*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997, p 128.

[2] Walter Benjamin, "Central Park," *New German Critique*, N° 34, (Winter, 1985) p 49.

Another authentic work of art may find expression, in Fitzgerald's novel, in the delicate face of Nicole, "modeled with a Rodinesque[1] intention." (*TN* 25) Fond of music and drawing, Nicole is often associated to art. Moreover, she is herself a true work of art: "I am Pallas Athene[2] carved reverently on the front of a galley." (*TN* 177) Associated to an artistic composition, Nicole stands as a vivid counterpart to the more synthetic Rosemary (or 'Miss Television' (*TN* 117)) whose body is "calculated to a millimeter," (*TN* 117) and who is associated, in turn, to mass culture: "…the beauty of Nicole had been to the beauty of Rosemary as the beauty of Leonardo's[3] girl was to that of the girl of an illustrator." (*TN* 117) Such associations suggest that there may be in Nicole some authenticity that discerns her from other more factitious characters in the book.[4] They may also suggest that there is in her something deep and profound.

In *Time Regained*, Marcel Proust writes:

> La grandeur de l'art véritable...c'était de retrouver, de ressaisir, de nous faire connaître cette réalité loin de laquelle nous vivons, de laquelle nous nous écartons de plus en plus au fur et à mesure que prend plus d'épaisseur et d'imperméabilité la connaissance conventionnelle que nous lui substituons, cette réalité que nous risquerions fort de mourir sans l'avoir connue, et qui est tout simplement notre vie, la vraie vie, la vie enfin découverte et éclaircie, la seule vie, par conséquent, réellement vécue, cette vie qui, en un sens, habite à chaque instant chez tous les hommes aussi bien que chez l'artiste...Ce travail de l'artiste, de chercher à apercevoir sous de la matière, sous de l'expérience, sous des mots quelque chose de différent, c'est exactement le travail inverse de celui que, à chaque minute, quand nous vivons détourné de nous-même, l'amour-propre, la passion, l'intelligence et l'habitude aussi accomplissent en nous, quand elles amassent au-dessus de nos impressions vraies, pour nous les cacher maintenant, les nomenclatures, les buts pratiques que nous appelons faussement la vie…Ce travail qu'avaient fait notre amour-propre, notre passion, notre esprit d'imitation, notre intelligence abstraite, nos habitudes, c'est ce travail que l'art défera, *c'est la marche en sens contraire, le retour aux profondeurs, où ce qui a existé réellement gît inconnu de nous qu'il nous fera suivre*. (Italics mine)
>
> (Marcel Proust – *Le Temps retrouvé*)

[1] A reference to the French sculptor, August Rodin (1840 – 1917)

[2] In Greek Mythology, Pallace Athene is among other attributes the goddess of wisdom, female art and craft.

[3] A reference to the Italian Renaissance painter, Leonardo Da Vinci (1452 – 1519)

[4] It may be worth remarking that in the closing chapters of *Tender Is the Night*, Dick becomes attached to a woman painter admitted at the clinic he runs with Dr. Gregorovious at Munich. When she dies unexpectedly, Dick is deeply affected. His attachment may reflect his nostalgia for his lost years of matrimony as he may have found in the woman some echo of his wife.

To Marcel Proust, true art is one that dismantles the work of 'knowledge'. It is one that erases the ephemeral envelope that covers our lives. It is one that reveals the 'truth', the essence of human life, the eternal beauties that reside in the depths of humanity. In this sense, the work of the true artist becomes the labor of the 'pearl diver' who returns to the depths and extracts from the bottom of the ocean the rich and the eternal.

Thus in *Tender Is the Night*, Nicole *Diver* becomes herself a 'pearl diver'. She *is* a pearl, indeed, as she is referred to as "the woman of the pearls." (*TN* 18) Her face, "*ivory gold* …had a promise Dick had never seen before…the *essential structure* and the economy were there." (*TN* 157) (Italics mine) Besides, Fitzgerald's reference to 'galley' (I am Pallas Athene carved reverently on the front of a galley) may call to mind the *galet,* the pebbles that cover the beaches of the French Riviera. Also polished and crystallized by the action of seawater, the stones recall the 'pearls and corals' of Ariel's Song, and suggest, therefore, that Nicole may be the 'relic' that contains the eternal beauties of the world. Nicole *is* the ruin of Fitzgerald's book indeed: "Now there was this scarcely saved waif of disaster bringing him the *essence* of a continent…" (*TN* 152) (Italics mine) And such associations may suggest that there is in her, like in Gatsby and Carraway, something profound and 'essential', some hope for regeneration.

In fact, the madwoman, like any other impaired character of modernist writings,[1] is also the most important character of the book. In a sense, she is another Tiresias figure whose blindness (or schizophrenia in the case of Nicole) is, to quote Eliot, "an immediate form of salvation." Her autistic condition becomes a form of deliverance since it prevents her from the decadence of the modern world. Cut from

[1] Figures of such kind may be found in the fiction of William Faulkner where the mentally defective seems to have the strongest sense of order. In *The Sound and the Fury*, for example, such figure is found in Benjy, the mentally retarded, who moans each time something goes wrong. Similarly, in *As I Lay Dying*, Darl, a character who is put at the end of the book in an asylum, seems to be the most reliable of the fourteen narrators of the story.

The same figure may be found in the character of Disley in *The Sound and the Fury*. She is not mentally defective but socially deficient since she is the servant of the Compson family. Her lack in social status, however, does not prevent her from being the most balanced member of the family. Indeed, having witnessed the 'beginnin' and the 'endin' of the Compson tragedy, she becomes the most important character of the book since, like Tiresias, she "Perceived the scene, and foretold the rest": "I seed de beginning, en now I sees the endin." (*The Sound and he Fury* 253)

the contemporary world, Nicole finds refuge in a universe of her own. This may be her garden at the Villa Diana where she escapes the artificiality of the worlds of Cannes and Monte Carlo: "This was because she knew few words and believed in none, and in the world she was rather silent, contributing just her share of urbane humor with a precision that approached meagreness."(*TN* 35) Nicole may also find refuge in some 'primitive' places where she can be in direct contact with the depths of history and the depths of humanity: "We went to Africa merely to see Timgad, since my principal interest in life is archeology." (*TN* 178) In a sense, Nicole's interest in archeology may be a way to revive tradition since the ruins are the 'pearls and corals' which restore the link with the glorious past. Nicole's concern, indeed, is to safeguard memory.

Thus, like in Shakespeare's plays where the fool happens to be the wisest man - or in Eliot's poetry where the blind man seems to have the most acute vision; or in Faulkner's fiction where the idiot appears to have the strongest sense of order - in Fitzgerald's novel, it is the madwoman who seems to be the closest to Fitzgerald's universe of harmony. In fact, both in *The Great Gatsby* and *Tender Is the Night*, the defective character (the 'ruined' character or the one who cannot conform to the modern world) is also one who, through his 'deficiency' (or anachronism in the case of Gatsby, or provincialism[1] in the case of Carraway, or madness in the case of Nicole), is in a sense 'ruined' and 'dead' but immune to the decadence of the modern world as he is preserved in a transcendent universe, what may be the 'Platonic' universe of Gatsby symbolized in his Gothic library, or the pastoral world of Carraway reflected in his longed-for Middle West, or the 'primitive' universe of Nicole incarnate in the primeval Tommy Barban.

In *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, Benjamin writes: "Just as mosaics preserve their majesty despite their fragmentation into capricious particles, so philosophical contemplation is not lacking in momentum" (*OGT* 28); and so are Eliot's and Fitzgerald's crumbled universes not lacking in harmony. The dismantled

[1] This is perhaps the 'deficiency' Nick refers to in the closing paragraphs of *The Great Gatsby* when he declares that he is a Westerner and that he possesses some 'deficiency' which makes him "subtly unadaptable to Eastern life." (*GG* 167)

contemporary world, as it is depicted in the works of both artists, is also an oasis of boundless beauties which wait only for the seer, the 'true artist', or the 'pearl diver' to crystallize them. This Eliot expressed in the very form of his greatest work, that "immense panorama of futility and anarchy"[1] which is "The Waste Land" where the 'heap of broken images' is also a splendid mosaic of timeless quotations. In "The Death of Europe," Hugh Kenner writes: "Cities are built out of the ruins of previous cities, as *The Waste Land* is built out of the remains of older poems."[2] In fact, in the chaos of the contemporary world where "You know nothing" (Do you see nothing? Do you remember/Nothing,) the speaker remembers at last (I remember/ Those are pearls that were his eyes) a quotation from Shakespeare's *Tempest*, and what quotation, the one that speaks of 'pearls and corals'. It seems like the importance of Dante, Chaucer, Shakespeare, Spencer, Baudelaire, Verlaine and Wagner in Eliot's poem are only to inform of the hidden richness of the contemporary world as they represent the 'fragments' modern men "have shored against [their] ruin."

[1] T.S. Eliot, "Ulysses, Order and Myth", *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, quoted in James W. Tuttleton, "T. S. Eliot and the Crisis of the Modern," *Modern Age*, (1987:Summer/Fall) p.282.

[2] Hugh Kenner, "The Death of Europe", Bloom, Harold (Ed), *The Waste Land: Modern Critical Interpretations*, New York: Chelsea House Publisher, 1986, www.questia.com, p 14.

Chapter II

'Unreal City'

or

The Song of Experience

II.1. The City of 'Men Without Qualities'

II.2. The Boredom, the Horror or the 'Setting of the Romantic Sun'

II.3. The *Dandy* or the Cult of the Ephemeral

II. 4. The *Flâneur* or the Quest for Eternity

Introduction

The first chapter of the present work has been devoted to the examination of the landscape of modernity which, related to the image of the ‘desert’, is merely reduced to a state of ruin and fragmentation, whose essential mood is melancholy and disenchantment; a landscape, however, not devoid of redemption since the very fragment, represented in the image of the ruin, contains the essence of human life. In the present chapter, we will concentrate on the experience of modernity, an experience epitomized in the experience of the modern city whose dwellers are not only inhabited by a feeling of alienation and modern ‘ennui’ but they are also haunted by a sense of catastrophe which is nothing more than the catastrophe of the loss of reality. The last sections of the present chapter will be devoted to the analysis of two quintessential figures of modernity, the dandy and the flâneur, who, though both products of modernity, play different roles in the urban scene .

II. 1. The City of 'Men Without Qualities'

> *For a multitude of causes, unknown to former times, are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor. The most effective of these causes are the great national events which are daily taking place, and the increasing accumulation of men in cities, where the uniformity of their occupations produces a craving for extraordinary incident, which the rapid communication of intelligence hourly gratifies.*
>
> ***William Wordsworth -Preface to Lyrical Ballads***

Like Eliot's, Fitzgerald's settings are essentially urban. Both writers showed, as Walter Benjamin would say, how the "old romantic sentiment for landscape [dissolved] and a new Romantic conception of landscape [emerged] – of landscape that seems, rather, to be a cityscape."[1] The fact is that both Eliot and Fitzgerald showed how the modern experience cannot be depicted otherwise than in scenes of city life. Whether it is in Eliot's London, or Fitzgerald's New York, Zurich, Monte Carlo, Amiens or Paris, the characters' lives are imprinted with images of the metropolis with its streets and boulevards, its 'horns and motors', its institutions and national banks, its 'city directors' and 'C.i.f. documents', its pubs and hotels, its 'violet hours' and 'throbbing' taxicabs, its railway stations, and, above all, with its edifices and buildings:

> Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. (*GG* 67)

As Ronald Berman puts it in his work, *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times*, the landscape of Fitzgerald's novel is "geometrical," and Fitzgerald's description of "the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps" is "abstract,

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Flâneur," *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p 420.

monochrome and cubist."[1] In this context, settings such as streets, boulevards, edifices, buildings, pubs, hotels and railway stations become significant as they express an idea of confinement and imprisonment. In fact, to use Northrop Frye's archetypes, in Eliot's and Fitzgerald's writings, the city becomes an image of a 'prison' or a 'tomb' in which the characters are buried.

In The "Waste Land", characters seem engulfed in a prison of the self: "We think of the key, each in his prison /Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison." (*WL*, 414-415) The motif of the prison, prevalent throughout the poem, is expressed as early as in the opening of the poem when the modern speaker, who would apparently be content to remain wrapped in his wintry torpor, expresses his reluctance to the vivifying effect of spring. His death-in-life state keeps him comfortable and the promise of spring revival is not necessarily a welcome one. For with spring rain comes the revival of 'memory and desire' and the modern speaker is not willing to such rebirth. Also the rainfall, a long-standing symbol of life and regeneration in literature, is not a welcome one in Eliot's poetry since people choose to remain comfortably buried in their death-in-life state. In "The Waste Land", indeed, spring rain is something to avoid just as summer showers are an inconvenient surprise: "Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee / With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade." ("The Waste Land," 8 - 9) The vacationers, reluctant to the inconvenient spring shower, stop in the colonnade for shelter. The same attitude is encountered in the first episode in "A Game of Chess" where the modern couple, also reluctant to the open air, prefer the confinement of a car. ("And if it rains, a closed car at four.") This suggests that modern couples are avoiding the unifying effect of rain and the open air, an effect which should keep them alive and in harmony with nature and the land. In contrast, their confinement confirms their alienation.

[1] Ronald Berman, *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994, p 86.

Such atmosphere is no less present in the fiction of Fitzgerald where characters seem also unwilling to any rural refreshment, just as the city, with its ultimate image of the 'car', becomes a place of confinement:

> *In the dark cave of the taxi, fragrant with the perfume Rosemary had bought with Nicole,* she came close again, clinging to him. He kissed her without enjoying it. He knew that there was passion there, but there was no shadow of it in her eyes or on her mouth; there was a faint spray of champagne on her breath. She clung nearer desperately and once more he kissed her and was chilled by the innocence of her kiss, by the glance that at the moment of contact looked beyond him out into the *darkness of the night, the darkness of the world.* (*TN* 74) (Italics Mine)

Just as Fitzgerald's reference to 'perfume' may be an echo to the opening of "A Game of Chess" where the lady in the palace is also prisoner of a 'synthetic' world, the whole passage is reminiscent of Eliot's 'unreal city' in "The Waste Land" where characters are buried - as the title of the first section suggests - in a place assimilated to a 'tomb' and where the tolling sound of Saint Mary Woolnoth functions only to reinforce their burial in the deadly routine of city life, the church being "transformed from a symbol of the timeless to a symbol of man's imprisonment in time,"[1] writes Nancy Duvall Hargrove in her work, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot.* What the passage also reveals is how Fitzgerald's characters, like Eliot's city dwellers, are morally and emotionally exhausted and how their lives are similarly doomed in a place where the link with the land and the open air is irremediably broken. Indeed, the perfume of Rosemary, in the passage above, will later form the 'dust of Paris' which will embalm the characters' lives: "There was a dust of Paris over both of them through which they (Dick and Rosemary) scented each other." (*TN* 122) In Richard Lehan's words, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's urban settings reflect the passage from a vital community to 'urban entropy'[2], where the city becomes rather a suffocating place:

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[1] Nancy Duvall Hargrove, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, University Press of Mississippi, 1978.

[2] In his work, *The City in Literature*, Richard Lehan means by 'urban entropy' a process by which energy is lost in a 'closed system'. To Lehan, the city is a closed system that depletes its energy and feeds on itself. It cannot be provided energy from the outside; it cannot be nourished from nature, and the result is waste and disorder.

> In the square, as they came out, a suspended mass of gasoline exhaust cooked slowly in the July sun. It was a terrible thing— unlike pure heat it held no promise of rural escape but suggested only roads choked with the same foul asthma. (*TN* 98)

Such 'entropic process' is due to the fact that people have lost touch with the land and the result is the loss of the 'organic community', a state F. R. Leavis refers to in his work, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*, as a state in which: "The industrial England blots out the agricultural England. One meaning blots out another. The new England blots out the old England. And the continuity is not organic, but mechanical."[1] Dominated by impersonal institutions, the city bankrupts the idea of community, love and friendship. As a result, there is no room for human values and people are caught in a mechanical routine. In the poetry of Eliot, indeed, people are assimilated to 'engine' (…when the human engine waits/ Like a taxi throbbing waiting) with mechanical gestures: "She smooths her hair with automatic hand/And puts a record on the gramophone." (The Waste Land," 255 - 256)

Thus, the city becomes a destructive entity where people are caught in an entropic process of waste by which energy is lost: (Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled.) In his work *The City in Literature*, Richard Lehan considers that such an organic, human and communal loss "comes with usury, when money makes money, when an abstract theory of money becomes the basis of economics, and when national banks and other urban institutions dominate the city."[2] As a result, human values are consumed by materialistic ones and people become like the commuters of Eliot's 'unreal city' who are unable to transcend the material world (And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.) Also Fitzgerald's urbanites show the same interest in finance, trade and business through their preference for finance and money over less pecuniary subjects:

[1] F. R. Leavis, *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1933, p 95.
[2] Ibid., p 127.

> "I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Maecenas knew… I was rather literary in college—one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the "Yale News." - and now I was going to bring back all such things into my life and become again that most limited of all specialists, the "well-rounded man."" (*GG* 10)

Like Eliot's 'hollow men' who behave "as the wind behaves", the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* needs to substitute financial reading for literary reading only to conform to a society increasingly materialistic. The fact is that, by obeying the laws of 'Midas and Morgan and Maecenas', he could only confirm how "limited", indeed, he actually is, as morally limited as modern urban life can be, a life "looked at from a single window, after all" (*GG 10*). More "limited," perhaps, are the people who crowd Gatsby's parties to discuss business:

> I was immediately struck by the number of young Englishmen dotted about; all well dressed, all looking a little hungry, and all talking in low, earnest voices to solid and prosperous Americans. I was sure that they were selling something: bonds or insurance or automobiles. (*GG* 43)

Through the repetition of "all", Fitzgerald emphasizes the great number of his city dwellers echoing the narrator of "The Waste Land" who is similarly struck by the huge number of the men of Eliot's crowd (A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many.)

Cut from a source of nourishment beyond itself and consumed by materialistic values, the city becomes, thus, as Lehan suggests, a 'closed system' producing "degenerate ideas and human sufferings."[1] Both in Eliot's and Fitzgerald's writings, characters are consumed by the futility and barrenness of their urban environment. In "A Game of Chess," relationships are fractured and modern couples can hardly communicate. The first episode betrays a world of artificiality among the rich whose lives are reduced to a state of nervousness and emotional vacuity, their only solace being chess and narcotics. The story of Philomel and the barbarous king suggests an idea of violence where love and beauty, represented in the myth of the nightingale, are corrupted. The same horror can be found among the

[1] Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1998, p 127.

poor. In the London of Lil and Albert, people are caught in loveless and sterile relationships where marriage is nothing more than having ‘a good time’. Prematurely aged women discuss abortion only to reinforce the idea of sterility. Once more, the myth of immortality is violated as women, urged by the barman’s words: “HURRY UP PLEASE IT’S TIME,” look ‘antique’ at thirty-one. And the echo of Ophelia’s farewell before going to drown herself is only to recall the suffering of those people caught in loveless and unhappy relationships. In “The Fire Sermon,” Eliot portrays the same horror outside marriage and gives a picture of modern and urban life at its lowest. The third part of the poem is the one that depicts the most dissolute behaviours and becomes one that epitomizes the ‘boredom’ and the ‘horror’ of modern urban life. Whether it is Sweeney, Mrs Potter, Mr Eugenides, the young man carbuncular or the typist, people are addicted to a life of debauchery. As the title of the section suggests, their desires are limited to physical and worldly needs, a fact that makes them blind to any spiritual value. In “The Fire Sermon,” indeed, the “boredom and the horror” of modern life are represented at best in the sordid copulation of the typist and the clerk as the young man seeks mere gratification and the young woman is incapable of any emotion because “she is bored and tired.” The story culminates in the squalid encounters between the Thames daughters and their rapists, a most desolate picture of modern life where no emotion is left save a set of meaningless fragments reflecting the emotional vacuity of people’s lives.

> I can connect
> Nothing with nothing.
> The broken fingernails of dirty hands.
> My people humble people who expect
> Nothing.'
> la la
>
> (“The Waste Land,” 301 - 306)

Likewise in the city of Fitzgerald, its desolate state is not different from that of Eliot’s wasteland as characters are similarly consumed by the barrenness of their environment. It is “the foul dust floated in the wake of [Gatsby’s] dream” (*GG* 8) Nick says in *The Great Gatsby*. In Fitzgerald’s realm, characters, epitomized in the

degenerate Tom Buchanan who stands, he believes, "on the last barrier of civilisation", are rather embodiments of evil and depravity. Daisy, "the king's daughter…the golden girl" is just as empty, for she is as futile as her words when she cries: "What'll we do with ourselves this afternoon...and the day after that, and the next thirty years?" (*GG* 113). Moreover, Fitzgerald's characters are 'drifters' and 'careless people' and the moral carelessness, suggested, by the character's careless driving, indicates the violation of the third commandment of the 'Thunder' in Eliot's "Waste Land" (Give, Sympathize, Control.) In fact, in *The Great Gatsby* it is ironically Daisy, the ultimate embodiment of moral carelessness, who asks her husband to have self-control: "You're causing a row. Please have a little self-control." (*GG* 123) Likewise, in *Tender Is the Night*, the only moment when one is asked for repression occurs, as Richard Godden remarks, in Nicole's bathroom, "a room designed for purgation"[1] :

> Nicole knelt beside the tub swaying sidewise and sidewise. "It's you!" she cried, "—it's you come to intrude on the only privacy I have in the world—with your spread with red blood on it. I'll wear it for you—I'm not ashamed, though it was such a pity. On All Fools Day we had a party on the Zurichsee, and all the fools were there, and I wanted to come dressed in a spread but they wouldn't let me—"
> **"Control yourself!"**
> "—so I sat in the bathroom and they brought me a domino and said wear that. I did. What else could I do?"
> **"Control yourself, Nicole!"**
> "I never expected you to love me—it was too late—only don't come in the bathroom, the only place I can go for privacy, dragging spreads with red blood on them and asking me to fix them."
> **"Control yourself. Get up—"**
>
> (*TN*, 125/126)

Also the brilliant psychiatrist, Dick Diver, is consumed by the emptiness of his urban milieu. As for Nicole, the "saint, the Viking Madonna," she is ruined by a "degenerate" father who stands for the corruption of a once pure and pastoral America. More effective, perhaps, are the barrenness and emptiness of people's lives and relationships. Indeed, whether between Tom and Daisy, Myrtle and Wilson or Dick and Nicole (or, more unofficially, Rosemary), modern relationships are equally sterile and unhappy.

[1] Godden, Richard, "Money Makes Manners Make Man Make Woman: Tender Is the Night, A Familiar Romance," University of Keele, *Literature and History*, 12:1, Spring 1986, p 26.

Thus in the cities of Eliot and Fitzgerald, the values of love, marriage, family, religion are lost. People are "neither /Living nor dead" because spiritually dead; 'Saint Mary Woolnoth' is no longer a church and its 'dead sound' has no religious meaning. Relationships are barren because love and marriage have lost their traditional meanings. What is left in the scene is nothing more than a "heap of broken images" where you "can connect /Nothing with nothing." In the city of Eliot, indeed, the whole world has cracked like the 'falling towers' of 'Jerusalem,' 'Athens,' 'Alexandria,' 'Vienna,' and 'London' in "The Waste Land."

Indeed, in the poetry of Eliot, if there is one image to represent the modern city, it is not so much the one of modern edifices, buildings and boulevards as the one of 'falling towers,' suggesting the collapse of human and communal values, a falling away from an ideal, from the 'city of God' to an urban hell. In "What Dante Means to Me," Eliot expresses, in fact, his admiration for Baudelaire to draw from the metropolitan setting material for his poetry and to depict a form of a modern hell, not different from Dante's *Inferno*: "Chaque jour vers l'Enfer nous descendons d'un pas," writes Baudelaire in "Au Lecteur." And this both Eliot and Fitzgerald expressed through their depiction of similarly Dantesque and Baudelairean urban environments. In Eliot's 'unreal city,' "each man fixed his eyes before his feet" because no one is able to transcend the material world, an image Eliot pictures to evoke the wandering shades of Dante's *Inferno* (I had not thought death had undone so many,) or the emptiness of the crowd of Baudelaire's "Fourmilliante cité."

Likewise in the city of Fitzgerald, people are as empty as the commuters of Eliot's 'unreal city' or, rather, of Eliot's 'Death Dream kingdom' where 'empty men' are caught in the same death-in-life state. And as in Eliot's London, walking corpses flow over London Bridge, in Fitzgerald's New York, "A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends…[looking out] … with tragic eyes… " (*GG* 67) In *Tender Is the Night*, a similar scene may be shown in a Paris where people are trapped in a same deadly state as "shots had entered into all their lives: echoes of violence followed them out onto the pavement where two porters held a

post-mortem beside them as they waited for a taxi." (*TN* 97). The same death-in-life state may be shown in a Monte Carlo similarly Dantesque and dreamlike:

> The studio manager opened a small door in the blank wall of stage building and with sudden glad familiarity Rosemary followed [Dick] into half darkness. Here and there figures spotted the twilight, turning up *ashen faces to her like souls in purgatory watching the passage of a mortal through*. (*TN* 31/32) (Italics mine)

Such pictures recall Dante's crowd of people who lived "without blame or praise" because, as Baudelaire would say, "[leur] âme, helas! N'est pas assez hardie." They "are not strictly in Hell", because they "never were alive," and can "neither live nor die."[1] People of such kind are neither 'blessed souls', nor 'lost violent souls', but, simply, empty men, pitiful figures devoid of existence. These, alas, are Eliot's hollow men, "Headpieces filled with straw," "Shapes without form, shades without colour," an echo of Joseph Conrad's figure of the 'hairdresser's dummy' in *Heart of Darkness* or of Conrad's ultimate hollow man, represented in the figure of Kurtz, the 'hollow sham', 'hollow at the core'.

Such pathetic creatures also crowd the city of Fitzgerald just as, in *Tender Is the Night*, people are depicted "with small heads groomed like manikins' heads." (*TN* 84) In *The Great Gatsby*, almost all characters incarnate insignificant creatures with no substance as their lives are empty and devoid of meaning: "Sometimes a shadow moved against a dressing-room blind above, gave way to another shadow, an indefinite procession of shadows, who rouged and powdered in an invisible glass." (*GG* 102) As such, they incarnate what Arnold Weinstein calls 'ghosts in disguise'.[2] Myrtle Wilson, though endowed with the greatest vitality, is also the most superficial character as her sole concern is the worship of her image. She delights in collecting copies of 'moving picture magazines' and 'scandal magazines of Broadway' only to construct an identity drawn from the market enterprise. As such, Myrtle sells and advertises her self as commodity, drawn from the marketplace, from 'Town Tattle' and 'scandal magazines' and also from the

[1] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot An Introduction*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, p 51.
[2] Arnold Weinstein, *20th Century American Fiction*, The Teaching Company Limited Partnership, 1998, p 8.

movies, for the movies, Ronald Berman writes, "sell not only styles but identities."[1] As for her husband, who inhabits a "shadow of a garage," "unprosperous and bare," is "a blond, spiritless man, anaemic, and faintly handsome," (*GG* 27/28) and whose sickly appearance is reminiscent of the pale figure of Pierrot, not the innocent character of the 16th Century *Comedia dell'arte* but rather the degenerate and unhealthy *Pierrot Lunaire* of the *Fin de Siècle*,[2] product of the decadent age, and whose whiteness is less a mark of innocence than a symptom of sickness.[3] Also dressed in white is the character of Jay Gatsby whose "vague contour…had filled out the substantiality of a man." (*GG* 97) He is perhaps not as decadent, but definitely as insignificant. For 'the self-made man' who writes schedules and resolves and faithfully follows the paths of Benjamin Franklin and Horatio Alger, knows nothing of the authentic because his resolves are "more theatrical than moral,"[4] writes Hugh Kenner in "The Promised Land." The fact is that Gatsby's identity is constructed from some ideology of his own, or more precisely, "from a Platonic conception of himself." (*GG* 95) Throughout the book, his identity is questioned, just as Owl Eyes is astonished to find that his books are "Absolutely real—have pages and everything." (*GG* 47) His insignificance lies in his lack of authenticity emphasized, in the book of Fitzgerald, through the theatrical quality of his environment, which the author expresses, in fact, through his use of the language of the theatre:

> [Myrtle] had changed her dress to a brown figured muslin, which stretched tight over her rather wide hips as Tom helped her to the *platform* in New York. At the news-stand she bought a *copy* of *Town Tattle* and a *moving-picture magazine*… (*GG* 29) (Italics mine)
>
> Mrs. Wilson had changed her *costume* some time before, and was now attired in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-coloured chiffon, which gave out a continual rustle as she swept about the room. *With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change*. (*GG* 33) (Italics mine)

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[1] Berman, Ronald, *The Great Gatsby and Modern Times*, Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1994, p 6.

[2] Once a symbol of innocence in the *Comedia dell'arte* of the 16th Century, in some writings of the *Fin de Siècle*, Pierrot turns to a decadent spirit, sickly, unhealthy and addicted to the vices of his age.

[3] In Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night*, it seems not accidental that the Divers' children sing precisely "Mon ami Pierrot" in the openings chapters of the book.

[4] Hugh Kenner, "The Promised Land," *A Homemade World: The American Modernist Writers*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975, p 24.

As Pascale Antolin Pirès suggests in her work, *L'objet et ses doubles. Une relecture de Fitzgerald*, words such as 'copy', 'picture', 'platform', 'costume' and 'Broadway' are devices Fitzgerald uses to stress the idea of theatricality. As for the decor, settings in *The Great Gatsby* are merely theatrical accumulations, spectacles the reader is offered, first, in the theatre of Myrtle's apartment of 158th Street, New York, one may easily confuse with the salons of Versailles: "The living-room was crowded to the doors with a set of tapestried furniture entirely too large for it, so that to move about was to stumble continually over scenes of ladies swinging in the gardens of Versailles." (*GG* 31) To Antolin Pirès, 'tapestried' and 'scenes' are indications of fiction, a performance, however, less comical than tragic since it culminates in the violent scene between Tom and Myrtle. A similar theatrical illusion is displayed in Gatsby's superb mansion situated in West Egg, that "unprecedented 'place' that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village." (*GG* 103) Gatsby's manor, which is "a factual imitation of some Hotel de Ville in Normandy," gathers all sorts of styles, from "the Merton College Library," through "Marie Antoinette music-rooms," to "Restoration salons."[1] His guests are "stage twins" that perform "a baby act in costume." Others are actors or come from a famous "Chorus," and his West Egger guests are "all connected with the movies in one way or another." (*GG* 61) And as Vladimir Tostoff's composition begins, Gatsby stands alone on the marble steps to look from one group to another. To Antolin-Pirès, the porch and the marble steps represent the stage upon which Gatsby, on several occasions, stands to greet the audience as an actor does at the end of the spectacle: "A sudden emptiness seemed to flow now from the windows and the great doors, endowing with complete isolation the figure of the host, who stood on the porch, his hand up in a formal gesture of farewell" (*GG* 56). As for the 'scene', it is appropriately illuminated by a dozen headlights: "Fifty feet from the door a dozen headlights illuminated a bizarre and tumultuous scene." (*GG* 54) There, Gatsby, "a regular Belasco,[2]" (*GG* 47) himself, stands to give his spectacular

[1] To consider Fitzgerald's numerous allusions to the French Aristocracy in *The Great Gatsby*, it seems that the reference to "Restoration" concerns the Bourbon Restoration (1814 – 1830).
[2] A reference to the Broadway producer, David Belasco (1853 – 1931).

show. In this context, it seems appropriate that he should command his pianist, Klipspringer: “Don’t talk so much, old sport… Play!” (*GG* 92)

Nevertheless, the tunes of *The Great Gatsby* are of a particular kind, not those of the jazz orchestras, nor those of the *Sheikh of Araby*, but the ‘contralto’ notes of Daisy’s voice. They are kinds of ballads with regular refrains as regular as the recurrent image of the ash heap between New York and West Egg where one cannot go from one place to another without passing through it. Indeed, music in *The Great Gatsby* seems to beat only one measure: That of a disenchanted world like the desolate valley of ashes, the deposit of a secular urban culture where nothing survives save the regular rhythms of modernity, as regular as the frenetic rhythms of the metropolitan crowd.

Closely related to the idea of the modern city also is the image of the crowd, which William Wordsworth calls “the accumulation of men in cities,” and which both Eliot and Fitzgerald drew not simply from Dante’s *Inferno* but also from Baudelaire’s poem, “Les Septs Vieillards”: (Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves/ Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!) Dante’s and Baudelaire’s images of the crowd suggest an idea of density, something that makes of the crowd an impermeable entity that the individual fails to encompass. As a result, the people of the crowd become passive, and their inertia informs of the limited understanding of urban complexities, an idea found in the works of both Eliot and Fitzgerald:

> There were about thirty people… Neither individually nor as a crowd could they be said to dominate the environment, as one comes to dominate a work of art he may possess, no matter how *esoteric*…They were very quiet and *lethargic* at certain hours... (Italics mine) (*TN* 83)

As William Wordsworth put it in his Preface to the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, the modern culture reduces the mind to a “state of savage torpor.” This implies that modern consciousness becomes passive. Modern men and women become mere spectators of modern life where the rapid events often go beyond their capacity for assimilation. And this is precisely the spectacle of the crowd, “the

incarnation of unprecedented incoherence and disorder,"[1] "a landscape whose human, social and natural parts [appear] related simply by accidents, a random agglomeration."[2] And as people are absorbed into its frenetic rhythms, the crowd, as Walter Benjamin put it in his essay, "On Some Motif in Baudelaire," becomes assimilated to the 'shock experience.' And as the individual gets lost in the crowd, alienation becomes unavoidable and the individual is reduced to a fragment of an entity. He becomes "Robert Musil's "man without qualities" as indifferent to values as is the metropolis itself."[3] Such images crowd the cities of Eliot and Fitzgerald, just as in *Tender Is the Night*, Dick's gradual decline is expressed through his growing agitation as he becomes increasingly involved in the crowd. In the Saint-Lazare episode, for example, where he pursues the girl with the helmet-like hair, the scene has something of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Man of the Crowd," and Dick is just as restless as Poe's narrator. In *The Great Gatsby*, it is the whole society of the East which is assimilated to a "rotten crowd." (*GG* 146)

Like the 'falling towers' of 'Jerusalem', 'Athens', 'Alexandria', 'Vienna' and 'London' in Eliot's poem, the modern city shows a 'falling away' from an ideal, where nature surrenders to the powers of industry; an 'organic community' disintegrates into urban entropy; a community of shared values yields to impersonal, dead institutions; the communal self succumbs to the alienated self; a vital community gives way to the mechanical crowd. Thus the cities of both Eliot and Fitzgerald are far from representing an ideal universe of harmony. On the contrary, their inhabitants, cut from the land, and confined in places where there is no possibility for rural refreshment, are trapped in an 'entropic process' where energy is lost and where there seems to be no promise of regeneration. In fact, cut from a source of nourishment and consumed by materialistic values, the people of the modern city rather seem to live a mechanical life, determined by the frenetic rhythms of the mechanical crowd, where the mind is reduced to a state of inertia or, in William Wordsworth's words, to "a state of savage torpor."

[1] Robert H. Byer, "Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe's The Man of the Crowd," *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p 221.
[2] Engel Marcus, quoted in Robert H. Byer, "Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe's The Man of the Crowd," *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p 221.
[3] Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1998, p 72.

Also related to the phenomenon of the crowd is the picture of the thick fog, that “muraille immense du brouillard” in Baudelaire’s ‘fourmilliante cité’, “un brouillard sale et jaune [inondant] tout l'espace.” Yellow in “Prufrock”, brown in “The Waste Land” (whatever its colour, its essential quality is its opaqueness), the thick fog shades the streets of both Eliot’s and Fitzgerald’s ‘unreal cities’. In the works of both artists, the fog represents the shadow that is placed between the individual and his surrounding urban world. It is the shade that weakens the individual’s vision, another phenomenon also related to the experience of the modern city. What restricts the individual’s capacity of vision also is the fact that the eye becomes restless in the modern city. In his essay, “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Walter Benjamin describes the eyes that “have lost their ability to see” because, caught by the continuous fluctuations of the crowd, they cannot lose themselves in remote visions. The eye which is on its guard against the dangers of the city; the eye which is overcharged with the images of the city knows, therefore, nothing of the distant. The eye which is overwhelmed by the images of modernity cannot experience a beatic vision as he is unable to see the sacred. As a result, the people of the modern city will lead a life devoid of meaning, a life where the individual is reduced to mere physical existence characterized by vacuity and boredom.

II. 2. The Boredom, the Horror or the 'Setting of the Romantic Sun'

Esprit vaincu, fourbu! Pour toi, vieux maraudeur,
L'amour n'a plus de goût, non plus que la dispute;
Adieu donc, chants du cuivre et soupirs de la flûte!
Plaisirs, ne tentez plus un cœur sombre et boudeur!

Le Printemps adorable a perdu son odeur!

Charles Baudelaire – « Le goût du néant »

The old romantic concept that nature mirrors an inner soul so that "to read the universe [is] to read the unfolding of nature and to understand the correspondences that [exist] between man and (say) the animal world,"[1] is far from being incarnated in the cities of Eliot and Fitzgerald. As it has been demonstrated in the previous section, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's urban worlds are far from representing idyllic places of harmony, and what the experience of modernity showed is how the inner meaning of nature has been obscured by the 'brown fog' of the modern city, the result being a fading of the individual's vision. Such phenomenon results in people's incapacity to read the universe and to understand its meaning as they are blind to all human values. This suggests that Eliot's and Fitzgerald's metropolitan worlds are devoid of meaning as all values are desecrated and reduced to bare reality. Thus the urban worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald are soulless worlds where people are unable to experience any beatific vision. In the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald, indeed, people are concerned with their failure to see:

…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.

"The Waste Land" (38 – 41)

[1] Richard Lehan, "*Sister Carrie*: The City, the Self, and the Modes of Narrative Discourse," *Cambridge University Press*, 1991, p 66.

In “A Game of Chess,” the lady is blinded by all the luxury in the palace, a place where everything glows and where there is so much to see, so much to see except the sacred. Madame Sosostris, “the famous clairvoyante” and “wisest woman in Europe” misreads her “wicked pack of cards” because she has “a bad cold”: “Which I am forbidden to see…I do not find/The Hanged Man…Fear death by water.” Concerning *The Great Gatsby*, one can remember Doctor T. J. Eckleburg’s eyes “blue and gigantic—their irises are one yard high”; however, they look out … from a pair of enormous yellow spectacles” and are “dimmed a little by many paintless days.” Doctor T J Eckleberg’s eyes are defective and his gaze hollow and impassive, just as his owner is said to have sunk down himself “into eternal blindness” (*GG* 26). As Dale B. J. Randall puts it in his essay, “The Seer and Seen: Themes in Gatsby and Some of Their Parallels in Eliot and Wright,” Doctor T. J. Eckleberg can be associated to Madame Sosostris in “The Waste Land” because both are “old and faded” and both “brood over a sorry sight.”[1]

In the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald, indeed, it seems there is nothing worth seeing, just as Gatsby, before he starts to realize that he “has lost the old warm world,” is left in the end “watching over nothing.” (*GG* 139) As far as Nick is concerned, he also shows a defective vision shortly after the death of Gatsby: “After Gatsby’s death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes’ power of correction” (*GG* 167). In *Tender Is the Night*, Nicole’s eyes, “brave and watchful,” look “straight ahead toward nothing,” (*TN* 23) and Baby Warren’s eyes, “large and beautiful, [look] precisely like marbles.” (*TN* 233) As for Dick Diver, haunted by the refrain, “do you mind if I pull dawn the curtain,” he enters a world of darkness, just as he can no longer decipher his father’s handwriting: “There was …a letter from Buffalo from his father, in a handwriting that year by year became more indecipherable…” (*TN* 102) With the death of his father, indeed, the ‘curtain’ is finally pulled down on his idyllic world and Dick bids farewell to an era of tradition and order: “Good-by, my father—good-by, all my fathers.” In the end, he becomes blind to any beatic vision, just as he can “no longer see” the “damp snow

[1] Dale B. J. Randall, “The Seer and Seen: Themes in Gatsby and Some of Their Parallels in Eliot and Wright”, *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Jul., 1964), p 52.

flock…under the darkening sky." (*TN* 190) The people of Fitzgerald's city become like Wallace Stevens' 'snow man' whose mind is reduced to a 'mind of winter' and who "[has] been cold a long time / To behold the junipers shagged with ice / The spruces rough in the distant glitter":

> For the listener, who listens in the snow,
> And, nothing himself, beholds
> Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.
>
> Wallace Stevens – "The Snow Man," *Harmonium*, 1923

In Stevens' words, such a blank universe is a world 'without reflections' where nothing remains save the 'plain sense of things'. In other words, the modern world is a universe in which there is a crisis between objects and their referents, an idea the American poet brilliantly sums up in the following verses:

> I do not know which to prefer,
> The beauty of inflections
> Or the beauty of innuendoes,
> The blackbird whistling
> Or just after.
>
> Wallace Stevens – "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," *Harmonium*, 1917

In the fifth stanza of his poem, Stevens seems to be stressing the gap between what is visible and what is inherent or, in other words, between the signifier and the signified. The 'inflections' of the blackbird whistling refer to the signifier; the 'innuendo' represents the signified. In Eliot's poetry, this is a crisis well known by the hollow men who, like the inhabitants of "The Waste Land," along with those of Baudelaire's Paris, are similarly torn between the image and its inherent meaning, a gap caused by the 'shadow' placed between 'the idea and the reality'. In the hollow men's valley, indeed, people are unable to express any feeling or emotion as all patterns of incarnation fail:

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Life is very long

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

"The Hollow Men" (78 – 90)

Also in the city of Fitzgerald, patterns of incarnation similarly fail. In *The Great Gatsby*, the hero's dream dies as a result of its 'incarnation' in Daisy's "perishable breath":

> His heart beat faster and faster as Daisy's white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and *forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath*, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her. At his lips' touch she blossomed for him like a flower and the *incarnation was complete*. (*GG* 107) (Italics mine)

As Ernest Lockridge points out in his introduction to *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Great Gatsby": A Collection of Critical Essays*, the failure of Gatsby is the failure of "the incarnation of 'unutterable vision' in the material earth."[1] The fact is that Gatsby has incarnated his dream in the 'foul dust' when he kissed Daisy and "forever wed his unutterable vision to her perishable breath." (*GG* 107) Gatsby lives in a universe where "the rock of the world [is] founded securely on a fairy's wing," (*GG* 96) but his world is now 'cracked up' because, in Fitzgerald's words, it failed "the test of a first-rate intelligence…the ability to hold two opposed ideas in the mind at the same time, and still retain the ability to function." (*Crack Up* 39) The fact is that when Gatsby kissed Daisy, he could no more hold the 'rock of the world' on 'a fairy's wing', just as 'forever' and 'vision'

[1] Ernest Lockridge, *Twentieth Century Interpretations of "The Great Gatsby" : A Collection of Critical Essays*, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1968, p 11.

cannot be conjugated with 'perishable' and 'breath'. Through his use of a rhetoric of paradox, Fitzgerald shows how the patterns of incarnation fail in the material world of Gatsby. This he conveys throughout the book through the use of a number of paradoxical images which culminate in the image of the old island which "flowered once for Dutch sailors' eyes." As Lockridge puts it, this is the ultimate incarnation of the spiritual in the material earth where "America promises to be the terrestrial paradise, God's kingdom on Earth, ordering spirit with and uniting chaotic matter." [1] However, in the world of Gatsby, the "fresh green breast" turns to a valley of ashes, or more precisely, to Myrtle's breast, "swinging loose like a flap." (*GG* 131) As for the Dutch sailor, he turns to a Dan Cody, "the pioneer debauchee" to whom Jay Gatsby, the "son of God", is at the service, the service of a "vast, vulgar, and meretricious beauty." Again and again, the world of Gatsby cannot hold as it is torn between the "dream" and the "dust", between "forever" and "perishable," and the "incarnation" of "unutterable vision" to the material earth proves a "fiction" because "Dutch sailor", "Jay Gatsby" and "son of God" are "incompatible" with "Dan Cody", "Jimmy Gatz" and "vast, vulgar and meritorious beauty." It is, in fact, a fiction just as Jay Gatsby is himself a fiction in a world "material without being real" (*GG* 153/154) where a photograph is "more real" than the original itself:

> It was a photograph of the house, cracked in the corners and dirty with many hands. [Mr Gatz] pointed out every detail to me eagerly. "Look there!" and then sought admiration from my eyes. He had shown it so often that I think it was more real to him now than the house itself (*GG* 163)

Just as in *Tender Is the Night*, "the vivid advertising cards of the railroad companies…were fresher than the long motionless sea outside," (*TN* 22) such images suggest how the world of Fitzgerald is a material universe without meaning at the core. This supposes that feelings, emotions, words and objects have no referent as the signs of the world distance themselves from their meaning. In William Faulkner's words, the image of the modern world is the one conveyed by

[1] Ibid., p 15.

'a drunken caricaturist',[1] one that can no longer recognize the original of his work. And the crisis between words and their referents he will express in his novel, *As I Lay Dying*, a work that deals with the same idea of the disintegration of the individual as the journey to bury Addie Bundren becomes, as the title of the novel suggests, a journey to bury the self (the "I" as a whole entity):

> I learned that words are no good; that words don't ever fit even what they are trying to say at. When [Cash] was born I knew that motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it… He had a word, too. Love, he called it. But I had been used to words for a long time, I knew that that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack; that when the right time came, you wouldn't need a word for that any more than for pride or fear.
>
> William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying*

Thus the modern world is a material universe empty and desecrated as feelings and emotions fail to find expression. As for Eliot's and Fitzgerald's city dwellers, they become, like Eliot's hollow men, condemned to a meaningless life where death itself becomes the only form of salvation. The fact is that they are threatened by the horror of a terrestrial hell as they are condemned to a doomed life, a "very long" life, ("Life is very long" *HM*) a life of emptiness and boredom.

The 'boredom' and the 'horror' become, in fact, what characterizes the lives of Eliot's and Fitzgerald's city dwellers. In "The Waste Land," the Sybil of Cumae, 'bored and tired', would be glad to leave a life of eternal boredom: 'Sybil, what do you want?' She replied, 'I want to die.'[2] Likewise in the city of Fitzgerald, people are tired of life. In *Tender Is the Night*, just before he catches (or fails to catch) his boat train to America, Abe North explains to Nicole how he is tired of life and how "his survivant will, once a will to live, [has] now become a will to die." (*TN* 94) His wife "spoke as though she were tired of saying things that no longer had a meaning for her." (*TN* 72) And an hour before the duel which was to oppose Tommy Barban

[1] In contrast to the expressionist who draws imprecise pictures without distinguishing the features, emphasizing expressions only, the caricaturist is supposed to convey pictures with very precise features so that one will immediately recognize the original (the model). As far as the "drunken caricaturist" is concerned, he can no longer guarantee such recognition, and his work will become an image without a referent since it will no longer reflect the original.

[2] From Eliot's Notes, "The Waste Land", *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Between the Wars 1914 – 1945*, Sixth Edition, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc, 2003, p 1430.

and McKinsco, Campion also explains to Rosemary how he is sick of life: "I almost wish it were I. I might as well be killed now I have nothing to live for." (*TN* 52) As for Rosemary, she is "filled with impatient lassitude" as she and her mother were "without direction and bored by the fact…wanted high excitement." (*TN* 12) Also in *The Great Gatsby*, Jordan Baker "turns to the world" a "bored" and "haughty face". During the dinner at the Buchanans in the first chapter, she and Daisy

> …talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter, that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here, and they accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little later the evening too would be over and casually put away. (*GG* 17)

As such, they recall the typist in "The Fire Sermon" who, when "The meal is ended, she is bored and tired" and "Hardly aware of her departed lover," she is "glad it's over." As passionless, perhaps, is the relationship between Dick and Rosemary in *Tender Is the Night.* Dick feels that love declaration has become mere cliché: "So many times he had heard this—even the formula was the same." (*TN* 74) He and Rosemary meet at hotels[1] and kiss without passion: "In the dark cave of the taxi …He kissed her without enjoying it. He knew that there was passion there, but there was no shadow of it in her eyes or on her mouth." (*TN* 74) And the sobs Rosemary will show later in the taxi become less signs of passion than marks of nervous emptiness or, perhaps, a sequence of a show the actress might have rehearsed a hundred times:

> She was shaken with audibly painful sobs. "Have you got a handkerchief?" she faltered. But there was little time to cry, and lovers now they fell ravenously on *the quick seconds* while outside the taxi windows the green and cream twilight faded, and the fire-red, gas-blue, ghost-green signs began to shine smokily through the tranquil rain. *It was nearly six, the streets were in movement, the bistros gleamed, the Place de la Concorde moved by in pink majesty as the cab turned north.* (*TN* 85) (Italics mine)

The scene reveals how opaque indeed is Eliot's 'shadow' "between the desire/And the spasm" in the Paris of Fitzgerald. The whole passage is pure expressionism without any substance. There is intensity in the expression of desires but not in the

[1] In her work, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot*, Nancy Duvall Hargrove argues that Eliot's use of the commercial hotel in his poetry symbolizes the debasement of love.

desire itself. There are all the gestures, the show, the sound, the fury and the hysteria with feelings in absentia. The scene is even more significant as it is reminiscent of Eliot's 'violet hour' in "The Waste Land" with its 'human engines' and 'throbbing' taxicabs, with its lights and street movements, and where, more significantly, the passionless love encounter between the typist and the young clerk is introduced.

Far from incarnating the romantic idylls of the past, relationships in the city of Fitzgerald are mere expressions of boredom and modern *ennui*. As such, they will know no sense of stability and durability. Rosemary "knew she would forget [Dick] half an hour after she left him—like an actor kissed in a picture." (*TN* 33) Indeed, relationships in the world of Fitzgerald are less forms of 'love at first sight' than what Walter Benjamin considers 'love at last sight', as fleeting as the passer-by in the metropolis:

> Un éclair... puis la nuit ! - Fugitive beauté
> Dont le regard m'a fait soudainement renaître,
> Ne te verrai-je plus que dans l'éternité ?
>
> Charles Baudelaire – "A une passante"

Fitzgerald's mention of the 'quick seconds' in the passage above may be another echo of Baudelaire. It may recall the *spleen* of Paris, a feeling that inhabits the modern mind, and which is caused by the flight of time. In his essay, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," Walter Benjamin explains the feeling in the following words: "The *ideal* supplies the power of remembrance; the *spleen* musters the multitude of the seconds against it. It is their commander, just as the devil is the lord of the flies."[1] To Benjamin, the *spleen* sharpens the perceptions of time, and man becomes slave to the seconds as is the narrator of Baudelaire's poem, "Le goût du néant," when he is engulfed by the minutes, as snow covers a frozen body: Et le Temps m'engloutit minute par minute/Comme la neige immense un corps pris de roideur. (Charles Baudelaire, "Le goût du néant") Also caused by *ennui* or boredom, Baudelaire's spleen represents another manifestation of distress and anxiety known

[1] Walter Benjamin, « On Some Motifs in Baudelaire, » *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 183.

by all the readers of Baudelaire's opening poem in *The Flowers of Evil*: "C'est l'Ennui!...Tu le connais, lecteur, ce monstre délicat/Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère!"

In fact, the feeling that the individual is in the grasp of time is no less present in the works of both Eliot and Fitzgerald. In "A Game of Chess," Lil, who is constantly urged by the barman's words, "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME," is haunted by a sense of growth and decay. She fears old age and sees child bearing as a sordid burden. She is only thirty-one and still looks 'antique'. To Fitzgerald's characters, too, the stroke of thirty is as 'formidable': "Thirty - the promise of a decade of loneliness, a thinning list of single men to know, a thinning brief-case of enthusiasm, thinning hair." (GG 129) In *Tender Is the Night*, time "accelerated in a rush, like the quick re-wind of a film", and for Nicole "the years slipped away by clock and calendar and birthday, with the added poignance of her perishable beauty." (*TN* 198) In the realm of Fitzgerald, in fact, characters are obsessed by time. They fear the passing of time and fly to a world beyond time where the laws of nature are suspended. In *The Great Gatsby*, such attitude is manifested through Gatsby's attempts to fix forever a moment with Daisy when he nearly breaks a clock: "Luckily the clock took this moment to tilt dangerously at the pressure of his head, whereupon he turned and caught it with trembling fingers, and set it back in place." (*GG* 84)

Such attitude is at the heart of the poetry of the English Romantic poet, John Keats, to whom Fitzgerald showed a deep and lifelong response and owed both the title and the epigraph of his novel, *Tender Is the Night*. Critics consider that much of Fitzgerald's 'melancholy lyricism' is drawn from the work of his favourite poet, and much of his wistful imagery is drawn, in particular, from the "Ode to a Nightingale," Fitzgerald confesses, he can never read without tears in his eyes. In the work of Fitzgerald, the characters' quest for immortality is symbolized in their quest for the romantic bird, symbol of eternal youth and beauty. Their quest is symbolized, in fact, in their desperate attempt to extend the chant of the nightingale, the promise of eternal youth. Is it the 'insistent bird' that visits Rosemary on the night of the duel in *Tender Is the Night*? Or the 'love bird' which stands on Nicole's

shoulders? Or the one Daisy perceives in the first chapter of *The Great Gatsby*? And Daisy is she not a bird herself with her voice 'thrilling' and enchanting, murmuring a 'deathless song'?

> "I looked outdoors for a minute, and it's very romantic outdoors.
> There's a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line. He's singing away - -." Her voice sang: "It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?" (*GG* 20)

Like in "The Waste Land," where the bird "Filled all the desert with inviolable voice," The world of Fitzgerald also seems "plagued by the nightingale" as Abe North suggests in *Tender Is the Night*. But in the modern world of Eliot, the wounded Philomel can hardly voice the melodious notes of the nightingale's voice. The fact is that the story of Philomel and the Barbarous King is rather a violation of the myth of beauty and immortality where the nightingale's 'inviolable voice' becomes rather a mark of vulgarity ('Jug Jug to dirty ears.) Likewise, in *Tender Is the Night*, the nightingale's chant is an 'ill-natured' chant, just as, in *The Great Gatsby*, the bird is 'singing away'. And, just as in Eliot's poem, the bird's "inviolable voice" is no voice of harmony, Daisy's 'deathless song' is no song of immortality. For if she sings with 'thrilling' notes, her voice is 'full of money', and, therefore, she can murmur no other words than those of Eliot's nightingale in "The Waste Land": "'Jug Jug' to dirty ears."

> Above the antique mantel was displayed
> As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
> The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
> So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
> Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
> And still she cried, and still the world pursues,
> 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.
>
> "The Waste Land" (97 – 103)

Also "rudely forced" are the lyrics of Nicole in *Tender Is the Night*, just as her voice is equally 'full of money':

> The thin tunes, holding lost times and future hopes in liaison, twisted upon the Valais night. In the lulls of the phonograph a cricket held the scene together with a single note. By and by Nicole stopped playing the machine and sang to him.

"Lay a silver dollar
On the ground
And watch it roll
Because it's round—"

(*TN* 151)

The story of rape in Eliot's poem suggests, indeed, an idea of violation of the sacred values of nature. In the modern urban world of Eliot and Fitzgerald, the pure values of the natural world are profaned by the demands of contemporary life. In the passage above, the tensions between tradition and modernity are highlighted through the altercation of conflicting tunes, those which evoke 'lost times', and those which call for 'future hopes'. In Eliot's words, the scene is 'mixing memory and desire', and Nicole, standing between two realms, oscillates a moment between the two, between the realm of 'memory' and the realm of 'desire'. Perhaps as another version of Keats's nightingale, the cricket[1] gives for a moment an impression of harmony as it holds the scene "in a single note." But the cricket's natural timber can hardly survive the automatic sound of the phonograph, and its effect is soon annihilated by the mechanical device which signals the triumph of modernity. In fact, the phonograph "frustrate[s] the sacred ends of nature,"[2] declares Theodore Purefoy in Joyce's *Ulysses.*

However amazing was perceived the effect of the gramophone in late nineteenth-century, the mechanism that had made "speech" "immortal" as declared Edison; the device which could reproduce the voice of the loved departed, and which could recreate "poor old greatgrandfather kraahraark! Hellohellohello amawfullyglad kraark awfullygladaseeragain…"[3] as affirms Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, Walter Benjamin regards it less as a magical process than a demystifying one. The fact is that the German philosopher sees authenticity in images of craft practices where only the hand can mark the object. In *The Storyteller*, for example, pot-throwing is considered as an image of authentic experience because it knows

[1] In Hamlin Garland's *Main-Travelled Roads*, a collection of short stories set in the Middle West, the "cricket" is often evoked in association to nature and to the countryside.
[2] Quoted in Sebastian D.G. Knowles, "Death by Gramophone", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 27, N° ½, Modern Poets, (Autumn 2003) Indiana University Press, p 2.
[3] Cited in Ivan Kreilakamp, *A Voice Without a Body, The Phonographic Logic of Heart of Darkness*, Victorian Studies, Winter 1997, Indiana University Press, 2009, p 211.

nothing of the mechanical.[1] Likewise in "The Waste Land", the gramophone cannot convey the authenticity that the nostalgic 'mandoline' offers.

But, in the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald, nature has already surrendered to the powers of industry just as the "fresh green breast" in *The Great Gatsby* turns to the electrical green light at the end of Daisy's dock. In "The Waste Land," even people's gestures are mechanical, (She smooths her hair with automatic hand/And puts a record on the gramophone.) In *The Great Gatsby*, the same 'automatic hand' can be shown in the following lines: "There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb." (*GG* 41) In the city of Fitzgerald, indeed, nature is devastated like the "desolate path of fruit rinds and discarded favours and crushed flowers" (*GG* 106) left at the end of Gatsby's parties, what Eliot would call the "testimonies of summer nights"; and the "empty bottles", "sandwich papers", silk handkerchiefs", "cardboard boxes" and "cigarette ends," in Eliot's poem, just recall the same ravages: "And on Mondays eight servants, including an extra gardener, toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ravages of the night before." (*GG* 41) Also in "The Waste Land" nature is soiled by the products of the modern age as now the Thames River "sweats/Oil and tar." It reflects no more the glitter of the golden days of Spencer's London because it is no time for love, joy and marriage ceremonies. For the modern festivities are far from being the pastoral celebrations of Spencer's *Prothalamion,* just as their "testimonies" are no more the rose petals left by Spencer's nymphs as the maidens are now profaned by "the loitering heirs of city directors."

Likewise in *Tender Is the Night*, the passage above also shows how the sacred qualities of the sounds of nature are profaned by the products of the mechanical Age. In the same way, Nicole is profaned by a father who stands for the corruption of a once pure and healthy America, the degenerate offspring of a Feudal tradition turned to a magnate of capitalism. After Nicole's performance, Dick, when

[1] Esther Leslie, *Walter Benjamin : Traces of Craf*t, Journal of Desigh History, Vol. 11 N° 1, 1998, p 6.

a few days earlier saw in her "all the lost youth of the world," regards her now as a "scarcely saved waif of disaster bringing him the essence of a continent." (*TN* 152) In the end, it seems like it is Dick Diver who sits down by the waters of the Rhône and weeps the death of pastoral America as he is left with a wounded Nicole who cannot help murmuring tunes altered by a mercenary note.

Yet the women of Fitzgerald have not always been so degraded. There was a time when their "white girlhood", their "beautiful white girlhood," as Daisy would say, made of them innocent and pure maidens. Like the young maidens from pre-war New Haven, Dick remembers, who "kissed men, saying "There!" hands at the man's chest to push him away," (*TN* 152), there was a time when the women of Fitzgerald were equally endowed with "virginal emotions." (*TN* 33) Moreover, they are apparelled with virginal garments as they are often dressed in white or flowered dresses. But if there is one image which precisely conveys the idea of virginity, it is perhaps the one of the blooming flower.

Fitzgerald's image of the maiden associated to a bouquet of flowers may be nothing more than a mark of the artist's nostalgia for the *jeune fille en fleurs* whose image, associated to purity, tradition and authenticity, is not unfamiliar with the writings of some romantic artists of the 19th century, as it is also present in the memory of the narrator of Gérard de Nerval's "Sylvie," (1854) who, remembering a provincial festival in his childhood village, cannot separate the picture from the one of the maiden crowned with a garland of flowers:

> … c'était un souvenir de la province depuis longtemps oubliée, un écho lointain des fêtes naïves de la jeunesse. − Le cor et le tambour résonnaient au loin dans les hameaux et dans les bois; les jeunes filles tressaient des guirlandes et assortissaient, en chantant, des bouquets ornés de rubans…Je me représentais un château du temps de Henri IV avec ses toits pointus couverts d'ardoises et sa face rougeâtre aux encoignures dentelées de pierres jaunies, une grande place verte encadrée d'ormes et de tilleuls, dont le soleil couchant perçait le feuillage de ses traits enflammés. Des jeunes filles dansaient en rond sur la pelouse en chantant de vieux airs transmis par leurs mères, et d'un français si naturellement pur, que l'on se sentait bien exister dans ce vieux pays du Valois, où, pendant plus de mille ans, a battu le cœur de la France.
>
> (Gérard de Nerval - "Sylvie")

The narrator, in love with Aurelia, an actress from his present town, longs to see Sylvie, a fresh brunette from his childhood village who used to sing old songs and dress in garbs from another century. But there is also Adrienne, the blond aristocrat whom he compares to Dante's Beatrice, and whom he once crowned with a wreath of leaves. In the passage, it is worth noticing how the experience the narrator recollects is authentic, an authenticity even more secured as the girls sing old songs transmitted by their elders and played with the drums and the horns, all instruments of authenticity. To consider Walter Benjamin's theory on the auratic experience he developed in his essay, "The Storyteller," and where he stresses the importance of the oral transmissibility of experience over modern information whose value, he considers, "does not survive the moment in which it was new,"[1] the girls' performance, in the passage, knows, therefore, nothing of the modern as the songs, the language and the instruments are authentic.

In the passage, the association of purity, tradition and authenticity with the pure maiden is clear, and, in the narrator's mind, Aurelia seems undistinguishable from Sylvie or Adrienne as the three women seem to blend into one mythical figure, the one of the *jeune fille en fleurs,* whose nostalgia will be the subject of a number of later writings. In fact, the maidens will later become Gilberte from the fictional Combray of Marcel Proust in *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs,* (1919) or Albertine, Andrée and Rosemonde, the group of young girls Proust's narrator meets on a beach at the fictional Balbec in the same volume. Here, the maidens are also apparelled with flowering garments as the world of Marcel Proust is fragrant with nasturtiums, irises and water lilies at 'lilac-time'. There are also the redolent lilacs, themselves, "ces jeunes houris…au tons vifs et purs des miniatures de la Perse," the chestnut tree of Combray, the blooming apple tree of Balbec under spring rain, and the 'aubépines' so dear to the narrator and whom he compares to "une blanche jeune fille, distraite et vive," and whose scent he cannot dissociate from the memory

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Storyteller," *Illuminations, Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schocken Books, 1968, p 90.

of Gilberte; without omitting, of course, the famous cup of lime-tea of Aunt Léonie, the catalyser of the narrator's memory.[1]

Also with the women of Fitzgerald, the world is 'redolent' of flowers, and Daisy, Myrtle and Rosemary all bear nouns of flowers. Indeed, Daisy, who is said to move "with the seasons," is often evoked in terms of roses and orchids: "For Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids…" (*GG* 143) She speaks to Nick in a "flower-like way," and cannot help seeing in him "a rose, an absolute rose." (*GG* 19) At her midsummer meeting with Gatsby, she wears a "lavender hat," and admires the garden's flowers in full bloom. And when Gatsby kissed her, "she blossomed for him like a flower." (*GG* 107) As for Rosemary, whose name suggests both the virgin and a flower, she seems to be another echo of the pure maiden as she is often portrayed as a young and innocent child: She "had magic in her pink palms and her cheeks lit to a lovely flame, like the thrilling flush of children after their cold baths in the evening…she was almost eighteen, nearly complete, but the dew was still on her." (*TN* 2) And just as she identifies herself with a horse-chestnut tree in full bloom, Dick sees her as "the only girl…that actually did look like something blooming." (*TN* 30)

But what flower is more graceful, more elegant, more delicate than the one incarnate in Nicole? For she is herself a flower among the bunch of 'nasturtiums' and 'irises', of 'tulips' and 'fragile mauve-stemmed roses' in her garden at the Villa Diana. There, the paths are "marked by an intangible mist of bloom," and there, "blooming," herself, "and filling the night with graciousness," (*TN* 48) she walks areas "so green and cool that the leaves and petals were curled with tender damp." (*TN* 34) In her garden, Nicole seems to be part of the flowering scenery. In fact, in her "lilac scarf," producing a "lilac shadow," she seems undistinguishable from the garden's "scherzo of colors," just as the garden's "untouched" walls are "undistinguishable from the violet grey mass of the town," (*TN* 35) Fitzgerald's mention of the "violet grey mass," being perhaps a reference to the wondrous lavender fields of Provencal France. As she melts to the florescent scenery, Nicole

[1] In *Du côté de chez Swann*, the taste of a cake dipped in an infusion of lime-tea helps the narrator recreate all his childhood at Combray.

seals her legitimate part of the landscape, and, as such, she becomes a timeless figure bringing love and harmony, and recalling the 'hyacinth girl' in "The Waste Land," "the Grail bearer, the maiden bringing love,"[1] or the Matilda figure of Dante's Eden,[2] and who, associated to flowers (your arms full) and water (you hair wet), is the centre of love and harmony in Eliot's poem. In the same way, Nicole, under the rain and with a 'basket of flowers', becomes the "grail bearer" of Fitzgerald's garden:

> I can remember how I stood waiting for you in the garden—holding all my self in my arms like a basket of flowers. It was that to me anyhow—I thought I was sweet—waiting to hand that basket to you… (*TN* 171)

Nicole *is* the "maiden bringing love," and to Dick, she "brought everything to his feet, gifts of sacrificial ambrosia, of worshipping myrtle." (*TN* 153) Nicole worships Dick; still it is she who is made sacred when, during a climbing-car trip in the Swiss mountains, the funicular shows the sign, "Défense de cueillir les fleurs," (*TN* 164) a reminder of Nicole's unapproachability. Even more unapproachable is the flower of the 'edelweiss', a Swiss alpine flower to which Nicole seems to be identified.[3] As a mountain flower, (meaning 'noble' (edel) and 'white' (weiss,)[4]) the 'edelweiss' may evoke an idea of purity, nobility and grandeur, as it is elevated above the mountains. And, as such, it may be associated to Baudelaire's *ideal*, what the French poet connects to the beautiful, the divine and the timeless, where the soul elevates to a place situated above the material world:

> Au-Dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
> Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers
> Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
> Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,
>
> Charles Baudelaire – "Elévation"

[1] Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950, p 74.
[2] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot An Introduction*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, p 54.
[3] Twice in the novel, the flower is mentioned in association to Nicole. The first time, it is mentioned in a letter Nicole writes to Dick, where she shows signs of recovery, and where she relates how she is "slowly coming back to life" and how she "climbed high enough to find asphodel and edelweiss…" (*TN* 139) The second time, the flower is mentioned by Dick himself when he starts to feel captivated by Nicole: "I like her. She's attractive. What do you want me to do—take her up in the edelweiss?" (*TN* 154)
[4] Encyclo Online Dictionary, http://www.encyclo.co.uk/webster/E/8.

However, such parallels are not without limits. For when the flowers are pried from their rural shell and brought to the artificial and worldly environment of the modern city, their effect is soon faded. As with Proust's Paris in *Un Amour de Swann* where the only named flowers are the chrysanthemums and the orchids of Odette's winter garden, greenhouse flowers, fashionable and symbolic of the insincere woman,[1] the city of Fitzgerald is also pervaded by an artificial flavour, just as Daisy's "orchids" are part of her "artificial world." In *Tender Is the Night*, Nicole is adorned with "artificial camellias," and shortly before the revelation of her insanity at the end of Book I, she shops at Rue de Rivoli for "artificial flowers." (*TN* 184) In Carraway's garden, "the flowers were unnecessary, for at two o'clock a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby's, with innumerable receptacles to contain it." (*GG* 81) For we are not at "lilac-time" since, in the garden of Gatsby, the lilac tree is "bare," so the 'jonquils', the 'hawthorns', the 'plum blossoms' and the 'kiss-me-at-the-gate' all need to come from the greenhouse. As for Gatsby, it seems that the flowers are merely reduced to colour his artificial and fashionable world: "We went up-stairs, through period bedrooms swathed in rose and lavender silk and vivid with new flowers…" (*GG* 88) Indeed, the flowers of Gatsby are stripped of their eternal qualities and function only as fashionable colours, just as the 'apple', the 'lavender' and the 'orange' function only to colour his shirts: "While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher - shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, and monograms of Indian blue." (*GG* 89) Consumed by fashion, the myth of the blooming flower cannot work anymore in the artificial world of Fitzgerald. So it is no coincidence that the 'orchids' of Daisy become "dying" at dawn; the paths of Gatsby, "desolate," and those of Nicole's garden at the Villa Diana, "atrophied and faintly rotten." (*TN* 34)

In fact, when the garden is brought to the factitious environment of the modern city, the myth of the *jeune fille en fleurs* cannot be potent anymore and becomes thus profaned by the demands of contemporary life. This Marcel Proust

[1] Annie Barnes, « Le Jardin de Marcel Proust : Pour le Cinquantenaire des "Jeunes Filles en Fleurs"», *The Modern Language Review*, Vol 64, N° 3 (Jul., 1969), p 548.

already felt as early as in the first volume of *La Recherche* when the narrator senses that the Bois de Boulogne has become "un lieu factice"[1] where women, along with the flowers, are desecrated:

> Et il m'eût fallu aussi que ce fussent les mêmes femmes, celles dont la toilette m'intéressait parce que, au temps où je croyais encore, mon imagination les avait individualisées et les avait pourvues d'une légende. Hélas ! dans l'avenue des Acacias - l'allée de Myrtes - j'en revis quelques-unes, vieilles, et qui n'étaient plus que les ombres terribles de ce qu'elles avaient été, errant, cherchant désespérément on ne sait quoi dans les bosquets virgiliens. (Marcel Proust – *Du côté de chez Swann*)

In the Bois de Boulogne of Marcel Proust, the 'Acacias path' becomes the 'Myrtle path' of Dante's *Inferno*, and the Bois, inhabited only by wandering shades, becomes thus assimilated to a descent into Hell.[2] And it seems that it is no coincidence that Dick Diver, on one evening, while he is wandering in Passy, wants to profane Rosemary precisely at the Bois de Boulogne.

"Atrophied and fairly rotten," the flowers of Fitzgerald are more likely to resemble the "crushed flowers" of the "desolate path" Gatsby walked shortly before "he found what a grotesque thing a rose is." (*GG* 153) As for the women, they seem to resemble the Myrtle of Fitzgerald, who, like the Myrtle of Dante, inhabits the hell of the book, and whose breast is smashed at the deadly accident in the even more deadly valley of ashes. In fact, the maidens are already departed as early as in the second volume of Proust's *La Recherche*, when the narrator asks a bare hawthorn-bush for the "demoiselles":

> Tout d'un coup dans le petit chemin creux, je m'arrêtai touché au coeur par un doux souvenir d'enfance : je venais de reconnaître, aux feuilles découpées et brillantes qui s'avançaient sur le seuil, un buisson d'aubépines défleuries, hélas, depuis la fin du printemps. Autour de moi flottait une atmosphere d'anciens mois de Marie, d'après-midi du dimanche, de croyances, d'erreurs oubliées. J'aurais voulu la saisir. Je m'arrêtai une seconde et Andrée, avec une divination charmante, me laissa causer un instant avec les feuilles de l'arbuste. Je leur demandai des nouvelles des fleurs, ces fleurs de l'aubépine pareilles à de gaies jeunes filles étourdies, coquettes et pieuses. « Ces demoiselles sont parties depuis déjà longtemps », me disaient les feuilles.
>
> (Marcel Proust – *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*)

[1] Quoted in Annie Barnes, « Le Jardin de Marcel Proust : Pour le Cinquantenaire des "Jeunes Filles en Fleurs"», *The Modern Language Review*, Vol 64, N° 3 (Jul., 1969), p 548.
[2] O Mannoni and Jesse Dickson, "The Flowering Paths of the Bois de Boulogne," *SubStance*, Vol. 1 No 3 Literature and Psychoanalysis (Spring, 1972) p 9.

As Baudelaire would say, "le printemps adorable a perdu son odeur!"[1] For the "aubépines" are departed; the maidens are departed, and the "lilac-time" of Marcel Proust is far away. As for the women of Eliot and Fitzgerald, they are less images of the *jeunes filles en fleurs* than those of Baudelaire's *fleurs du mal*, just as the relationships are far from representing the healthy and romantic idylls of the past, those the narrator longs for in the opening of "The Fire Sermon" when he remembers the maidens of Spencer's *Prothalamion* (Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song); but just like Fitzgerald's maidens, "the nymphs are departed."

My analysis on the profanation of nature (including the maiden) would be incomplete without a word on the profanation of the ultimate locus of spiritual life, the church. For, as with Gerard de Nerval where the picture of the maiden crowned with a wreath of flowers and performing a traditional dance cannot be detached from the one of festive life, what the narrator calls "les fêtes naïves de la jeunesse"; or as with Marcel Proust where the souvenir of the "aubépine" is inseparable from the days of festivity; likewise in the context of Fitzgerald, the image of the maiden should not be separated from the one of spiritual life. Again in the world of Fitzgerald, along with that of Eliot where the sound of 'Saint Mary Woolnoth' is a "dead sound," the locus of religious life is similarly desecrated:

> On Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages alongshore, the world and its mistress returned to Gatsby's house and twinkled hilariously on his lawn. (*GG* 60)
>
> Later [Rosemary] was homeward bound at last in broad daylight, with the pigeons already breaking over Saint-Sulpice. All of them began to laugh spontaneously ... (*TN* 91)

The passages seem to echo not only Eliot's "Waste Land" but also Baudelaire's "Spleen":

> Des cloches tout à coup sautent avec furie
> Et lancent vers le ciel un affreux hurlement,
> Ainsi que des esprits errants et sans patrie
> Qui se mettent à geindre opiniâtrement.
>
> Charles Baudelaire – "Spleen"

[1] Charles Baudelaire, "Le goût du néant," *Les fleurs du mal*, Le livre de poche, Librairie Générale Française, 1972, p 204.

As in Baudelaire's and Eliot's cities, the sound of the church bells are not heard by the inhabitants of Fitzgerald's city. The meaning of a "Sunday morning" seems to have lost its significance as the characters are engaged in worldly activities. In the same way, their days, devoid of spirituality, lose their significance. For, as Walter Benjamin suggests in his essay on Baudelaire, if one were to admit a quality in the quantity of days in the calendar of human life, this would be in the form of holidays. According to the German philosopher, the days of festivity are the days that bestow the quality necessary to make human life significant, and the people who are unable to experience those days feel as though they were excluded from the calendar:

> To have combined recognition of a quality with the measurement of the quantity was the work of the calendars in which the places of recollection are left blank, as it were, in the form of holidays. The man who loses his capacity for experiencing feels as though he is dropped from the calendar. The big-city dweller knows this feeling on Sundays…The bells, which once were part of holidays, have been dropped from the calendar, like the human beings. They are like the poor souls that wander restlessly, but outside of history.[1]

Likewise in the city of Fitzgerald, religious ceremonies and festive days are dropped from the characters' lives. Ritual life surrenders to a spirit of fashion, just as the religious festivities of the past are substituted for social parties. In the world of Gatsby, the whole world abandons the Sunday Service only to attend the hero's gorgeous parties, just as in *Tender Is the Night*, Rosemary, on her way home after an all night party, hardly notices the call of Saint Sulpice. The people of Fitzgerald's city become like the lady in Wallace Stevens' "Sunday Morning" who, dressed in her "peignoir" and enjoying "late /Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair," wonders about the meaning of the religious service:

> Complacencies of the peignoir, and late
> Coffee and oranges in a sunny chair,
> And the green freedom of a cockatoo
> Upon a rug mingle to dissipate
> The holy hush of ancient sacrifice.
>
> Wallace Stevens – "Sunday Morning" - *Harmonium*, 1915

[1] Walter Benjamin, « On Some Motifs in Baudelaire, » *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p184/185.

Even more unaware of the meaning of religious life is Rosemary in *Tender Is the Night*, when, in a Pullman car on her way home for Easter, she has an adventure with a young man. The fact is that she and her mother, "On *Sundays* sometimes when [they] had lived in Paris they had taken the little steamer up to Suresnes and talked about *plans for the future*." (*TN* 48) (Italics mine) Like the Thames River in "The Waste Land," the Seine River of the Paris of Fitzgerald is associated to the realm of "desire" where characters are attracted only by worldly concerns. In the world of Fitzgerald, indeed, religious life belongs to the past:

> "You ought to have a church, George, for times like this. You must have gone to church once. Didn't you get married in a church? Listen, George, listen to me. Didn't you get married in a church?"
> "That was a long time ago." (*GG* 150)

In the city of Fitzgerald, the link with the traditional past is cut as characters are seduced by the future. The break with the past is symbolised, in fact, by the death of Reverend Diver in *Tender Is the Night*, when the hero bids farewell to his father, to "all his fathers," and to an era of tradition. Dick's return to the provincial town of his father is a mere salute to the memory of a vanished order.

Thus the cities of Eliot and Fitzgerald are places in which all traditional values are desecrated. The correspondences between man and nature are violated by the forces of modernity. The whole world is pervaded by an artificial flavour where nature and flowers are absorbed by fashion and stripped, therefore, of their eternal qualities, as their scents are forever lost. Perhaps this explains why in "The Waste Land," "April is the cruellest month," and why in *The Great Gatsby*, a rose is a "grotesque thing," and why in *Tender Is the Night*, "the seasons [are] marked only by the workmen on the road turning pink in May, brown in July, black in September, white again in Spring." (*TN* 198) The whole world is reduced to plain reality, to nature in all its nakedness, to bare nature without essence. This is a world "without reflections" like the "nothing" Wallace Stevens' "snow man" "beholds," like a "star without atmosphere."[1] And this is what Walter Benjamin calls the

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, quoted in Walter Benjamin, « On Some Motifs in Baudelaire, » *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, Schoken Books, New York, 1968, p 194.

modern catastrophe or the “loss of the aura,” which is the price paid for being modern. In fact, the experience of modernity makes man renounce the sacred elements that provide meaning for his surrounding world as he embraces a world of fashion and artificiality.

II. 3. *The Dandy* or The Cult of the Ephemeral

> FASHION -- Madam Death, Madam Death!
> …
> FASHION -- I am Fashion, your sister.
> DEATH -- My sister?
> FASHION -- Yes. Do you not remember we are both born of Decay?
>
> **Giacomo Leopardi -** ***Dialogue Between Fashion and Death***

We saw in the previous section that a major influence on Fitzgerald's writings is found in the poetry of his favourite poet, John Keats to whom Fitzgerald showed a deep and lifelong response and owed both the title and the epigraph of *Tender Is the Night*. Closely related to the work of the Romantic poet also is the theme of the quest for immortality, symbolized in the quest for the Romantic nightingale, bird of immortality and promise of eternal youth and beauty. However, to youth, as well as to beauty, time *is* the enemy, something that Keats already felt (When youth grows pale, and spectre-thin, and dies,)[1] and both Eliot and Fitzgerald expressed through their characters' desperate attempts to extend the chant of the Romantic bird. In fact, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's characters' obsession with time is as central as their lives are marked by incessant reminders of the inevitable passing of time, as incessant as the barman's words in "A Game of Chess" Lil can hardly repress: "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME."

Haunted by time, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's characters' dearest wish may be to become part of Keats' Grecian urn and resemble those blessed figurines endowed with eternal youth and beauty. In his poem, Keats depicts the still universe of a Grecian urn where timeless figures enjoy eternal happiness as they will never know the curse of time, a world beyond obsolescence where neither the young "piper" nor his beloved nor their whole natural surrounding world will ever "bid the Spring adieu":

[1] John Keats, "Ode to a Nightingale", *English Romantic Poetry, An Anthology*, Stanley Appellbaum, NY: Dover Publications, 1996, pp 216.

> Ah, happy, happy boughs! that cannot shed
> Your leaves, nor ever bid the Spring adieu;
> And, happy melodist, unwearied,
> For ever piping songs for ever new;
> More happy love! more happy, happy love!
> For ever warm and still to be enjoy'd,
> For ever panting, and for ever young;
>
> John Keats – "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (21-27)

Is not Eliot's "still Chinese jar" in "Burnt Norton" manifestation enough of the author's response to the English Romantic poet? Indeed, Eliot's imagery draws from Keats's poetry to express a central theme of *The Quartets*, the quest for eternity, of the 'timeless moment', the 'moment of the Rose Garden'. Concerning the work of Fitzgerald, Keats's presence is most apparent through the characters' flight to a world beyond time where the laws of nature are suspended as is the world of Gatsby when he nearly breaks a clock at his midsummer meeting with Daisy, or when he believes in his capacity to "imprison and preserve youth" or to reverse time and repeat the past.

We have also seen that in the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald, the nightingale's 'inviolable voice' is no voice of harmony; that Daisy's 'deathless song' is no song of immortality, just as the characters' whole lives cannot escape the grasp of 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.
>
> "The Waste Land" (142 – 146)

Far from incarnating a figure of Keats's "Grecian Urn," Lil is more likely to resemble a picture of Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray*, which also fails the test of time. In the work of Oscar Wilde, Dorian, endowed with eternal youth and beauty, lets his portrait support the marks of time. So it is the picture, and not the model, which ages with time and reflects, therefore, the true nature of its owner. Indeed, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's writings are not so much familiar with Romantic themes as with late nineteenth-century post-Romantic ones as their universes are universes of

decadence. The reference to Baudelaire in the last episode of "The Burial of the Dead" ('You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!') suggests, indeed, an idea of decadence. Seeing the limits of the Enlightenment agenda, the French artist did not believe in the theory of progress and assumed, instead, that civilisation was exhausted and running down. To him, progress could not improve man's condition and would only increase greed and vulgarity. Thus, Eliot's and Fitzgerald's urban worlds are not unconnected with the picture of modern life of Baudelaire's Paris as both artists depict a tableau of a decadent civilisation enlightening the worst in humanity.

Decadence leads us to the philosophy of the "dandy," a personage who leads an existence of leisure and self-indulgence; a man who has devoted his life to the cult of the beautiful, the luxurious, but also the mundane and the novel. The cultivation of beauty becomes the chief concern of the dandy. He is a man "who finally has no profession other than elegance," [1] writes Baudelaire in his essay, "The Painter of Modern Life." (1863) And as such, the dandy becomes an art object dedicated to the beautiful and to the refined.

Dandyism also suggests that the natural surrenders to the artificial and the spirit of humanity, to a spirit of fashion. The first episode in "A Game of Chess" betrays a world of artificiality which suggests that people inhabit "a grotesque landscape" which is an "inversion of nature."[2] In fact, the dandy, as an ultimate product of a world over-civilized, becomes addicted to a culture of manners and style, and as such, he becomes the ultimate incarnation of sophistication.

"Sophisticated—God, I'm sophisticated!" (*GG* 22) cries Daisy in *The Great Gatsby*. As Leo Marx remarks in the Epilogue of *The Machine in the Garden*, Fitzgerald's characters seem to favour a direction other than the traditional pastoral retreat. All of them (with the exception perhaps of Myrtle who, her husband believes, wants to go west to start life over) choose to move "from simplicity to

[1] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, Penguin Books, 1972, p 419.
[2] Richard Lehan, *The City in Literature: An Intellectual and Cultural History*, Berkley: University of California Press, 1998.

sophistication."[1] The Buchanans "drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together" (*GG* 11). Nick left the Middle West, "the ragged edge of the universe," not only to learn the bond business or to escape an engagement but because he came back from the Great War restless. As far as Gatsby is concerned, he sprang from the heart of the continent not simply to carry his "Father's business" but also to "practice elocution, poise and how to attain it." (*GG* 164)

In fact, when T.S. Eliot granted *The Great Gatsby* as the "first step forward in the American novel since Henry James," he was perhaps thinking of the Jamesian legacy of the Genteel Tradition. As Richard Godden seems to suggest in his essay, "Money Makes Manners Make Man Make Woman: *Tender Is the Night*, A Familiar Romance," Fitzgerald's interiors seem more familiar with a 1870's salon of Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* than with those of the American 1920's. And what places are more evocative than the Buchanans' 'Georgian Colonial mansion' or Gatsby's fabulous manor where the owner stands "his hands still in his pockets… reclining against the mantelpiece in a strained counterfeit of perfect ease, even of boredom." (*GG* 84) In such elegant setting, indeed, the host cannot do otherwise than adopt the *perfect* posture (however affected) of the *perfect* dandy. Even the Reverend Diver in *Tender Is the Night* turns to be "a clerical dandy more given to taste than to theology" as he becomes "a master of the Victorian drawing-room," [2] the primary locus of the dandy culture, a location, however, which seems to have shifted, in the book of Fitzgerald, from the *salon* to the beach, where fashionable people gather "on the pleasant shore of the French Riviera," (*TN* 11) where young men read the "Book of Etiquette," (*TN* 38) and where three Victorian women knit the patterns of a sophisticated England: "Three British nannies sat knitting the slow pattern of Victorian England, the pattern of the forties, the sixties, and the eighties, into sweaters and socks, to the tune of gossip as formalized as incantation." (*TN* 12) The fact is that the women knit the patterns of a culture of style and manners of

[1] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, p 356.
[2] Richard Godden, "Money Makes Manners Make Man Make Woman: *Tender Is the Night*, A Familiar Romance," *Literature and History*, University of Keele, 1986, p 22-23.

perhaps a Beau-Brummellian[1] heritage[2], a tradition clearly demonstrated, in Fitzgerald's book, through the spectacle of elegance offered by perfect 'gentlemen of leisure':

> A well-dressed American had come in with two women who swooped and fluttered unselfconsciously around a table. Suddenly, he perceived that he was being watched—whereupon his hand rose spasmodically and arranged a phantom bulge in his necktie. In another unseated party a man endlessly patted his shaven cheek with his palm, and his companion mechanically raised and lowered the stub of a cold cigar. The luckier ones fingered eyeglasses and facial hair, the unequipped stroked blank mouths, or even pulled desperately at the lobes of their ears. (*TN* 62)

As Baudelaire suggests in "The Painter of Modern Life," the beauty the dandy cultivates is one that "affects his whole attire."[3] So it is imperative that the way a man should dress be of primary importance in the culture of the Dandy. In *The Great Gatsby*, Myrtle's marriage turns to a disaster the day she learns that her husband has borrowed his wedding suit: "I married him because I thought he was a gentleman (a 'gentleman of leisure', she should have said)[4]...I thought he knew something about breeding, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe." (*GG* 37) Later she explains: "He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in and never even told me about it." (*GG* 37) "A cheap coat makes a cheap man," writes Thorstein Veblen in *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899). This supposes that the value of man is measured by the value of his apparel, and as far as George Wilson is concerned, his deficiencies lie, in fact, in his want for elegance, a value Myrtle (as well as the whole 'leisure class') confuses with breeding and gentility; a value, however, she cannot deny in the 'elegant' Tom Buchanan of whom she reports a different story: "He had on a dress suit and patent leather shoes, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him..." (*GG* 38) Of course, Tom knows much about 'breeding' as he devotes his life to the pursuit of leisure, to play polo, to cultivate taste, to polish his look, and to raise pedigree ponies, dogs and the likes. He incarnates the perfect 'gentleman of

[1] A reference to George Brummell (Beau Brummell) (1778 - 1840), a British dandy considered as a prototype of the dandy culture.
[2] Thomas Spence Smith, "Aestheticism and Social Structure: Style and Social Network in the Dandy Life", *American Sociological Review*, Vol 39, N° 5 (Oct 1974), p 727.
[3] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 392.
[4] Comment in parenthesis mine.

leisure' analysed by Veblen, one who constructs his reputability upon the principles of "conspicuous leisure" and "conspicuous consumption" where the value of men is shown through an evident waste of time and waste of goods. Is this the "rich profusion" the lady demonstrates in the opening of "A Game of Chess" in Eliot's poem, a profusion of wealth necessary to establish the reputability of the 'leisure class'? "In order to be reputable it must be wasteful,"[1] declares Veblen, and the respectability of man is shown essentially in his display of goods. In this sense, one can easily understand why it was so cardinal for Gatsby to display his shirts under the approving eye of Daisy in chapter V, for it was the only way to recommend himself to a 'sophisticated' Daisy. In the same way, Nicole Warren tries desperately to recommend herself to a similarly 'cultivated' Dick:

> For a moment she entertained a desperate idea of telling him how rich she was, what big houses she lived in, that really she was a valuable property—for a moment she made herself into her grandfather, Sid Warren, the horse-trader. But she survived the temptation to confuse all values and shut these matters into their Victorian side-chambers—even though there was no home left to her, save emptiness and pain. (*TN* 159)

Indeed, in the world of Fitzgerald, the profusion of wealth reveals less an abundance than a profound emptiness. This is the dialectic between fullness and vacuity: A deep void is often disguised in a profusion of objects represented, in Fitzgerald's novel, in interminable 'lists of things' the characters make. In *The Great Gatsby*, Myrtle also reminds us how 'rich' she is when she mentions her "lists of things": "I'm going to make a list of all the things I've got to get. A massage and a wave, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer." (*GG* 38) In *Tender Is the Night*, there are young women lying "under a roof of umbrellas making out a list of things." (*TN* 14) Much longer are the "lists of things" Nicole and Rosemary shop at the boutiques of Rue de Rivoli, lists that never decrease in abundance and become, as such, most apparent demonstration of wealth. But the most evident manifestation of 'conspicuous consumption' is shown in the spectacle of commodity offered to the restless eye:

1 Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, P 67.

"He was just a peeper," [Dick] explained cheerfully. "He was just looking at your clothes. Why do you have so many different clothes?" (*TN* 152 - 153) As for Dick Diver, he can hardly restrain his eyes from following a 'beret', a most fashionable product of the 1920's. The fact is that he and Nicole were "too acute to abandon [the] contemporaneous rhythm and beat" of fashion. (*TN* 88) Indeed, Dick, a "model of correctness," Rosemary thinks, seems to be another example of the perfect dandy as "His hat was a perfect hat and he carried a heavy stick and yellow gloves" (*TN* 87):

> …he was compelled to walk there, or stand there, his shirt- sleeve fitting his wrist and his coat sleeve encasing his shirt- sleeve like a sleeve valve, his collar molded plastically to his neck, his red hair cut exactly, his hand holding his small briefcase like a dandy—just as another man once found it necessary to stand in front of a church in Ferrara, in sackcloth and ashes. Dick was paying some tribute to things unforgotten, unshriven, unexpurgated. (*TN* 103 - 104)

But the perfect dandy is also the perfect idle, the "virtuoso of non utilitariness."[1] As Veblen suggests, what makes dress elegant is also the fact that a spotless garment carries the indication of leisure: "Elegant dress serves its purpose of elegance not only in that it is expensive, but also because it is the insignia of leisure."[2] So it is not a surprise that, in the same chapter, shortly before the display of his elegance, Dick is shown withdrawing from his wife's account.

Thus the beauty the dandy cultivates is one concerned with the fashionable and the contemporary, what Baudelaire considers the "half of beauty" made of "a relative circumstantial element, which we may like to call, successively or at one and the same time, contemporaneity, fashion, morality, passion."[3] To Fitzgerald too, it is the "half of beauty" connected to the "contemporaneous rhythm and beat" of fashion, a fact that makes the dandy a harsh "critic of obsolescence."[4] In fact, in the world of Gatsby, Myrtle abandons her dress "as soon as [she is] through with it,"

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[1] Robert H. Byer, "Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe's The Man of the Crowd," *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p 229.

[2] Thorstein Veblen, *The Theory of the Leisure Class* (1899), Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, P 113.

[3] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 392.

[4] Irving Wohlfarth, "Perte d'Auréole : The Emergence of the Dandy," *MLN*, Vol 85, N° 4 French Issue (May, 1970), p 568.

(*GG* 38) and Gatsby renews his wardrobe "at the beginning of each season, spring and fall." (*GG* 89)

In this sense, the world of fashion also suggests a lack of inner stability: Because fashions always change, because a world of fashion always calls for movement and novelty, modern values will have no sense of constancy and security. In this context, it is worth noticing how the idea of fashion in the world of Fitzgerald is closely related to the sense of the ephemeral, just as Myrtle's 'list of things' in *The Great Gatsby* finishes with the mention of the mourning wreath, a reminder of their fleeting character. The idea of transience is all the more significant as shortly before her verbal display of commodities, Myrtle cries: "You can't live forever; you can't live forever." (*GG* 38)

And this is Giacomo Leopardi's formidable "Dialogue Between Fashion and Death" where 'Madam Fashion' and 'Madam Death' reverberate each other. (Fashion: Madam Death! Madam Death![1]) Both are sisters, and "Both [are] born of Decay" declares Leopardi, and such affiliation shows how ephemeral indeed is the world of fashion. This is a fact Rosemary seems to be aware of since, "half in the grip of fashion, [she] became a little self-conscious, as though she were displaying an unhealthy taste for the moribund." (*TN* 22) Likewise in the universe of Gatsby, his fashionable world is not immune to the abuse of time, just as Gatsby himself, dressed in "a white flannel suit, silver shirt, and gold-colored tie," (*GG* 81) is "pale as death…standing in a puddle of water glaring tragically into [Nick's] eyes." (*GG* 83) In the Paris of *Tender Is the Night*, the *Dialogue* is even more terrible as Fitzgerald clearly shows how "Madam Fashion" and "Madam Death" ramble side by side in the city of modernity:

> It was a melancholy neighborhood. Next door to the place [Dick] saw a sign: "1000 chemises." The shirts filled the window, piled, cravated, stuffed, or draped with shoddy grace on the showcase floor: "1000 chemises"—count them! On either side he read: "Papeterie," "Pâtisserie," "Solde," "Réclame"—and Constance Talmadge in "Déjeuner de Soleil," and farther away there were more sombre announcements: "Vêtements Ecclésiastiques," "Déclaration de Décès" and "Pompes Funèbres." Life and death. (*TN* 103)

[1] Quoted in Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999, p 8.

In the city of modernity, "Madam Fashion" and "Madam Death" perform what Robert H. Byer calls a "*dance macabre* in modern dress."[1] This suggests that a world of fashion is a consuming world, absorbing the humanity of the individual.

In fact, the dandy turns out to be a man cynical and "blasé," a man "who aspires to cold detachment,"[2] writes Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life." The dandy is a being whose humanity is consumed, and he is reduced to a soulless creature. He becomes "Like a patient etherised upon a table," a lifeless body, inanimate and inactive, as apathetic as can be Alfred Prufrock in Eliot's poem.

In Eliot's poetry, indeed, a typical figure of the dandy may be found in the character of Prufrock, a personage more interested in the details of his clothing than on giving life meaning. In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot depicts a world of decadence and artificiality where the protagonist, a modern man, highly cultivated and over civilized turns to be inactive and emotionally frustrated as his feelings become irrelevant in the face of the refined. Also a master of the drawing room, where "women come and go/Talking of Michelangelo," his world becomes one of sophistication where art and manners triumph upon life, just as his whole life becomes as insignificant as to be "measured out…with coffee spoons." As the world of Prufrock reaches the highest point of civilization, the American dandy becomes unable to express human feelings or to see the clear sense of things, his surrounding world being darkened by the 'yellow smoke' of the rotten city. Addicted to art, Prufrock represents a typical dandy whose humanity is overwhelmed by worldly interests just as his main concern becomes the cult of his image:

> And indeed there will be time
> To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?"
> 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!"]
> My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,
> My necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin—
>
> T.S. Eliot – "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (37 – 43)

[1] Robert H. Byer, "Mysteries of the City: A Reading of Poe's The Man of the Crowd," *Ideology and Classic American Literature*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986, p 231.
[2] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 399.

The dandy becomes a "Shape without form" as insignificant as those pathetic figures in Eliot's "Hollow Men," similarly passive (behaving as the wind behaves) and unable to act (Paralysed forces, gestures without motion). The reference to Guy Fawkes in the poem's second epigraph (A penny for the Old Guy) allows Eliot to parallel the hollow men, 'the stuffed men,' to the effigy of the 'Old Guy' only to reinforce their hollowness at the core since the English Catholic hero is now a 'stuffed' guy (Headpiece filled with straw). In fact, The hollow men's 'deliberate disguises' make them blend into one figure which is more likely to resemble the figure of the scarecrow which is nothing more than a physical presence without meaning at the core.

> Let me also wear
> Such deliberate disguises
> Rat's coat, crowskin, crossed staves
> In a field
> Behaving as the wind behaves
> No nearer -
>
> "The Hollow Men" (29 – 36)

In the passage above, the hollow men's grotesque attire parodies the figure of the dandy who is more likely to resemble the lifeless and spiritually dead creatures of Eliot's poem, reminiscent of the figure of the 'hairdresser's dummy' in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,*[1] another embodiment of spiritual deadness clad in "a high starched collar, white cuffs, a light alpaca jacket, snowy trousers, a clean necktie, and varnished boots."[2] Indeed, as it is suggested by Eliot and Conrad, the dandy is more likely to get close to the figure of the 'dummy', an image also suggested by Baudelaire in his depiction of modern beauty in "The Painter of Modern Line." As Marshall Berman remarks in his analysis of the work of Baudelaire in his book, *All that is Solid Melts into the Air: The Experience of Modernity,* the modern picture of "beautiful people" of Baudelaire's Paris is nothing more than a rendering of "dashing costumes, filled by lifeless mannequins with

[1] It is worth mentioning that Joseph Conrad's book, *Heart of Darkness*, provides Eliot's poem with both a title (hollow at the core) and an epigraph (Mistah Kurtz—he dead.)
[2] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994, p25.

empty faces."[1] The same image is found in the Paris of Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* where people are depicted "with small heads groomed like manikins' heads" (*TN* 84). The dandy is finally a being whose humanity has surrendered to his physicality, a figure Fitzgerald perfected in the 'bulky' Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, a character remembered only for his "physical accomplishments," (*GG* 11) as well as in the character of Devereux Warren in *Tender Is the Night*, a "Goddamned degenerate" (*TN* 144) who happens to be "un homme très chic." (*TN* 141)

But if there is one image in the book of Conrad the dandy is more likely to resemble, it is not so much the figure of the white-collar chief accountant as the image of the "iron collar" dehumanized natives since the dandy performs, in a modern fashion, the same *dance macabre*:

> …each had an iron collar on his neck, and all were connected together with a chain whose bights swung between them, rhythmically clinking. … They were called criminals, and the outraged law, like the bursting shells, had come to them, an insoluble mystery from the sea…They passed me within six inches, without a glance, with that complete, deathlike indifference of unhappy savages. (*Heart of Darkness*, 23/24)

But Conrad's natives "were not enemies, they were not criminals… nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation." (*Heart of Darkness*, 24) Like Eliot's hollow men, Conrad's natives are not remembered as "lost violent souls" but only "shapes without form, shade without colour, paralysed forces, gestures without motion."

Thus, the dandy is not so much the product of an achievement as the remnant of decadence because, as an art object, he "allows aesthetics to absorb ethics" where "moral laws become irrelevant in the face of the beautiful."[2] He becomes the residue of a loss, which is nothing more than the loss of a halo as Baudelaire remarkably pictures in his prose poem entitled "Perte d'Auréole":

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[1] Berman, Marshall, *All that is Solid Melts into the Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Penguin Books, 1982, p 136.
[2] Richard Lehan, F. *Scott Fitzgerald and the Craft of Fiction*, London: Southern Illinois University Press, 1966, p 21.

> Eh! quoi! vous ici, mon cher? Vous, dans un mauvais lieu! vous, le buveur de quintessences! vous, le mangeur d'ambroisie! En vérité, il y a là de quoi me surprendre.
> -- Mon cher, vous connaissez ma terreur des chevaux et des voitures. Tout à l'heure, comme je traversais le boulevard, en grande hâte, et que je sautillais dans la boue, à travers ce chaos mouvant où la mort arrive au galop de tous les côtés à la fois, mon auréole, dans un mouvement brusque, a glissé de ma tête dans la fange du macadam. Je n'ai pas eu le courage de la ramasser. J'ai jugé moins désagréable de perdre mes insignes que de me faire rompre les os. Et puis, me suis-je dit, à quelque chose malheur est bon. Je puis maintenant me promener incognito, faire des actions basses, et me livrer à la crapule, comme les simples mortels. Et me voici, tout semblable à vous, comme vous voyez!
>
> (Charles Baudelaire, "Perte d'Auréole" – *Le Spleen de Paris*)

Like the world he inhabits, the figure of the dandy is a figure without an aura, whose loss seems not so much due to the artist's terror of horses and carriages as to his reluctance to walk on the mud. The picture reveals a man, as he jumps about in the mud, less anxious to escape the dangers of the road than to keep his garments perfectly clean. In fact, the artist judged it less disagreeable to lose his insignia than to venture in the mud, the picture seems to say. Thus, such has emerged the impeccable dandy, from the artist's attempt to "get the better of a situation that got the better of him."[1] In other words, having lost his halo, which is finally nothing more than the artist's "Romantic mystique,"[2] a sort of innocence and humanity that inhabits the romantic mind, the dandy becomes addicted to fashion and devotes his life to the cult of his image. But since a world of fashion is a world without inner stability, modern values will have no sense of perpetuity, just as the life of the dandy, devoid of meaning, becomes assimilated to spiritual death.

Nevertheless, though, in Baudelaire's poem, the dandy strolls incognito in the streets of the metropolis, he is not to be confused with another central figure of modernity, the city flâneur, a personage Walter Benjamin depicts in his project on the Parisian arcades. In contrast to the dandy whose attention is concentrated on his own image, the flâneur assumes a different role. He becomes the observer at a distance who is stimulated by the city and by the crowd which contains potentiality for experience. He is the observer of a wide range of disconnected images upon which he will put order.

[1] Irving Wohlfarth, "Perte d'Auréole : The Emergence of the Dandy," *MLN*, Vol 85, N° 4 French Issue (May, 1970), p 553.
[2] Ibid., p 562.

II. 4. *The Flâneur* or The Quest for Eternity

Dans les plis sinueux des vieilles capitales,
Où tout, même l'horreur, tourne aux enchantements,
Je guette, obéissant à mes humeurs fatales
Des êtres singuliers, décrépits et charmants.

Charles Baudelaire – « Les petites vieilles »

How much of Romantic literature narrated the old fancy of the romantic mind to enjoy long solitary hours wandering lonely through the country and admiring the natural landscape. Such attitude often resulted from a feeling of alienation where the individual, in quest for self-fulfilment, escaped the civilised world and sought refuge in remote lands where he could commune with the natural world, and where he could enjoy heavenly hours of harmony. These moments can be easily felt through a number of romantic compositions, from the "solitary walks" of Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey" which forged the spirit of Romanticism, through the travelling days of Chateaubriand's *René,* the paradigm of the romantic *flâneur;* through the blessed country hours of Ludwig Van Beethoven which inspired the greatest pastoral symphony; to the "walking" hours of Henry David Thoreau where the artist, "part and parcel of nature," feels "at home everywhere."[1] In fact, in his essay, the American Transcendentalist not only stressed the importance of the relationship with nature but he also consecrated the true art of "walking," an art found even in the mannered world of Austen's Elisabeth Bennet where "not a day went by without a solitary walk."[2] The question one may ask is what feeling would result when the old romantic penchant for the natural landscape is absorbed by a new tendency for the cityscape? In fact, what Post-romantic literature showed is

[1] Henry David Thoreau, "Walking", *Walden, Civil Disobedience and Other Writings,* New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008, p 260.
[2] Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994, p 165.

that even the old romantic attitude of *flânerie* also migrated to the city, and in the cities of Baudelaire, Eliot and Fitzgerald, such new attitude is clearly demonstrated through the figure of the city *flâneur*, which Walter Benjamin depicts, in his project on the Parisian Arcades, as the "quintessential figure of modernity, adrift in the city, in thrall to a constant barrage of people, objects, and commodities."[1] Thus who is that new post-romantic figure of the *flâneur* who seems not so different from Thoreau's "walker" (who, "ready to leave father and mother, and brother and sister, and wife and child and friends," feels "at home everywhere,")[2] since he is also "away from home and yet at home anywhere"?[3]

To examine this new post-romantic conception of flânerie, let us clarify what the *flâneur* is not. The *flâneur* is not to be confused with the dandy even if many writers and critics often blend the two figures. In his work, "Perte d'Auréole," for example, Baudelaire seems to associate the dandy to the *flâneur* when he states, "Je puis maintenant me promener incognito, faire des actions basses, et me livrer à la crapule, comme les simples mortels," yet the figures are definitely different as, in the case of Baudelaire, the parallel is merely accidental, dictated only by the circumstances. In fact, the *flâneur* differs from the dandy in more than one respect. To start with, the dandy, though without a halo, remains conspicuous as he cultivates prominence and self-importance. As for the *flâneur*, he is rather discreet, "a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes," writes Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life." Besides, the flâneur, however idle he may be, his indolence is productive. As a distant observer of the urban scene, his indolence allows him to observe, read and decipher the "hieroglyphs" of the modern city, creating thus "correspondences" between disjoined images.[4] Finally, while the dandy's home is the Victorian *salon*, the street is, to quote Benjamin, the "properly sacred ground of flânerie,"[5] as put by Baudelaire in "The Painter of Modern Life":

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[1] Gregory Castle, *The Blackwell Guide to Literary Theory*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, p 68.
[2] Henry David Thoreau, "Walking", *Walden, Civil Disobedience and Other Writings*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2008, p 260.
[3] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 399/400.
4 Richard Kearney, *Modern Movements in European Philosophy*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994.
5 Walter Benjamin, "The Flâneur," The Arcades Project, Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, p 420/421.

> The crowd is his domain, just as the air is the bird's, and water that of the fish. His passion and his profession is to merge with the crowd. For the perfect idler; for the passionate observer it becomes an immense source of enjoyment to establish the dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite. To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very centre of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits, who do not lend themselves easily to linguistic definitions.[1]

The readers of Baudelaire have certainly noticed the author's use of phrases such as "passionate observer" and "immense source of enjoyment." Indeed, the *flâneur* has nothing of the attitude "blasé" and detached of the dandy as he is a man capable of emotions. Besides, unlike the dandy, the *flâneur* is not entirely a bourgeois. He "stands still on the threshold of the metropolis as of the middle class. Neither has him in its power yet,"[2] writes Walter Benjamin in "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century." As such, the *flâneur* is not yet engulfed by the city, a fact that makes him a figure still endowed with qualities of freshness, confidence and expectation. In *The Great Gatsby*, a typical figure is found in the character of Nick Carraway who is himself a provincial, "a simple man in a complex society,"[3] as put by Leo Marx in his Epilogue to *The Machine in the Garden*. From the very beginning, Nick shows rather a provincial attitude and seems uncomfortable among the sophisticated society of the East: "You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy…Can't you talk about crops or something?" (*GG* 17/18) He is even able to describe New York's Fifth Avenue in pastoral terms - "We drove over to Fifth Avenue, so warm and soft, almost pastoral, on the summer Sunday afternoon that I wouldn't have been surprised to see a great flock of white sheep turn the corner," (*GG* 30)- the streets of the metropolis having all freshness of the country: "And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees…I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer." (*GG*, 9/10) Why is the impression of renewal so "familiar" with Nick? Perhaps because it recalls the

[1] Charles Baudelaire, ibid p 399/400.
[2] Walter Benjamin, "Paris, the Capital of the Nineteenth Century", *The Work of Art in the Age of its Technological Reproducibility, and Other Writings on Media*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008, p 104
[3] Leo Marx, *The Machine in the Garden Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1967, p 361.

Prologue of *The Canterbury Tales* with its images of hope and revival, and Nick goes East with the same hope and enthusiasm as Chaucer's pilgrims, and it seems not accidental that Fitzgerald sets the beginning of the story in "the spring of 1922." To Nick, it is "a warm season" during which he knows all the excitement of a new start.

In fact, the flâneur often incarnates what Lionel Trilling refers to in his introduction to *The Princess Casamassima* as "a young man from the provinces,"[1] a character attracted and fascinated by the majestic aspects of the city, a figure epitomized in the character of Eugene de Rastignac in Honoré de Balzac's *Le Père Goriot.*[2] Is it a coincidence that Theodore Dreiser's Carrie Meeber, another provincial character seduced by the magic of the modern city and whose name Fitzgerald probably borrowed to name his Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*, reads precisely Balzac's *Le Père Goriot* in the closing chapters of Dreiser's book. The association of Dreiser (and, indirectly, Fitzgerald) to Balzac's model is certainly not accidental, for both writers used the same "young man from the provinces" formula (or young woman in the case of Dreiser) and depicted figures with the same qualities of expectation as those of the French hero.

Thus the main attribute of the flâneur is his capacity for emotion, and his emotions will reach an upper state of ecstasy when he comes to be in direct contact with the hustle and bustle of the metropolitan crowd. Again in the fiction of Fitzgerald, a typical figure of the flâneur is represented in the character of Nick Carraway who, "dressed up in white flannels…wandered around … among swirls and eddies of people [he] didn't know." (*GG* 47) The same quality of amazement is found in his look as he sees in the metropolis all the freshness of the new: "The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its

[1] Cited in Richard Chase, "Three Novels of Manners," *The American Novel and Its Tradition*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957, p 163.

[2] It is worth mentioning that the story of Fitzgerald has much of Balzac's *Le Père Goriot*, especially when it concerns the fate of the hero. In Balzac's novel, Goriot attracts his daughters by his wealth. Similarly, Gatsby attracts Daisy (as well as all East and West Eggers) by his gorgeous parties. Both heroes finish ruined morally if not materially. Both of them die miserably, abandoned by their beloved. Both of them are deserted at their funerals. Rastignac and a young medicine student are the only ones of Goriot's acquaintances to attend his burial. In the same way, Carraway, along with Owl Eyes and Mr. Gatz, are the only attendants of Gatsby's funeral.

first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world." (GG 67) Animated by a "tender curiosity," (*GG* 57) he indulges in idle hours where he can enjoy the fascinating spectacle of the metropolis:

> I began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night, and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye. I liked to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter into their lives, and no one would ever know or disapprove…
>
> …At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others - poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for a solitary restaurant dinner - young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life...Again at eight o'clock, when the dark lanes of the Forties were five deep with throbbing taxi-cabs, bound for the theatre district, I felt a sinking in my heart. (*GG* 57)

Closely related to the figure of the *flâneur* also is the moment of the 'violet hour', what Fitzgerald calls "the enchanted metropolitan twilight," and what he probably borrowed form Eliot's same twilight hour in "The Waste Land":

> At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
> Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
> Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
>
> "The Waste Land" (215 – 217)

In the works of both Eliot and Fitzgerald, the 'violet hour' is the moment when day light surrenders to the gleam of the streetlights, when man, "[Turned] upward from the desk," leaves the austerity that the day imposes to enjoy the pleasures of the city night: "I went up-stairs to the library and studied investments and securities for a conscientious hour…After that, if the night was mellow, I strolled down Madison Avenue past the old Murray Hill Hotel, and over 33rd Street to the Pennsylvania Station." (*GG* 57) The 'violet hour' is, in fact, the moment when men and women are succumbing to the shimmering beauty of the metropolitan night. In *The Great Gatsby*, the 'violet hour' is "the hour of a profound human change," (*GG* 92) and it is precisely the hour that witnesses the greatest moment of enchantment of Fitzgerald's book, the one that reunites Gatsby and Daisy at their crucial midsummer meeting in chapter V:

> All the lights were going on in West Egg now; the electric trains, men-carrying, were plunging home through the rain from New York. *It was the hour of a profound human change, and excitement was generating on the air*. (*GG* 92) (Italics mine)

The 'violet hour' is finally not simply a moment but a whole state of mind by which man is experiencing the enchanting effect of the night. Whether it is the 'hot twilight' of Gatsby's 'burning gardens', or the 'velvet dusk' of his "blue gardens where men and girls [come and go] like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars," (*GG* 41) the 'violet hour' is, in fact, the moment when men and women become like "moths" attracted by the dazzling lights of the metropolitan nights. In this sense, the night becomes, as William E. Doherty puts it in "*Tender Is the Night* and the 'Ode to a Nightingale,'" "the time of enchantment, masking the ugliness of reality that the day exposes. The night, as in the "Ode." is the time of beauty and the time of illusion"[1]: "They arrived at twilight, and, as we strolled out among the sparkling hundreds, Daisy's voice was playing murmurous tricks in her throat." (*GG* 101) And the ecstasy of the night will reach an upper state of bliss when the whirl of the moment is cadenced, in fact, by the tender rhythms of the night, whether these are the romantic chants of Keats's nightingale in the "Ode", or the soft measures of the "The Love Nest" in Fitzgerald's *Gatsby* or, more significantly, the thrilling notes of Daisy's incantations, Fitzgerald's heroine performs with a voice so warm, so soft and so reminiscent of Rappaccini's daughter's voice in Nathaniel Hawthorne's story, "a voice as rich as a tropical *sunset*."[2] (Italics mine) The fact is that Daisy's voice is as bewitching as that of Hawthorne's Beatrice.[3]

Yet the charm of the night is not only the effect of a 'voice' but also that of the 'eyes' of another Beatrice who is considered as the centre of love and faith in the universes of both Eliot and Fitzgerald. It is Dante's Beatrice whose 'eyes' are

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[1] William E. Doherty, "*Tender Is the Night* and the 'Ode to a Nightingale,'" *Explorations of Literature*, Ed Rima Drell Reck, Louisiana State University Press, 1966, n.pag..

[2] Nathaniel Hawthorne, "Rappaccini's Daughter", *The Norton Anthology of American Literature, Seventh Edition, Volume B 1820 – 1865*, New York: W.W. Norton & Company. Inc., 2007, p 1335.

[3] In Hawthorne's short story, the beautiful Beatrice, daughter of Dr. Rappaccini, is described as having an extraordinary voice, 'rich and youthful'. Fitzgerald's reference to Daisy's voice in *The Great Gatsby* seems to owe something to Hawthorne's tale.

the most longed-for in the wastelands of Eliot and Fitzgerald since they represent the "hope only/Of empty men." In fact, as Nidhi Tiwari puts it in his work, *Imagery and Symbolism in T.S. Eliot's Poetry*, the 'eyes' are "the archetypal symbol of rebirth" as "their memory reminds one of the tree swinging and the wind singing in the trees in earthly paradise."[1]

The enchanted 'eyes' become thus the main attribute of the *flâneur*, and the "passionate observer" will acquire an unusual capacity for wonder, just as his eyes will be endowed with an extraordinary quality of amazement which makes him see the world with innocent eyes. Drawing from Edgar Allan Poe's story, "The Man of the Crowd," whose protagonist is in a convalescent state, Baudelaire sees in the flâneur the gaze of the convalescent which, the French artist considers, is not different from the gaze of the infant:

> But convalescence is like a return to childhood. The convalescent, like the child, enjoys to the highest degree the faculty of taking a lively interest in things, even the most trivial in appearance. Let us hark back, if we can, by a retrospective effort of our imaginations, to our youngest, our morning impressions, and we shall recognize that they were remarkably akin to the vividly coloured impressions that we received later on after a physical illness, provided that illness left our spiritual faculties pure and unimpaired. The child sees everything as a novelty; the child is always 'drunk'…But genius is no more than childhood recaptured at will, childhood equipped now with man's physical means to express itself, and with the analytical mind that enables it to bring order into the sum of experience, involuntarily amassed. To this deep and joyful curiosity must be attributed that stare, animal-like in its ecstasy, which all children have when confronted with something new…[2]

Is it a coincidence that Rosemary Hoyt in *Tender Is the Night*, a character "as dewy with belief as a child from one of Mrs. Burnett's vicious tracts," (*TN* 43) is precisely recovering from illness: "I got pneumonia making a picture last January and I've been recuperating." (*TN* 25) It seems that it is through her convalescent state that Fitzgerald emphasizes her innocent looks and bestows the quality necessary to make her see in the world some form of simplicity and candor:

> Her [Rosemary] naïveté responded whole-heartedly to the expensive simplicity of the Divers, unaware of its complexity and its lack of innocence, unaware that it was all a

[1] Nidhi Tiwari, *Imagery and Symbolism in T.S. Eliot's Poetry*, New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2001, p134.

[2] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 397/398.

> selection of quality rather than quantity from the run of the world's bazaar; and that the simplicity of behavior also, the nursery-like peace and good will, the emphasis on the simpler virtues, was part of a desperate bargain with the gods and had been attained through struggles she could not have guessed at. (*TN* 30)

But there is also Nicole Diver, another convalescent character from the book of Fitzgerald who seems to possess the same freshness and sincerity in her eyes, a quality she develops, however, through those idle hours she spends in her garden at the Villa Diana, a place reminiscent of Mrs Burnett's *Secret Garden* by which the protagonist is healed. In her garden, indeed, Nicole develops an acute vision and shows a gradual "lifting of a burden, an unblinding of eyes" (*TN* 301), not to the material world but to a subjective world of her own. At the same time, her surrounding world becomes more and more opaque: "This was because she knew few words and believed in none, and in the world she was rather silent, contributing just her share of urbane humor with a precision that approached meagreness." (*TN* 35) Nicole becomes a seer who is blind to the objective world.

Indeed, unlike the dandy who is blind to human values, the flâneur becomes blind to the objective world. At the same time, he develops an impressionistic vision which allows him to see beyond the material world. Such fractured vision may be the effect of the crowd whose density renders the complexity of the modern city. In fact, as Richard Lehan explains in his book, *The City in Literature*, the experience the city offers goes often beyond people's capacity for assimilation and the city becomes more and more impenetrable. As a result, the objective vision weakens leaving way to an impressionistic one controlled by the mind. The more intense the impressionistic vision is, the more opaque objective reality becomes. This phenomenon Eliot summarises through the character of Tiresias in "The Waste Land", the blind man who "perceived the scene and foretold the rest," and whose actual blindness shows how limited is the understanding of urban complexities. His impressionistic vision makes of him "the most important character of the poem," and allows him to "see the substance of the poem," and decipher the images of Eliot's Unreal City. Indeed, as Benjamin suggests, it is the task of the *flâneur,* the seer, the observer, to patch up the fragments of modernity. It is, in fact, the task of the *flâneur,* that modern Tiresias with his ability to see beyond the material, to see

'substance' in the vacuity of the modern world, or, as Baudelaire puts it in "The Painter of Modern Life," to "extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distil the eternal from the transitory."[1]

In *The Great Gatsby,* a Tiresias figure may be found in one character who, in spite of being blind – in a sense, since he wears enormous spectacles - is endowed with an "unusual quality of wonder": Owl Eyes, the character Nick meets in Gatsby's library and whose name, Letha Audhuy remarks in "The 'Waste Land' Myth and Symbols in *The Great Gatsby*," suggests wisdom, seems the most perceptive character of the book because, like Tiresias, "what he sees, in fact, is the substance"[2] of the book: Despite his defective vision, he is able to see "substance" in Gatsby's library ("Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard" (*GG* 47)) and, therefore, in his life: He is the only one of Gatsby's former guests to attend Gatsby's funeral. He is the only one who pronounces the compassionate words: "The poor son-of-a-bitch." (*GG* 166) Another Tiresias figure may be found in the character of Nick Carraway who, shortly after the death of Gatsby, becomes blind to the world of the East: "After Gatsby's death the East was haunted for me like that, distorted beyond my eyes' power of correction." (*GG* 167) But the "guide" and "pathfinder" of the book of Fitzgerald proves equally able to see "substance" in Gatsby, for he is the only one who acknowledges Gatsby "worth the whole damn bunch put together" (*GG* 146) and that he "turned out all right at the end." (*GG* 8)

Nevertheless, like Nick Carraway, the *flâneur* grows soon "within and without, simultaneously enchanted and repelled by the inexhaustible variety of life," (*GG* 37) simultaneously fascinated and repelled by the spectacle of the city as he experiences what Balzac would call the 'splendours and miseries' of modern life. In this sense, Balzac's model of the 'young man from the provinces' will work no more, for while Rastignac grows increasingly involved in the artifice of the Parisian society, Fitzgerald's 'young man' chooses to retreat back to his province. And while Rastignac follows the pattern of rise without fall, Nick does know the tragic fate of

[1] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 402.
[2] From Eliot's notes, "The Waste Land," *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*, Sixth Edition Volume D, Between the Wars 1914 -1945, New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003, p 1437.

the 'young men from the provinces' whose symbolic death "puts a tragic end to their lives."[1] In the case of Carraway, his eviction from the city, at the end of the book, can be similar to his death, death which is, however, not devoid of regeneration. In fact, unlike Rastignac, who confronts, in the end, the Parisian society pronouncing the words, "à nous deux maintenant," Carraway, disillusioned, chooses to retreat from the urban scene. Incorruptible, Nick remains endowed with a romantic halo, and his idealism is even more reinforced through his final disillusionment and his longing for his hometown at the end of the book, a tradition also deeply rooted in Romantic literature and which finds expression in tales as old as Goethe's *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* or Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner*.

If the dandy is the culmination of decadence, the *flâneur is* the redemption. As an inheritor of a romantic tradition re-examined by the demands of modern life, the *flâneur* still embodies some relics of the romantic spirit as he is capable of true emotions; as he is endowed with a quality of amazement and expectation; as his gaze is the gaze of the child, and as he possesses that religious insight which allows him to extract what Baudelaire considers the "half of beauty" connected to the eternal and to the timeless. In this sense, the *flâneur* becomes a personage whose task is to patch up the fragments of a tradition gone to pieces, or in other words, a personage that represents the urban equivalent of the ruin which is supposed to bring harmony in the modern disenchanted world.

[1] A. K. Chanda, "The Young Man from the Provinces", *Comparative Literature*, Vol 33, N° 4, 1981, p 340.

Chapter III

'The Rose Garden'

or

The Unheard Song of Innocence

III.1 Nostalgia or the Garden of Early Childhood

III.2 *La Vie antérieure* or the Garden of the Unfallen Man

III.3 *Paradise Regained* or the Garden of Remembrance

Introduction

Now that the experience of the modern city proved that the modern urban world is a universe that meaning has deserted, let us reflect on the way to recover a lost meaningful past. The question one may ask is whether a romantic and healthy past is recoverable, or at least memorable, out of the desolate landscapes, polluted waters and industrial wastes of the contemporary world. If the past is not repeatable, can it be memorable? To Walter Benjamin, the Twentieth Century is a post-historical age in which the past is lost with the disappearance of the figure of the storyteller. In the present chapter, we will see how in the modern distorted worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald, meaning has left the material world to enter a realm of memory. In the first section, we will see how past experiences are sheltered in a halo which makes them both present and out of reach. They are as significant and inaccessible as the eternal moments of early childhood. A second section will be devoted to a much earlier and more significant past close to a Garden of Eden, what Baudelaire calls “La Vie antérieure”, a previous life prior to the modern age and in which experience finds its consecration. In the last section, we will see how past experiences can be recovered only if they are restored to their meaningful context, or in other words, only if the halo that shelters the experiences is recreated by Benjamin’s *storyteller*.

III. 1. Nostalgia or the Garden of Early Childhood

Ô temps, suspends ton vol ! et vous, heures propices,
Suspendez votre cours !
Laissez-nous savourer les rapides délices
Des plus beaux de nos jours !

(Alphonse de Lamartine, *Le lac)*

As developed previously, the modern urban worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald are governed by a terrible *spleen* accentuated by the even more 'formidable stroke' of an uncompassionate time: Souviens-toi que le Temps est un joueur avide/Qui gagne sans tricher, à tout coup! c'est la loi. (Baudelaire – "L'horloge") In "The Waste Land," this is the time of the city clock, regulated by the pace of the mechanical crowd as well as the commands of a merciless barman (HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME.) In *The Great Gatsby*, time is controlled by schedules and calendars, by clocks and watches, by train hours and inexorable financial terms such as those Nick meets everyday to "unfold the shining secrets" of "Midas and Morgan and Maecenas." (*GG* 10) In the urban worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald, time is one of the present, a linear and objective time that cannot be reversed. Within this order of time we can neither suspend the course of events nor repeat the past.

"Can't repeat the past?" [Cries Gatsby] incredulously. "Why of course you can!" (*GG* 106) Only Gatsby - who nearly breaks a clock - cannot accept the implacable 'rules' of objective time. His fantasy world is measured by time of a particular order, a subjective time governed by nature and plants, by rain and seasons, by rites and religious festivities. This is the time of memory, the time of recollection and conversation. It is the time of the *souvenir* in which life and meaning are concentrated because the 'souvenir', Benjamin suggests, is the 'relic' that derives from 'deceased experience'. ("Central Park", 49) As for Gatsby, time is one of 'uniforms' and officers parties, the time of 'orchids' and 'cheerful

orchestras', and more effectively, the time of "one Autumn night" of 1917 when he "[sucked] on the pap of life, [gulped] down the incomparable milk of wonder." (*GG* 107) In the mind of Carraway, time is one of boyhood and college years, the time of "thrilling returning trains" for Christmas vacation.

As we have seen with the flâneur, the modernist hero, first attracted by the splendour and the happiness the city seems to promise, enters a phase of seduction. But since the experience of the modern city often results in disillusionment, he, like Nick Carraway, grows soon "within and without," torn between a sense of expectation and a sense of nostalgia. Gradually he loses all sense of purpose and feels a sense of loss and absurdity, and if he is not destroyed, he comes back home overcome with a sense of waste, leaving the phase of seduction to enter a phase of regret. This Fitzgerald precisely conveyed through Nick's attitude at the end of the book when he expresses a desire to return home recreating innocent moments of prep-school and college years, of parties and friends, of effervescent trains homeward for Christmas vacations:

> One of my most vivid memories is of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time. Those who went farther than Chicago would gather in the old dim Union Station at six o'clock of a December evening, with a few Chicago friends, already caught up into their own holiday gayeties, to bid them a hasty good-by…When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. We drew in deep breaths of it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before we melted indistinguishably into it again. That's my Middle West—not the wheat or the prairies or the lost Swede towns, but the thrilling returning trains of my youth…(*GG* 167)

But these can only be evoked in the past and Nick is left with nothing more than nostalgia, that "limbo land, leading nowhere, where the artist can graze like a horse put to pasture, feeding on such clover of the past as whets the appetite…We dip our faces into the past as into the corridors of that train, homeward bound at Christmas…But it has a greater virtue still. It is inexhaustible."[1] The narrator of *The Great Gatsby* can only remember those 'returning trains' because the times he longs

[1] Wright Morris, "The Function of Nostalgia," Arthur Mizener (ed), *F. Scott Fitzgerald: A Collection of Critical Essays*, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, 1963, p 26.

for and the province he seeks, the province of purity, innocence and harmony, is a country that belongs solely to the past. In the end, Nick embraces a world of timeless beauties because the past is always greater than objective reality.

Indeed, the more fleeting and limited the objective world is, the more immense and boundless the realm of memory is. Both in the works of Eliot and Fitzgerald, two worlds intersect: The limited world of disenchantment and modern sterility and the infinite world of innocence, cultural coherence and potency. In the language of Dante, these may be associated to *Inferno* and *Paradiso*. In William Blake's words, such demonic and paradisal realms may be associated to the poet's states of experience and innocence. In the realm of Baudelaire, they may represent the poet's states of *spleen* and *ideal*. And as the demonic realities of Eliot and Fitzgerald are those associated with the horror of Dante's Inferno and Baudelaire's Paris, represented at best in Eliot's Unreal City, Dantesque and dreamlike where people are weary, emotionally exhausted and caught in a mechanical routine, the paradisal state is not so much a future or eternal life as the coherent and healthy past that winter covers with "forgetful snow."

Thus in the works of Eliot and Fitzgerald, the paradisal state is the one associated to the healthy and harmonious past disillusioned characters long for. In "The Waste Land," the past was one of great cultural achievements and represents a vivid contrast to the apocalyptic world of 1922. The poem opens with an evocation of "memory" which, juxtaposed to "desire," may evoke a sense of remembrance and longing at the same time, or, more simply, a sense of nostalgia, that the American poet seems to suggest through his use of the image of the 'wheel' which finally evokes less an idea of imprisonment in time than a sense of return to the sources. Likewise in *The Great Gatsby*, nostalgic resurrections of the past, apparent throughout the book, are carried at best through those numerous images of wheels and circles the American novelist uses to evoke the same idea of a backward movement: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (*GG* 172) They are those 'ripples' of Gatsby's pool which form the book's final image of the 'compass' suggesting a sense of return to a previous and harmonious life: "The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like

the leg of transit,[1] a thin red circle in the water." (*GG* 154) The circular path is completed, in fact, soon after Gatsby's death when Mr Gatz gives us a glimpse of the young Jimmy Gatz's "GENERAL RESOLVES" bringing back his beginning to his end. The book finally ends in a loop with the image of the Dutch sailor in front of his enchanted vision echoing Gatsby's enchantment in front of the green light in the opening chapter of the book.

"Mixing memory and desire," the characters of Eliot and Fitzgerald can hardly detach themselves from the image of the past, an obstinate image they can hardly restrain. As Fitzgerald brilliantly concludes in *The Great Gatsby*, the image of the past is always imposing itself before the hero as he tries desperately to move forward: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past." (*GG* 172) This, however, does not let itself easily unveil, for the past, though persistent, is not easy to figure as it is also vague, distant, and even furtive: "[Gatsby] looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the *shadow* of his house, just *out of reach of his hand.*" (*GG* 106) (Italics mine) And just as Eliot's realm of ideas in "The Hollow Man" is veiled by a 'shadow', the ideal past in the realm of Fitzgerald is similarly veiled by a shade, what the American novelist seems to represent in *The Great Gatsby* in that 'damp mist' that covers Gatsby's 'vacant eyes' (*GG* 82) at his midsummer meeting with Daisy in chapter V, or in that 'pink and golden billow of foamy clouds' (*GG* 91) that veils his vision as he tries to recreate his remote past in the same chapter: "If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay," said Gatsby. "You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock." (*GG* 90) The 'mist' becomes thus the veil that covers the image of the past as this resists being captured. In fact, the hero of *The Great Gatsby* loses all meaning of his past at the very moment when he gets hold of Daisy, the iconic manifestation of his dream. As for 'the green light', the other embodiment of his dream, it seems to have already lost all significance:

[1] In a letter to Maxwell Perkins, Fitzgerald explains that though he used the word 'transit' to describe the circle of leaves around Gatsby's corpse in the pool, he really meant 'compass'.

> Daisy put her arm through his abruptly, but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had diminished by one. (*GG* 90)

> As I went over to say good-by I saw that the expression of bewilderment had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault, but because of the colossal vitality of his illusion. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. (*GG* 92)

Possession is, indeed, the very thing that the past resists. As Walter Benjamin suggests in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, "Truth is the death of intention," (*OGT* 36) that is, the intention to possess. What makes the significance of past experiences, in fact, is that they resist being recaptured, and this is precisely the idea Fitzgerald conveys in *The Great Gatsby* when he pictures his hero unable to appreciate a present moment with Daisy because his past is far greater than his objective reality. In the end, the hero is left with a reality beneath his pristine memories, and the union of our protagonists will end with nothing but a bitter disillusionment with the image of the hero trying desperately to grasp the ungraspable, and the image of the past increasingly receding before him: "[Gatsby] began to talk excitedly to Daisy…But with every word she was drawing further and further into herself, so he gave that up, and only the dead dream fought on as the afternoon slipped away, trying to touch what was no longer tangible, struggling unhappily, undespairingly, toward that lost voice across the room." (*GG* 128)

As Marcel Proust would say, "les vrais paradis sont les paradis qu'on a perdus." (*Le Temps retrouvé*) The more distant and inaccessible our memories are, the deeper our sense of nostalgia is, and the more significant the meaning of the past will be. Thus what makes the significance of the past is its inaccessibility. "Unapproachability is indeed a major quality of the cult image,"[1] writes Benjamin in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," and the idea of the inaccessibility of the past he will render through his concept of the 'aura', which the German philosopher designates as the unique manifestation of a halo that encircles

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 243.

an experience, that association of images which cluster around it and which form its authenticity and significance. Past experiences, Benjamin considers, are sheltered in a husk, in a cluster of images related to the whole circumstances that witnessed the experience. To reproduce an experience out of its original context would be to destroy its significance, that is to say, its 'aura'. And this explains why mechanical devices such as the photography, the camera or the gramophone can never render the authenticity of an experience because the recaptured object, Benjamin explains in his "Artwork" essay, would lack "its presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be." Such experience must be unique and to reproduce it would be to destroy its aura, that is, "to pry it from its shell."[1] It is the same with our memories, they should not be captured by such technical devices as the photography, the camera or the gramophone, nor should they be grabbed or possessed. They are inapproachable and stand therefore for the remote, the imaginary, even the sacred. These are our childhood memories "in vain we try to conjure [them] up again the effort of our intellect is futile."[2] Indeed, the paradisal state will be one associated to early childhood, to a remote land the individual can hardly figure, what Baudelaire would call, "le vert paradis des amours enfantines… plus loin que l'Inde et que la Chine." (Charles Baudelaire, *Les Fleurs du Mal* - "Moesta et errabunda")

Like in Dante's Eden where the poet renews the innocence of childhood,[3] the paradisal states of Eliot and Fitzgerald are closely related to the image of lost childhood. In the works of both artists, the state of harmony seems undistinguishable from the memories of the blessed years of childhood and adolescence. In *The Great Gatsby*, for example, nostalgic recollections of the past culminate in those "most vivid memories…of coming back West from prep school and later from college at Christmas time," (*GG* 166) a most resplendent tableau of boyhood and college years Fitzgerald's narrator offers by the end of the book.

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art," Ibid., p 223.

[2] Marcel Proust, quoted in Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 158.

[3] In Eden, Dante meets a young girl, Matilda, who is gathering flowers and who will become, according to Northrop Frye, an archetypal figure of childhood innocence and harmony.

Similarly in *Tender Is the Night*, Dick's years at New Haven constitute his "favorite, heroic period" (*TN* 130) in his life, and it is the memory of his childhood that will compensate for his later emotional voids. Shortly after the announcement of his father's death, for example, Dick immediately recollects the summers he used to spend with his father, those blessed days when, clad in his "starched duck sailor suit", he used to walk with him listening to his sermons about life, "simple things, matters of behavior that came within his clergyman's range." (*TN* 223) Also after the hell of Nicole's breakdown at the fair when he takes time off from his marriage and from the clinic and travels to Munich to rest, Dick finds refuge, as he skims over the Vorarlberg Alps, in contemplating some rustic villages that evoke the "tawdry souvenirs of his boyhood." (*TN* 215) And as he broods over that lost rural world of his past, he dreams of a "peasant girl … with a face as green and rose as the color of an illuminated missal." (*TN* 214) Perhaps his most apparent manifestation of childhood nostalgia is found, after all, in his fascination for juvenile beauties, "fashioned by Louisa M. Alcott or Madame de Ségur," (*TN* 83) and who find embodiment either in his youthful wife whose 'childish smile' evokes "all the lost youth in the world," (*TN* 150) or in the babyish Rosemary, a character "as dewy with belief as a child from one of Mrs. Burnett's vicious tracts." (*TN* 43)

Yet the bulk of children's literature will concern another character of Fitzgerald who seems unable to secure memories of her own. As far as Nicole is concerned, she seems to rely, in fact, on young fictional characters to nourish her divided memory and provide some form of harmony for her fractured life. Indeed, her reminiscences of 'college' (or rather the clinic) seem somewhat confused with those of Jean Webster's Judy Abbot in *Daddy Long Legs*[1] (1912), that brilliant orphan who cannot spend a day without writing affectionate words to an anonymous 'daddy long legs' she marries at the end of the book. As for Fitzgerald's

[1] In Jean Webster's epistolary novel, Judy Abbot, an orphan sent to college by an anonymous philanthropist she names 'daddy long legs', writes quite regularly delightful letters to her benefactor in which she informs him of her progress, her exploits and all her doings at college.

daddy's girl[1] (perhaps no less orphan than Webster's Judy), she chooses to set her dissipated emotions on her psychiatrist who will later play the part of a 'daddy' in her life. The echo of Webster's story is reflected, in fact, in those numerous letters Nicole writes to Dick where she relates her sombre days at the clinic (in the same fashion Judy relates her days at college) and where she shows the same sentimentality and gentle audacity as Webster's heroine: "So far it was easy to recognize the tone—from "Daddy-Long-Legs" and "Molly-Make-Believe," sprightly and sentimental epistolary collections enjoying a vogue in the States." (*TN* 135) In Nicole's confused mind, one may find the echo of another children's classic that may have fulfilled her abortive childhood. It is Mrs. Burnett's *Secret Garden* (1911) which seems to find an equivalent, in the book of Fitzgerald, in Nicole's garden at the Villa Diana.

Set in the Yorkshire moors of England, Frances Hodgson Burnett's novel mirrors the nostalgic yearning, proper to the age of urbanism and industrialization, for a pastoral world in communion with nature. The story features an abandoned garden which is restored to life thanks to the care of benevolent children. In the same way, the ailing protagonists equally benefit from the healing powers of nature and see a significant improvement in their health and temperament. The novel stresses the strong relationship between nature and childhood innocence, reflected through the children's strong ability to respond to the natural environment. In the end, both the sickly Mary Lennox and her handicapped cousin benefit from the elixir of the garden. Similarly in *Tender Is the Night*, it seems that it is through a regular contact with her garden that Nicole enjoys the healing powers of nature and restores her mental abilities at the end of the book:

> Nicole went on through her garden routine…Reaching the sea wall she fell into a communicative mood and no one to communicate with…In the fine spring morning the inhibitions of the male world disappeared and she reasoned as gaily as a flower, while the wind blew her hair until her head moved with it. (*TN* 297)

[1] In *Tender Is the Night*, 'Daddy's Girl' is the title of a movie whose leading role is played by Rosemary. Fitzgerald seems to have used the phrase to designate that uncommon relationship that opposes Dick and Nicole and, later, Dick and Rosemary.

In a splendid tableau of a blooming nature, Nicole cannot do otherwise than burgeoning like a flower among that dazzling "scherzo of colors" fashioned by nasturtiums and irises, by tulips and roses, by lilacs and kaleidoscopic peonies that adorn her garden. Nicole's "ego began blooming like a great rich rose" (*TN* 310), and such association stresses her ability to respond to the rhythms of nature. In the end, she is even able to adopt the language of nature and speak with its own words. In fact, Nicole, who is usually silent in the world, proves capable of communication with the fauna and flora of her garden: "Nice, Rabbits, isn't it—Or is it? Hey, Rabbit—hey you! Is it nice?—hey? Or does it sound very peculiar to you?" (*TN* 297)

Like Burnett's secret garden, Nicole's garden, cut from the sophisticated world of Cannes and Monte Carlo, is in a sense locked and isolated, and, as such, it allows its owner to immerse in a universe of harmony where she restores her lost innocence. Besides, the place, inhabited by plants and animals, is preserved from the decadence of the modern world and remains, therefore, immune to the desecrating powers of modernity. In fact, in Nicole's 'private' garden, one may enjoy the sacred sounds of nature like that beautiful "medley of insolent sounds" (Nicole seems to be the only one to understand) produced by the pigeons, the rabbits and the parrot recalling the prophetic bird of Burnett that summons the children into the 'rose-garden'.

Locked in an old manor, Burnett's secluded garden (as well as Nicole's 'locked' garden in the villa Diana), stresses the idea of a lost kingdom, symbolizing that pastoral world of childhood that lies enshrouded, deeply buried, almost unremembered, in the depths of all individual. Visited by children and animals only, the garden also stresses the immaculateness of the place which, cut from the world of adults, remains unsullied and allows, therefore, its visitors to renew contact with an upper world of harmony. This is symbolized, in fact, in that final tableau of a blossoming garden Burnett offers in the closing chapters of her book when the reader is left with a resplendent garden in full bloom, animated by a beautiful medley of 'joyous cries' produced by excited children concealed among the leaves:

> …inside the garden there were sounds. They were the sounds of running scuffling feet seeming to chase round and round under the trees, they were strange sounds of lowered suppressed voices -- exclamations and smothered joyous cries. It seemed actually like the laughter of young things, the uncontrollable laughter of children who were trying not to be heard but who in a moment or so -- as their excitement mounted -- would burst. (Frances Hodgson Burnett – *The Secret Garden*)

Also in the realm of Eliot the reader may perceive the 'joyous cries' of children (*Et, O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!),* just as in the 'rose garden' the "leaves were full of children."

> Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
> Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
> Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
> Cannot bear very much reality.
>
> ("Burnt Norton", *Four Quartets*)

About a hundred and fifty miles from Burnett's Yorkshire garden, lies another secluded garden concealed in Burnt Norton, a deserted manor located in Gloucestershire. This is Eliot's rose garden, another 'secret garden' which, like Burnett's, is enclosed in an old manor, as well as in the deep centre of the memory of a narrator who reminisces the dream garden of his childhood:

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden.
>
> ("Burnt Norton", *Four Quartets*)

Into the rose garden, man "descends lower," not into the London tube, but "into the heart of light," into the deep centre of memory, down a passage "we did not take/Towards the door we never opened," summoned by a familial bird that murmurs a familiar tune. For the "unheard music hidden in the shrubbery" evokes an old song of innocence, another "echo in the memory" of perhaps a nursery rhyme which also lies deeply anchored in the memory:

Here we go 'round the prickly pear
Prickly pear prickly pear
Here we go 'round the prickly pear
At five o'clock in the morning.

"The Hollow Men" (68 – 71)

Eliot's 'rose garden' pictures what Northrop Frye refers to as "screen memories of man's lost innocence."[1] The images of the 'passage' (we did not take) and the 'door' (we never opened) suggest that the world of the rose garden is unapproachable at the same time as it is present in the memory. It points to a world which is both visible and no longer here. This may be the world of early childhood, that remote past whose image is "both here and out of reach."[2]

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world…

("Burnt Norton", *Four Quartets*)

Through the 'first gate', into 'our first world' the reader is summoned to the 'first world' of childhood where he finds an "invisible" but no less present company. The leaves are "full of children/Hidden excitedly, containing laughter." The deserted alleys are full of spectral presences, perhaps the departed elders, "dignified, invisible/Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves." All images suggest the garden of early childhood as it is pictured in the memory of the nostalgic mind. The place though deserted is rich in memories and evokes the splendours of a bygone and unified past. Eliot's depiction of that lost world of "invisible" presences suggests that the past, however distant, is always present: "What might have been and what has been/Point to one end, which is always present."

For a more expressive picture of that 'first world' of childhood with its images of the lost garden and the lost parents, walking the deserted alleys, "dignified, invisible/Moving without pressure," I suggest a passage from Anton

[1] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot An Introduction*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, p 55.

[2] Northrop Frye, Ibid., p 57.

Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), a book that associates the pastoral world of childhood to a splendid orchard in full bloom. The scene occurs at dawn when Lubov, the owner of the family estate, discovers the family orchard after a long absence in Paris:

> GAEV. [*Opens the other window*] The whole garden's white. You haven't forgotten, Luba? There's that long avenue going straight, straight, like a stretched strap; it shines on moonlight nights. Do you remember? You haven't forgotten?
>
> LUBOV. [*Looks out into the garden*] Oh, my childhood, days of my innocence! In this nursery I used to sleep; I used to look out from here into the orchard. Happiness used to wake with me every morning, and then it was just as it is now; nothing has changed. [*Laughs from joy*] It's all, all white! Oh, my orchard! After the dark autumns and the cold winters, you're young again, full of happiness, the angels of heaven haven't left you. . . . If only I could take my heavy burden off my breast and shoulders, if I could forget my past!
>
> GAEV. Yes, and they'll sell this orchard to pay off debts. How strange it seems!
>
> LUBOV. Look, there's my dead mother going in the orchard . . . dressed in white! [*Laughs from joy*] That's she.
>
> GAEV. Where?
>
> VARYA. God bless you, little mother.
>
> LUBOV. There's nobody there; I thought I saw somebody. On the right, at the turning by the summer-house, a white little tree bent down, looking just like a woman. [*Enter* TROFIMOV *in a worn student uniform and spectacles*] What a marvellous garden! White masses of flowers, the blue sky. . . .
>
> Anton Chekhov – *The Cherry Orchard (1904)*

We are in spring and the cherry orchard is in full bloom. The whole family contemplates the last vestige of their pastoral world of childhood. Chekhov's use of archetypes of innocence such as analysed by Northrop Frye in *Anatomy of Criticism* suggests some form of harmony in that spot of paradise threatened by the avidity of the lords of business and industry of an early Twentieth-century Russia on the verge of urbanization. The whole imagery (the nursery, the souvenirs of childhood, the image of the dead mother dressed in white, perhaps an echo of the *jeune fille en fleurs* we discussed previously, the garden, the whiteness of the bourgeoning trees, the ecstatic mood of Lubov, the whole scene occurring at dawn) reinforces the innocence of the realm of the orchard. Perhaps more resplendent than ever (as if to bid a last farewell to the family), the cherry orchard represents the last spell of a romantic era which is about to be absorbed by the ineluctable forces of modernity.

Like Chekhov's cherry orchard, the rose garden is thus a universe where childhood memories are no more wrapped in 'forgetful snow'. In fact, in the rose garden, far from the demonic realities of "The Waste Land," April is no longer 'cruel', the land is no longer 'dead' and the shrubbery is radiant with life:

> Sudden in a shaft of sunlight
> Even while the dust moves
> There rises the hidden laughter
> Of children in the foliage
>
> ("Burnt Norton", *Four Quartets*)

And even if the scene appears to evoke the wasteland's "dusty trees" that 'give no shelter', the foliage is rife and umbrageous and suggests, therefore, a sense of fruitfulness and abundance in a living universe, for in the rose garden, nature is no longer 'carvèd', the perfumes no more 'synthetic' and Eden no longer profaned in the 'sylvan scene.'

Beside the garden of the unsullied child, Eliot's rose garden may evoke the garden of the unfallen man as it also recalls the Garden of Eden where man restores his Adamic innocence and purity.[1] In this sense, "our first world" will refer to our first garden; just as the "invisible" presences will be our first parents. And such associations suggest that the rose garden is a world beyond time, a world where time is no more regulated by the chronometer, where flowers are blooming in autumn, and where 'empty pools' are filled with "water out of sunlight." The world of the rose garden becomes a reservoir of boundless possibilities envisaged by a humanity that "cannot bear very much reality." It is the world of "the might have been" that points to the life man might have known if paradise was not lost or as Northrop Frye suggests, the "life we might have lived if man had not fallen out of Eden."[2] In this sense, the world of the rose garden may refer to an age of innocence, to a golden age associated to a terrestrial paradise, what Baudelaire would call "la vie antérieure", a life he sees in images of caverns and vegetation and which, pure and consecrated, represents the childhood of the universe.

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[1] Hugh Kenner, "Into Our First World," Bergonzi Bernard (ed), *T.S. Eliot: Four Quartets, A Casebook,* London: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1969, p 169.
[2] Northrop Frye, Ibid., p 63.

III. 2. *La Vie antérieure* or the Garden of the Unfallen Man

J'ai longtemps habité sous de vastes portiques
Que les soleils marins teignaient de mille feux,
Et que leurs grands piliers, droits et majestueux,
Rendaient pareils, le soir, aux grottes basaltiques.

Charles Baudelaire – « La Vie antérieure »

In an article in which he reflects on the poetry of Marceline Desbordes-Valmore, Charles Baudelaire associates his impressions of paradise to the splendours of a garden, not to the majesty of Versailles, nor to the classicism of Italy, but to the abundance of the English garden, romantic and verdant, and whose paths seem to exclude all form of symmetry:

> Je me suis toujours plu à chercher dans la nature extérieure et visible des exemples et des métaphores qui me servissent à caractériser les jouissances et les impressions d'un ordre spirituel.… Cette poésie m'apparaît comme un jardin ; mais ce n'est pas la solennité grandiose de Versailles ; ce n'est pas non plus le pittoresque vaste et théâtral de la savante Italie, qui connaît si bien l'art d'*édifier des jardins* (*aedificat hortos*) ; pas même, non, pas même *la Vallée des Flûtes* ou *le Ténare* de notre vieux Jean-Paul. C'est un simple jardin anglais, romantique et romanesque. Des massifs de fleurs y représentent les abondantes expressions du sentiment. Des étangs, limpides et immobiles, qui réfléchissent toutes choses s'appuyant à l'envers sur la voûte renversée des cieux, figurent la profonde résignation toute parsemée de souvenirs…Des allées sinueuses et ombragées aboutissent à des horizons subits.
>
> (Charles Baudelaire, *Marceline Desbordes-Valmore*)

Closely related to the realm of innocence is the image of the 'primitive' garden, which suggests a return to the depths of history and to the depths of humanity, to an anterior world close to God and to the Garden of Eden. In fact, what may explain our present sense of loss is the fact that we have lost the tie with an anterior richness. One way to recover the link with such a place of bliss may be to return to nature in which place one can fully experience Benjamin's aura. Indeed,

in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, Benjamin explains the aura in the following words:

> We define the aura…as the unique phenomenon of a distance, however close it may be. If, while resting on a summer afternoon, you follow with your eyes a mountain range on the horizon or a branch which casts its shadow over you, you experience the aura of those mountains, of that branch. [1]

Is it a coincidence that Benjamin explains the concept of aura in nature’s terms? The fact is that the German philosopher considers that the richness we seek, the place we long for, is a remote land associated to God and to the Garden of Eden. It is a place not severed from God, from the timeless, from the beautiful and from the divine. In “Spleen et Idéal”, the first of the cycles in *Les Fleurs du Mal*, Baudelaire associates such a place with what he calls the *idéal*, a notion that he contrasts to the *spleen* and that he essentially develops in the poems “Elévation”, “La Vie antérieure” and “correspondances”.

While Baudelaire’s *spleen* (characteristic of the modern city) is a pain essentially caused by *ennui*, which the French poet regards as the “ugliest of our vices” and associates not merely to melancholy and evil but also to ugliness and putridity, the *idéal* is connected to the beautiful, to the divine and to the timeless where the soul rises to a place situated above the material world:

> Au-dessus des étangs, au-dessus des vallées,
> Des montagnes, des bois, des nuages, des mers,
> Par delà le soleil, par delà les éthers,
> Par delà les confins des sphères étoilées,
>
> (Charles Baudelaire, “Elévation”)

The *idéal* suggests that the soul clears itself from the constrictions of the material perishable world (Envole-toi bien loin de ces miasmes morbides) and embraces an upper universe of innocence and purity (Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur/ Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur/ Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides.) The world of the *idéal* is thus far from the boredom and the horror of the modern

[1] Walter Benjamin, “The Work of Art In The Age of Mechanical Reproduction”, *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 222/223.

city (Derrière les ennuis et les vastes chagrins/Qui chargent de leur poids l'existence brumeuse) and suggests a reunion with an immense universe of hope, joy and serenity (Heureux celui qui peut d'une aile vigoureuse/S'élancer vers les champs lumineux et sereins.)

Like Baudelaire's, Eliot's ideal is also located "au-dessus des montagnes…"

> And when we were children, staying at the archduke'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.
>
> ("The Waste Land," 13 - 17)

The episode, which evokes the narrator's nostalgia for a previous life represented in an older Europe, offers a vivid image of childhood liveliness and exuberance which reinforces the idea of abundance and luxuriance of that relatively innocent past of pre-war Germany. The *idéal* is also evoked through the image of the snowy mountain which becomes an allegory of purity and suggests that the children, so long as they are playing on the heights of the mountain, are placed on an upper world of innocence close to the sky. The episode also evokes an idea of freedom (there you feel free) which is closely related to Eliot's realm of innocence (as well as to Baudelaire's *idéal*) and contrasts with the idea of imprisonment and alienation proper to the modern demonic state, often associated to the images of the prison[1] and the tomb.

In the realm of Fitzgerald, the *idéal* is also situated above the material world, just as Gatsby sees his ideal world on the top of a ladder which mounts to a "secret place above the trees." (*GG* 107) In *Tender Is the Night*, the *idéal* moves to the heights of the Swiss Alps where the Divers spend their Christmas holidays, and where, like the sliding children in "The Waste Land", they enjoy (in a rather more romantic mood) the same ecstasy of the sledding experience: "For the evening they were sliding down the hill into the village, on those little sleds which serve the same purpose as gondolas do in Venice." (*TN* 190) What the experience seems to suggest

[1] Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism, Four Essays*, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957, p 150.

is that our protagonists, close to the purity and the serenity of the Swiss mountains, come to be in communion with a higher universe (Outside [Dick] inhaled damp snowflakes that he could no longer see against the darkening sky" (*TN* 190)), recalling the experience of Baudelaire in his poem (Va te purifier dans l'air supérieur/ Et bois, comme une pure et divine liqueur/ Le feu clair qui remplit les espaces limpides) as well as that of Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby* when he fuses with his ideal world materialized in the Middle West:

> When we pulled out into the winter night and the real snow, our snow, began to stretch out beside us and twinkle against the windows, and the dim lights of small Wisconsin stations moved by, a sharp wild brace came suddenly into the air. *We drew in deep breaths of* it as we walked back from dinner through the cold vestibules, unutterably aware of our identity with this country for one strange hour, before *we melted indistinguishably into it again*. (*GG* 166/167) (Italics mine)

Nearer to the sky is Dick Diver when he flies over the Vorarlberg Alps on his way to Munich. As he contemplates the rustic villages that evoke his boyhood, he feels "a pastoral delight" (*TN* 214) and seems to be reconciled for a moment with the harmony of a superior universe not unfamiliar with the innocence and simplicity of childhood: "It was simple looking at the earth from far off, simple as playing grim games with dolls and soldiers." (*TN* 214) And it is worth noticing how the experience shows in his mind a significant progress from technology to nature: "Dick had with him what magazines were available on the station quays: The Century, The Motion Picture, L'lllustration, and the Fliegende Blätter, but it was more fun to descend in his imagination into the villages and shake hands with the rural characters." (*TN* 214) It seems like it is an encounter with an ideal universe that allowed Dick to detach himself from a modern dehumanized culture (represented in the magazines) and seek a communion with a more authentically human and organic community.

A more picturesque evocation of the *ideal* is finally depicted above "an emerald hill" of a Swiss village where the protagonists experience the *ideal* in a funicular that almost touches the sky:

> The conductor shut a door; he telephoned his confrere among the undulati, and with a jerk the car was pulled upward, heading for a pinpoint on an emerald hill above. After it cleared the low roofs, the skies of Vaud, Valais, Swiss Savoy, and Geneva spread around the passengers in cyclorama. On the centre of the lake, cooled by the piercing current of the Rhône, lay the true centre of the Western World. Upon it floated swans like boats and boats like swans, both lost in the nothingness of the heartless beauty. It was a bright day, with sun glittering on the grass beach below and the white courts of the Kursal. The figures on the courts threw no shadows. (*TN* 163/164)

In the passage, Eliot's 'shadow' between the idea and the reality is indeed dissipated. The harmony of the moment is total and suggested by the image of swans floating "like boats and boats like swans." Later in the funicular the trees interlace with the car and suggest that man and nature are in perfect symbiosis:

> Though one must not pick flowers on the way up, the blossoms trailed in as they passed—Dorothy Perkins roses dragged patiently through each compartment slowly waggling with the motion of the funicular, letting go at the last to swing back to their rosy cluster. Again and again these branches went through the car. (*TN* 164)

What may be significant for our analysis is the fact that immediately after the funicular experience, Nicole seems to have recovered as "every taint of the clinic was departed." (*TN* 164) The contact with the 'celestial air' seems, indeed, very vivifying for our protagonist who often shows signs of recovery after her mountain trips, as she once explained in one of her letters to Dick: "I am slowly coming back to life…Today we climbed high enough to find asphodel and edelweiss…" (*TN* 139) In fact, it seems like Nicole's antidote does not come from the sanatorium but rather from the heavenly spots of the Swiss mountains, hills and valleys, "fertile [regions] of pasture farms and low hills, steepled with chalets," (*TN* 134/135) Fitzgerald qualifies as "postcards from heaven." Indeed, the sight of the chalets, the farms and the cow pastures offers Nicole what William Wordsworth would call a "tranquil restoration" to her mind.

Far from the boredom and the horror of the rotten city, the *idéal* also suggests a reunion with an earlier life which is, to quote Eliot, "Older than the time of chronometers." This is Baudelaire's 'la vie antérieure', a previous life prior to the modern age and untouched by the desecrating forces of modernity. In Baudelaire's poem, the previous life, depicted in images of caverns and vegetation, suggests a 'primitive' state of the world, which reinforces its purity. But these, the French poet

considers, are veiled by the tears of nostalgia, by "the warm vapor of tears, tears of homesickness,"[1] perhaps a form of Benjamin's aura, the veil that covers past experiences and which makes their significance. Such image suggests, indeed, that the previous life *is* the life that modern man longs for and which is, like man's early childhood, both present and out of reach. In this sense, the previous age becomes an age in which meaning is concentrated and where life is fruitful and significant, as put by Baudelaire in "La Vie antérieure":

> C'est là que j'ai vécu dans les voluptés calmes,
> Au milieu de l'azur, des vagues, des splendeurs
> Et des esclaves nus, tout imprégnés d'odeurs,
>
> Qui me rafraîchissaient le front avec des palmes,
> Et dont l'unique soin était d'approfondir
> Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir.
>
> (Charles Baudelaire, "La Vie antérieure")

Likewise in the realm of Eliot, the previous life transcends historical time:

> I have said before
> That the past experience revived in the meaning
> Is not the experience of one life only
> But of many generations-not forgetting
> Something that is probably quite ineffable:
> The backward look behind the assurance
> Of recorded history, the backward half-look
> Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.[2]
>
> (*Four Quartets*, "The Dry Salvages")

In "The Dry Salvages," Eliot, like Baudelaire, suggests that the world finds its consecration in a previous age. He suggests that meaningful experiences (auratic experiences – experiences for which man would drop tears of homesickness) find their place only in a previous life (C'est là que j'ai vécu), a life the American poet represents in his poem in images of waves and rocks, suggesting a 'primitive' beauty much like the one evoked in the waves and caves of Baudelaire's poem.

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[1] Walter Benjamin, « On Some Motifs in Baudelaire, » *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 182.

[2] In the poem, Eliot's reference to 'primitive terror' may be an echo of Edmund Burke's *sublime*, which the Irish philosopher defines in terms of fear, terror and majesty and which is often associated to nature in its savage state.

Eliot seems to join with Baudelaire when he considers the world of waves and caves more fulfilling than the world of streets and boulevards. In fact, as we have discussed previously, the price of the modern experience is the loss of a collective and meaningful existence because each man is locked in a prison of the self. In *The Metaphysical Poets*, Eliot speaks about a "dissociation of sensibility" set in the 17th century and "from which", writes Eliot, "we have never recovered."[1] Modern poets, Eliot considers, see their feelings divided because these are "altered by their reading and thought."[2] As a result, they "do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose."[3] Eliot's simile ('as the odour of a rose') reinforces the importance of man's response to the natural organic world, much as it stresses the importance of the integration of the different parts of the universe into one unified whole. As Harmon William points out in his essay, "T.S. Eliot, Anthropologist and Primitive," Eliot considers that 'primitive' societies used to live in a harmonious organic community where consciousness, memory, perception and expression converged in a unified pattern. Modern men, on the other hand, see their feelings and sensibility divided as a consequence of the dehumanizing effect of science, technology and civilisation, the result being a weakening of mystical perception and collective memory as well as a loss of the organic community. In fact, the discontent with civilization Eliot will express in "Mary Lloyd", an essay in which he laments the unfortunate fate of the Melanesians who "are dying from pure boredom" simply because civilization "has deprived them of all interest in life."

> In an interesting essay in the volume of *Essays on the Depopulation of Melanesia*, the psychologist W. H. R. Rivers adduced evidence which has led him to believe that the natives of that unfortunate archipelago are dying out principally for the reason that the 'Civilization' forced upon them has deprived them of all interest in life. They are dying from pure boredom. When every theatre has been replaced by 100 cinemas, when every musical instrument has been replaced by 100 gramophones, when every horse has been replaced by 100 cheap motor-cars, when electrical ingenuity has made it possible for every child to hear its bedtime stories from a loudspeaker, when applied science has done everything possible with the materials on this earth to make life as interesting as possible, it will not be surprising if the population of the entire civilized world rapidly follows the fate of the Melanesians.[4]

[1] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, p 287.
[2] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Ibid., p 286.
[3] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Ibid., p 287.
[4] T.S. Eliot, "Mary Lloyd", *Selected Essays*, London: Faber and Faber Limited, p 421.

Eliot's celebration of the culture of the cave-man goes as far as to make him declare in one of his lectures that "Poetry begins … with a savage beating a drum in a jungle."[1] However, nowhere is his tribute to prehistoric beauties as significant as in the first part of "East Cocker":

> In that open field
> If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close,
> On a summer midnight, you can hear the music
> Of the weak pipe and the little drum
> And see them dancing around the bonfire
> The association of man and woman
> In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie—
> A dignified and commodious sacrament.
>
> (*Four Quartets*, "East Cocker")

The passage, taken from Eliot's second quartet, a poem dedicated to a Somersetshire hamlet which once sheltered the poet's ancestors, celebrates the values of an early and unified age. The poet's use of archaic English stresses the authenticity of the place, much as it reinforces the timelessness of the moment. The harmony is also conveyed by a music played with authentic instruments which, unlike the impersonal gramophone in "The Waste Land", bear the imprimatur of the musician's soul and secure the transmission of richness and tradition. Indeed, in the passage, the man and the woman certainly do not simply "want a good time," nor will they ever "play a game of chess" in "rats' alley/Where the dead men lost their bones." Instead, they are 'daunsinge' in an 'open field' where rustic people are dancing "in country mirth." The image of 'signifying matrimonie' communicates an idea of prosperity and fecundity which forms a vivid contrast with the sterility of the modern couples in "The Waste Land." The dance 'around the bonfire' suggests, in fact, the convergence of values into one integrated and illuminated whole:

> Round and round the fire
> Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,
> Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter
> Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
> Mirth of those long since under earth
> Nourishing the corn.
>
> (*Four Quartets*, "East Cocker")

[1] T.S. Eliot, Cited in Harmon William, "T.S. Eliot, Anthropologist and Primitive", *American Anthropologist*, New Series Vol 78, N° 4 (Dec., 1976) p 800.

The passage offers a vivid image of abundance and fruitfulness suggested by the cheerfulness of the country people. The image of "Earth feet, loam feet" suggests that the people are bound to the soil and reinforces, therefore, the organic quality of the place as well as the rural character of the country people whose dignity is all the more significant as their apparel is precarious. In fact, instead of the impeccable dandy whose futility is as significant as his dress is spotless, the place is inhabited by rustic people, simple and dignified, and who care little for the image of their "clumsy shoes". As such, they recall the no less dignified *Ouled Nail* natives in Fitzgerald's *Tender Is the Night* whose shoes are made of "old automobile tires." (*TN* 177)

Likewise in the realm of Fitzgerald, Baudelaire's *idéal* is no less significant as all characters seek, in a way or another, nourishment from some exotic soil. In *The Great Gatsby*, Nick imagines his *idéal* in the form of a continent in its 'primitive' state ("a fresh green breast of the new world"). Gatsby extends his horizon as far as to the "abounding blessed isles." (*GG* 113) In *Tender Is the Night*, the Divers' stay at Gstaad culminates in a communion with the 'tranquil' wilderness where they can listen "*atavistically* to *wolves* in the wide snow." (*TN* 195) (Italics mine) Nicole is a 'Viking Madonna' (*TN* 43). For a mysterious reason, her musical repertoire suggests an Eastern orientation ("Do you know 'Hindustan'?" [Nicole] asked wistfully. "I'd never heard it before, but I like it. And I've got 'Why Do They Call Them Babies?'(*TN* 150)), perhaps a debased echo of the Sanskrit Benediction in "The Waste Land" (*Shantih shantih shantih*). Rosemary's room in the Parisian hotel is a bric a brac of "crystal or china ornaments", of "polished brass, silver and ivory", which suggest an oriental flavour. As such, they recall the adornments of Eliot's Cleopatra in "A Game of Chess", an embellishment of ivory and marble, of satin and jewels, and whose exotic touch is essentially conveyed, Kerry Weinberg argues in "The Women of Eliot and Baudelaire: The Boredom, the Horror and the Glory", in the "ivory", the "marble" and the sylvan scene of Philomela.[1]

[1] Kerry Weinberg, "The Women of Eliot and Baudelaire: The Boredom, the Horror and the Glory", *Modern Language Studies*, Vol 14, N° 3 (Summer 1984), p 33.

Thus like Baudelaire's 'exiled' urbanites in "The Swan", who, caught in the *ennui* of a modern Paris, long for "Les cocotiers absents de la superbe Afrique," Eliot's and Fitzgerald's city dwellers, weary from the monotony of the modern city, seek refuge in some exotic setting where they may fuse with a more nourishing universe identified with the boundless charms of an enchanting nature. Indeed, Nicole's exotic voyage in *Tender Is the Night* will take the form of a colourful pilgrimage in the heart of the Algerian Sahara where she is caught in a whirl of drums, flutes and oriental dances:

> . . . We travelled a lot that year—from Woolloomooloo Bay to Biskra. On the edge of the Sahara we ran into a plague of locusts and the chauffeur explained kindly that they were bumble-bees. The sky was low at night, full of the presence of a strange and watchful God. Oh, the poor little naked Ouled Naïl; the night was noisy with drums from Senegal and flutes and whining camels, and the natives pattering about in shoes made of old automobile tires. (*TN* 177)

A far-away world of exotic beauties, the African continent allows, indeed, a communion with an earlier life. In the novel, the trip is suggested to provide rest for a sickly Nicole approaching her breakdown: "But I was gone again by that time—trains and beaches they were all one. That was why he took me travelling but after my second child, my little girl, Topsy, was born everything got dark again." (*TN* 177) Just as Joseph Conrad's Africa in *Heart of Darkness* (symbolized in the African mistress) is associated to fertility, so is the African continent in *Tender Is the Night* associated to enchantment and pregnancy. Nicole is bathed by the enchanting atmosphere, by the drums, flutes and oriental dances. She is impregnated by Africa: "…after my second child, my little girl, Topsy, was born everything got dark again." (*TN* 177) In this context, 'dark' is not so much an indication of illness as an imprint of the African continent often associated to the black color. Nicole's child, indeed, bears the colors of Africa: "You tell me my baby is black," she exclaims. (*TN* 178)

Nicole's fascination with exotic cultures culminates in her union with Tommy Barban, a character remembered for "The foreignness of his depigmentation by unknown suns, his nourishment by strange soils, his tongue awkward with the curl of many dialects…" (*TN* 289) Fitzgerald's "strange soils"

may refer to those lands infused with some exotic perfumes, lands that receive special sanction from their remoteness from the modern sophisticated world:

> Au pays parfumé que le soleil caresse,
> J'ai connu, sous un dais d'arbres tout empourprés
> Et de palmiers d'où pleut sur les yeux la paresse,
> Une dame créole aux charmes ignorés.
>
> (Charles Baudelaire, "A une dame créole")

With his 'deep tan', recalling "ce teint fauve et brun" of Baudelaire's mulatto mistress, or la "brune enchanteresse" in "A une dame créole," Tommy is invested with exotic charms which allow him to conquer a Nicole no longer nourished by her sophisticated and stylish husband. Tommy becomes thus endowed with an exotic aura which not only "fascinated" but also "rested Nicole." (*TN* 289)

Indeed, the world of the *idéal* is tranquil and reposeful: "Une île paresseuse où la nature donne/Des arbres singuliers et des fruits savoureux." (Charles Baudelaire, "Parfum exotique") In the island, man is far from the hustle and the bustle of the metropolitain crowd. Instead, he is bathed by the ambiance of "féconde paresse" left by the exotic perfumes of Baudelaire's 'île paresseuse', or by those confused "parfums/De l'huile de coco, du musc et du goudron" of

> La langoureuse Asie et la brûlante Afrique,
> Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt,
> Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique!
>
> (Charles Baudelaire, "La chevelure")

In a sense, the ecstatic perfumes of the exotic world allow a revival of lost beauties that were deeply swallowed by the forces of modernity. In fact, Tommy and Nicole's romantic encounter in *Tender Is the Night* leaves the reader with impressions from a far-away world, a world "lointain, absent, presque defunt":

> …they swam in Beaulieu in a roofless *cavern of white moonlight formed by a circlet of pale boulders about a cup of phosphorescent water*, facing Monaco and the blur of Mentone. *She liked his bringing her there to the eastward vision* and the novel tricks of wind and water; it was all as new as they were to each other. *Symbolically she lay across his saddle-bow as surely as if he had wolfed her away from Damascus and they had come out upon the Mongolian plain.* (*TN* 319/320) (Italics mine)

The passage deserves to be integrated in one of the plots of *The Arabian Nights* where Nicole and Tommy would be the main characters, or immortalized in one of those orientalist paintings which so successfully preserve the aura of the past. What the passage reveals, in fact, is how Fitzgerald pays tribute to ancient values and suggests a reunion with an anterior world of timeless beauties. It seems like it is through Tommy and Nicole's union that Fitzgerald stresses the victory of the natural over the sophisticated, of the 'primitive' over the civilized, of the archaic over the fashionable.

Far from the 'baneful miasma' of the modern perishable world, the *ideal* suggests a reunion with an upper world of purity and serenity. Moreover, through an encounter with an earlier life, the *idéal* becomes a universe beyond time and beyond obsolescence, a universe where man is no longer slave to the clock and to the chronometer. It is an 'indolent island' where man is bathed by the 'fecund nonchalance' evoked by exotic perfumes. It is, in fact, a world where April is no longer 'cruel', where a rose is no longer 'grotesque' and where the scents of nature are no longer painful since they allow a revival of lost times and privileged moments of life, moments that were buried, deeply embedded, almost extinguished, in the depths of the individual.

III. 3. *Paradise Regained* or the Garden of Remembrance

Et comme dans ce jeu où les Japonais s'amusent à tremper dans un bol de porcelaine rempli d'eau, de petits morceaux de papier jusque-là indistincts qui, à peine y sont-ils plongés s'étirent, se contournent, se colorent, se différencient, deviennent des fleurs, des maisons, des personnages consistants et reconnaissables, de même maintenant toutes les fleurs de notre jardin et celles du parc de M. Swann, et les nymphéas de la Vivonne, et les bonnes gens du village et leurs petits logis et l'église et tout Combray et ses environs, tout cela qui prend forme et solidité, est sorti, ville et jardins, de ma tasse de thé.

Marcel Proust – *Du côté de chez Swann*

We have seen in the previous sections that modern men's sense of loss is chiefly due to their inability to feel the scents of nature. Eliot has stated that modern men "do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose,"[1] perhaps because their world, like the one of Gatsby, is a plain universe where a rose is "a grotesque thing." (*GG* 153) The opening of "The Waste Land" pictures a 'dead land' where a 'cruel' April evokes nothing but painful feelings, perhaps because the 'lilacs' it breeds evoke no more the happy moments of the past. The fact is that we are far from the "lilac times" of Proust's Combray when the revival of nature by spring rain was a blissful moment for the narrator, perhaps because our world is a bare universe where the scents of nature are absorbed by the infected atmosphere of the even more infected city. This Baudelaire already felt it when he declared in his poem that "Le printemps adorable a perdu son odeur." (Baudelaire – "Le goût du néant")

Yet the French poet offers a possibility to recover the sweet odour of spring as this may be restored through a communion with an earlier life. As we have seen previously, the *ideal* allows a recovery of meaningful moments of life, hence a revival of the lost cherished past. In fact, contrasted to the *spleen*, the *ideal* "supplies the power of remembrance." (Je sais l'art d'évoquer les minutes

[1] T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," Ibid., p 287.

heureuses/Et revis mon passé blotti dans tes genoux.) The *spleen*, however, "musters the multitudes of the seconds against it."[1] (Et le Temps m'engloutit minute par minute/Comme la neige immense un corps pris de roideur) The *ideal* becomes thus a quest for the timeless where one would rediscover "places and privileged moments" that are "non-temporal moments," or in Benjamin's words, "days of recollection, not marked by any experience. They are not connected with the other days, but stand out from time."[2] This suggests that time recalled is no time but moments of eternity one would revive to invest life with meaning.

What if the only way to restore the link with the meaningful past was to multiply Baudelaire's *Correspondances* since the *correspondances,* writes Benjamin, "are the data of remembrance, not historical data, but data of prehistory"[3]? In fact, if canonical experience has its place in a previous life, "the murmur of the past may be heard in the correspondences,"[4] writes the German philosopher. In this sense, Baudelaire's *correspondances* seem to be the ties that restore the link with the previous life

> Comme de longs échos qui de loin se confondent
> Dans une ténébreuse et profonde unité,
> Vaste comme la nuit et comme la clarté,
> Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se répondent.
>
> Charles Baudelaire – "Correspondances"

One way to create *correspondances* with the previous life would be through a ritual life. As Benjamin suggests, "What makes festive days great and significant is the encounter with an earlier life."[5] In fact, not only does festive life allow the members of the community to converge into one custom but it also resuscitates buried moments of private and collective life. The rituals with their festivities and ceremonies call for traditions that keep the collective memory alive. Moreover, the seasonal element of festive life suggests a sense of fruitfulness and renewal which

[1] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 183.
[2] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", Ibid., p 181.
[3] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", Ibid., p 182.
[4] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", Ibid., p 182.
[5] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", Ibid., p 182.

breaks with the harshness and inflexibility of linear time, as it is suggested in one of the few moments of eternity of Eliot's poetry, the one that brings the protagonists into contact with an earlier life:

> Keeping time,
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
> As in their living in the living seasons
> The time of the seasons and the constellations
> The time of milking and the time of harvest
> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.

(*Four Quartets*, "East Cocker")

In the first part of his second quartet where the poet pictures a moment of festivity and merriment, Eliot seems to invest the moment with ritual elements which stress the timelessness of the moment. There is, indeed, a sense of fruitfulness through the author's reference to elements, such as 'harvest' and 'coupling', which connote an idea of renewal and regeneration. The 'time of milking', the 'time of harvest' and the 'time of coupling' become thus the 'non-temporal moments' which provide life with eternity. Also the repetition of 'seasons' suggests that time is no more governed by the clock and the chronometer but by the eternal cycles of nature.

Likewise in the fiction of Fitzgerald, in the *Ouled Naïls* episode discussed previously, one of the few moments that bring the protagonists into contact with a previous life, there is something of the ritual in the picture of the Sahara essentially conveyed in the oriental dances as well as in the flutes and the drums, authentic instruments whose value, according to Benjamin, "has its basis in ritual."[1] In fact, the details of Nicole's exotic voyage (Fitzgerald brings not in *Tender Is the Night* but in a short story which seems to be a seminal work for his last finished novel) reveal passages that seem equally endowed with ritual elements which reinforce the timelessness of the moment:

[1] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 224.

> Walking over to the Café of the Ouled Naïls afterward, Nicole regretted that she and Nelson were not strolling alone through the *ever-lower, ever-softer, ever-brighter night.* Nelson had reciprocated the bottle of champagne at dinner, and neither of them was accustomed to so much. *As they drew near the sad flute she didn't want to go inside, but rather to climb to the top of a low hill where a white mosque shone clear as a planet through the night.* (Fitzgerald - "One Trip Abroad")

Tender is the night indeed in that "ever-lower, ever softer, ever-brighter" atmosphere "full of the presence of a strange and watchful God." The passage is no deficient with images of ritual life conveyed essentially in the locus of spiritual life, the mosque, reminiscent of St Magnus Martyr in "The Waste Land" which represents the monument that restores the tie with the previous and meaningful life, just as the 'sad flute' of Fitzgerald recalls the nostalgic mandoline of the same episode in Eliot's poem.

In *Tender Is the Night*, another ceremonial moment is conveyed in an episode that brings the hero into contact with "a country that is no longer here," (*TN* 224) that is to say, with a previous life both present and out of reach. It is the episode of Reverend Diver's funeral when Dick returns to the provincial village of his childhood only to revive lost moments of his meaningful past:

> Next day at the churchyard his father was laid among a hundred Divers, Dorseys, and Hunters. It was very friendly leaving him there with all his relations around him. Flowers were scattered on the brown unsettled earth. Dick had no more ties here now and did not believe he would come back. He knelt on the hard soil. These dead, he knew them all, their weather-beaten faces with blue flashing eyes, the spare violent bodies, the souls made of new earth in the forest-heavy darkness of the seventeenth century. (*TN* 224)

The passage is not devoid of harmony since it represents one of the few moments of the book where the hero is provided with moments of eternity as he is in contact with a world of tradition where religious ceremonies are still significant. It represents, in fact, an open window on an earlier life whose link is brought through the religious ceremony (represented in the image of the churchyard and in the very action of kneeling) as well as in the image of flowers which are strong vehicles of memories.

In fact, closely related to the religious ceremonies are the scents, the savours and the tunes. The religious festivities call for feasts and other ingredients that are

often bearer of memories. For the scents and the flavours, as they slowly penetrate the soul, represent the elements that help the mind renew with the idyllic world of childhood, as it is suggested by the narrator of Proust's *In Swann's Way* who resuscitated his dear years at Combray through the taste of a pastry dipped in tea:

> Mais, quand d'un passé ancien rien ne subsiste, après la mort des êtres, après la destruction des choses, seules, plus frêles mais plus vivaces, plus immatérielles, plus persistantes, plus fidèles, l'odeur et la saveur restent encore longtemps, comme des âmes, à se rappeler, à attendre, à espérer, sur la ruine de tout le reste, à porter sans fléchir, sur leur gouttelette presque impalpable, l'édifice immense du souvenir. (Marcel Proust – *Du côté de chez Swann*)

The scents and flavours are, in fact, the ingredients that restore the halo of a meaningful experience which has its place in the previous life. These in fact are closely related to the ambiance of festive days as is the souvenir of the "aubépine" to that atmosphere of "anciens mois de Marie, d'après-midi du dimanche, de croyances, d'erreurs oubliées" in the memory of Macel Proust:

> Tout d'un coup dans le petit chemin creux, je m'arrêtai touché au cœur par un doux souvenir d'enfance : je venais de reconnaître, aux feuilles découpées et brillantes qui s'avançaient sur le seuil, un buisson d'aubépines défleuries, hélas, depuis la fin du printemps. *Autour de moi flottait une atmosphère d'anciens mois de Marie, d'après-midi du dimanche, de croyances, d'erreurs oubliées.* (Marcel Proust – *A l'ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*) (Italics Mine)

In fact, as Marcel Proust suggests, "une heure n'est pas qu'une heure, c'est un vase rempli de parfums, de sons, de projets et de climats." (*Le Temps retrouvé*) The scents, the flavours, the sounds, the whole ambiance of festivities, evoke Baudelaire's correspondances "comme de long echoes qui de loin se confondent" where "Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se respondent," and form that romantic halo that shelters our past experiences. In fact, in his essay on Baudelaire, Walter Benjamin designates as 'aura' "the associations which at home in the *mémoire involontaire,* tend to cluster around the object of a perception…"[1]

In *La recherche du temps perdu,* Marcel Proust distinguishes between *mémoire volontaire,* one which is in the service of the intellect; and *mémoire*

[1] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 186.

involontaire which is more spontaneous and is awakened by accident. The past, Marcel Proust writes, is "somewhere beyond the reach of the intellect, and unmistakably present in some material object (or in the sensation which such an object arouses in us), though we have no idea which one it is. As for that object, it depends entirely on chance whether we come upon it before we die or whether we never encounter it."[1] Proust teaches us that past experiences often come by chance and do not call for intellectual effort. As such, they are not inscribed in the *mémoire volontaire*. In *La Recherche du temps perdu*, he tells us how vainly he tried to recollect his childhood days at Combray his efforts were unsuccessful. It is the taste of a "madeleine" that transported him back to his early years. It is through the accidental taste of a pastry that he could resuscitate his past. This suggests that the past is brought not by intellectual effort but through the association of external ingredients that awaken the senses. As Benjamin suggests, experience is "less the product of facts firmly anchored in memory than of a convergence in memory of accumulated and frequently unconscious data."[2]

In "The Waste Land", memories also come by chance. The accidental occurrence of episodes in "The Burial of the Dead" suggests that memories are not produced by the mind. They are rather the result of impressions and sensations, or in Eliot's own words of "objective correlative," that is "the use of a concrete image to express an emotion or an abstract idea."[3] Those sensations are reinforced in the episode of Pre-War Germany where the vacationers are exposed to impressions evoked by scents (Hofgarten) and flavours (coffee) and changes of the weather which come by "surprise":

> 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.
>
> ("The Waste Land," 8 - 11)

[1] Quoted in Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 158.
[2] Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire", *Illuminations : Essays and Reflections*, New York: Schoken Books, 1968, p 157.
[3] J. A. Cuddon, The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory, London: Penguin Books, 1998, p 886.

Indeed, the poem opens with the coming of spring and the revival of nature when human senses are awakened to spring rain, and when April "stirs" "roots," "lilacs" and "memory and desire". With spring rain comes the revival of "memory and desire" and the speaker longs for a lost innocent past. The same attempt to revive "memory and desire" is found in a midsummer scene in *The Great Gatsby* where the hero tries to recreate his past through a parade of spring flowers:

> Instead of taking the short cut along the Sound we went down the road and entered by the big postern. With enchanting murmurs Daisy admired this aspect or that of the feudal silhouette against the sky, admired the gardens, *the sparkling odor of jonquils and the frothy odor of hawthorn and plum blossoms and the pale gold odor of kiss-me-at-the-gate.* (*GG* 88) (Italics mine)

No one seems to have noticed why Fitzgerald emphasizes the odours of the jonquils, the plum blossoms and the kiss-me-at-the-gate, and more significantly, the hawthorns, which can be an echo of Proust's 'aubepine'. In fact, in the passage, the 'road' (which has just received the rain) seems to be another echo of Proust as it recalls his *Côté de Méseglise* (also called Swann's way), a path that the French novelist connects to unsettled weather and rainy days and, more significantly, to odours and involuntary memory. What may be significant for our analysis is that it is the path of *Méséglise* that includes the famous hawthorn bush so dear to the narrator and so rich in memories. Proust's *côté de Méséglise* becomes thus the 'objective correlative' of the narrator's emotions awakened by the suggestive odours of the flowers revived by the summer shower: "Quand par les soirs d'été le ciel harmonieux gronde comme une bête fauve et que chacun boude l'orage, c'est au côté de Méséglise que je dois de rester seul en extase à respirer, à travers le bruit de la pluie qui tombe, l'odeur d'invisibles et persistants lilas." (Proust – *Du côté de chez Swann*)

In "The Waste Land," the same moment of bliss occurs in the "Hyacinth garden", a place where childhood memories are similarly brought through the association of water and flowers:

> ‘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…
>
> (“The Waste Land,” 13 - 16)

Closely related to Eliot’s realm of innocence are the “young girl,” the “garden”, the “flowers” (your arms full) and “water” (your hair wet.) In the passage, the hyacinth girl is the figure that symbolizes harmony, for she is “the Grail bearer, the maiden bringing love,”[1] or the Matilda figure of Dante’s Eden,[2] much like the maiden of Fitzgerald’s garden who is the Grail bearer and the maiden bringing love of Fitzgerald’s universe of harmony:

> I can remember how I stood waiting for you in the garden—holding all my self in my arms like a basket of flowers. It was that to me anyhow—I thought I was sweet—waiting to hand that basket to you… (*TN* 171)

In *Tender Is the Night*, There is an Edenic atmosphere announcing Nicole and Dick’s encounter reinforced by “a damp April day.” Nicole, waiting in the rain and bringing flowers, with “cheeks stung alive by the damp air,” is associated to the ‘hyacinth girl’ of Eliot’s garden and suggests, therefore, a strong relationship with the natural external environment.

Thus, whether it is expressed in Baudelaire’s *correspondances*, or in Eliot’s terms of “objective correlative” where impressions and emotions are “stirred” by external images and objects, or in Proust’s terms of “memory sensation” provoked by a cake dipped in tea, the quest for the *idéal* is a quest for a unity that allows a reconciliation between the idea, the feeling and the emotion with the image.

Thus Eliot’s and Fitzgerald’s gardens, associated to the harmony of childhood, be it the childhood of the individual or the collective past of a whole community, suggest a reunion with an ideal universe where ideas and objects are magically fused. In other words, the world of the *ideal* is a universe where Eliot’s shadow between the idea and the reality is dissolved and where harmony is brought

[1] Grover Smith, *T.S. Eliot’s Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1950, p 74.
[2] Northrop Frye, *T.S. Eliot An Introduction*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963, p 54.

through a convergence of unconnected and independent ingredients into one and unified whole. As Benjamin suggests in the prologue of *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, ideas are not contained in themselves but rather in the 'visual arrangement' of 'concrete elements' that determine the whole meaning: "Ideas are to objects as constellations are to stars." (*OGT* 34) The constellations become thus the *correspondances* of Baudelaire, those concrete images that cluster around an experience and which form the aura of a whole world, a whole community. The *correspondances* become thus the arrangement of independent ingredients which form the harmony of the ideal world, which Eliot would call a "complete consort dancing together."

Eliot's and Fitzgerald's associations of paradise with the innocence of childhood are not unfamiliar with the themes of English Romantic poetry. In fact, it is often considered that the theme of longing for childhood is a romantic image. The attempt to recapture the exact feeling of early childhood is not only Proustian but essentially Wordsworthian. The "Ode: Intimations of Immortality from Recollections of Early Childhood" in which the poet tries to remember his past, speaks mainly about the longing of adults for a lost cherished childhood.

The poet's longing may be due to a sense of loss, the loss above all of spiritual wholeness often associated to the realm of childhood. In this sense, it is no accident that in such poetry of childhood nostalgia the idea of spiritual unity is often represented in the image of the church: "The locus of the search is so often a church, ruined or otherwise, that the association of lost faith with lost childhood becomes unmistakable."[1] In "Tintern Abbey", a poem that centres on a ruined abbey shows how the poet's recollections of the cottages, the orchards and the pastoral farms of his youth offer, indeed, a "tranquil restoration" to his mind.

[1] Christopher Clausen, "Tintern Abbey to Little Gidding the Past Recaptured", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 84, N° 3 (Summer 1976), p 405.

Conclusion

This research has tried to demonstrate how modern men's cult of ephemeral beauties led to the fragmentation of their world as well as their alienation from a harmonious universe of established values. At the same time, it is their contact with sites of timeless beauties that made them reestablish the link with an eternity they had lost. Also in the worlds of Eliot and Fitzgerald is the intersection of such opposed realms – a realm of sterility and disenchantment concerned with decadent beauties and a realm of innocence and harmony identified with eternal values – that informs of a duality often encountered in the field of literature whether it is expressed in Dante's realms of *Inferno* and *Paradiso*, in William Blake's songs of experience and innocence or in Baudelaire's states of *spleen* and *ideal*.

Thus the rocky and waterless deserts of Eliot and Fitzgerald parable a state of disenchantment and melancholy essentially due to the state of modernity. In fact, if we define modernity as a breakdown with tradition, modern life becomes assimilated to movement and dynamism. Modern values, Walter Benjamin suggests in *The Origin of German Tragic Drama* become represented in the 'mobile', 'dynamic' and amorphous allegory characterized by "ambiguity and multiplicity of meaning" (*OGT* 177) Modern experiences become thus diversified. There is not one structure of value but a diversity of structures, a diversity which leads, in fact, to a distance from a harmonious pattern of traditional values. Like Eliot' hollow men and Fitzgerald's 'ash-grey' men, modern men become fragmented; modern couples, sterile and empty as they preserve nothing of the harmony of the romantic idylls of the past. In such diversity of experience, modern man is left with no stable feeling save pain and melancholy.

Thus in the context of modern life where there is change and mobility, man is distanced from a traditional pattern of established values. As a result, modern man's feeling, as he is pried from his traditional and natural shell, becomes one of exile and rootlessness much like the feeling of the exiled Jews in *The Old Testament*

who lament the loss of The Promised Land. Thus Eliot's 'dead valley' and Fitzgerald's 'valley of ashes' become assimilated to Ezekiel's 'valley of dry bones' where empty men lament the passing of old values.

Yet it would perhaps be inappropriate to assume that the wastelands of Eliot and Fitzgerald are devoid of any harmony since they may conceal, among the ruins and rubbles, timeless beauties of the past. In fact, since the modern world with its decadent values is a disenchanted world, modern man will seek meaning in the ruin, in ancient edifices but also in old objects, books and old photographs. In fact, if the worldly and the fashionable are source of disenchantment, redemption may be found in the archaic and the old-fashioned. In "The Waste Land", for example, if there is one successful moment of harmony it is the one that brings the echo of the glorious past, the one that brings the reader into contact with an old dock district that carries the vestiges of a lost harmonious past represented in the medieval Magnus Martyr which "holds /Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold." In the realm of Fitzgerald, the ruin may take the form of Gatsby's library, for example, that monument of ancient beauties that may represent the 'Platonic' universe of the anachronistic hero. Moreover, some specimens of human ruins such as the blind man of Eliot in "The Waste Land" or the madwoman of Fitzgerald in *Tender Is the Night* are here only to assert themselves as timeless beauties immune to the decadence of the modern world. Thus it is through the ruin that modern man restores the link with an eternity that he has lost because the ruin leads back to a former age of harmony, to a previous life of established values, what Baudelaire would call 'la Vie antérieure', a life prior to the modern age where all value has its place.

In the cities of Eliot and Fitzgerald the mood of modernity will take the form of a Baudelairean feeling of modern *ennui*. In Baudelaire's sense, *ennui* is not so much the effect of the lack of activity as it is the result of the multiplicity of experience, which leaves man with a sense of a deep void because in the multiplicity of meaning there is absence of meaning. As a result, man will lose the sense of things and the taste of things, a feeling that one may sum up in the following verses of Baudelaire's poem:

Esprit vaincu, fourbu! Pour toi, vieux maraudeur,
L'amour n'a plus de goût, non plus que la dispute;
Adieu donc, chants du cuivre et soupirs de la flûte!
Plaisirs, ne tentez plus un cœur sombre et boudeur!

Le Printemps adorable a perdu son odeur!

Charles Baudelaire – « Le goût du néant »

Like in Eliot's 'unreal city' where April is the cruellest month, or in Fitzgerald's New York City where a rose is a 'grotesque thing', city life becomes reduced to a plain universe where all values are profaned by the forces of modernity. Nature is ruined, the family shattered, the community divided and the religious edifices desecrated. The 'fresh green breast' turns to an electrical 'green light'. The *Jeune fille en fleurs* becomes 'flower of evil', and the religious festivities surrender to fashionable parties. Keats's immortal urn disintegrates into a decaying portrait of Dorian Gray. A spirit of humanity bows to a spirit of fashion, and the whole world becomes addicted to the cultivation of the ephemeral. This finds its culmination in the figure of the dandy, a personage whose sole concern is the cultivation of his image, a figure epitomized in Eliot's Prufrock as well as in Fitzgerald's Dick Diver in *Tender Is the Night* and Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*.

Yet in such a universe of decadence redemption is not impossible since it may be carried once again through the contact with the ruin. Indeed, what corresponds to the ruin in the desert is the figure of the flâneur in the city since the latter is ruined at the same time as he is crystallized by experience. Thus it is the task of the *flâneur*, the seer, the observer, to patch up the fragments of a tradition gone to pieces or, as Baudelaire puts it in "The Painter of Modern Life," to "extract from fashion the poetry that resides in its historical envelope, to distil the eternal from the transitory."[1] For the flâneur, like Tiresias, will see only 'substance' in human life, just as his eyes, like those of Dante's Beatrice, represent the "hope only/Of empty men." A typical figure of the flâneur may be found in the city of

[1] Charles Baudelaire, "The Painter of Modern Life," *Selected Writings on Art and Literature*, London: Penguin Books, 1972, p 402.

Fitzgerald in the character of Nick Carraway in *The Great Gatsby*, a character who, like Tiresias, proves able to see 'substance' in the life of the hero, for he is the only one who acknowledges Gatsby "worth the whole damn bunch put together" (*GG* 146) and that he "turned out all right at the end." (*GG* 8)

In the garden regeneration comes through pastoral retreat but also through a return to the sources and through a communion with Baudelaire's previous life, a life assimilated to a harmonious romantic past in which all value has its place. The previous life may be thus the pastoral universe of childhood, what may be the most harmonious phase in the life of the individual. In such case regeneration comes through memory, through a return to the pastoral world of childhood often assimilated to a garden full of invisible presences, of departed elders and voices of children concealed among the leaves like in Eliot's 'rose garden'. The previous life may be also the collective past of a whole community like that of Nick Carraway in his childhood village the narrator of *The Great Gatsby* evokes by the end of Fitzgerald's book.

What corresponds to the ruin in the desert is the *souvenir* in the garden, what Benjamin considers the 'relic' that derives from 'deceased experience'. ("Central Park", 49) The souvenir, which is the physical manifestation of memory, finds its equivalent, in the garden, in the scents and the flavours, which Marcel Proust considers the last ruins that bear the 'vast edifice of recollection'. And closely related to the scents and the flavours are the festivities, which Benjamin considers the 'correspondences' that allow an encounter with an earlier life. For the festivities with their ceremonies call for ingredients that are strong vehicles of memory and allow, therefore, a revival of the tastes and the scents of the past. In *The Great Gatsby*, in fact, it seems no coincidence that Nick Carraway recreates the 'wheat' and the 'prairies' and the 'lost Swede towns' of his childhood Midwest precisely at Christmastime.

The scents, the odours, the festivities will thus form the halo of canonical experience that restores the fabric of a meaningful life. This is exactly the pattern that Benjamin's storyteller weaves when he recreates the fabric of past experiences.

This is exactly the pattern that also creates the ‘passionate observer’ of Baudelaire, or the sensitive narrator of Proust or the clairvoyant observers of Eliot and Fitzgerald when they tell a story with the slightest details that evoke the slightest emotion; when they call for Proust’s ‘sensorial memory’ which allows the past to be magically resuscitated; or when they call for Eliot’s ‘objective correlative’ which allows the idea and the image to be reconciled.

Thus if the experience of modernity leaves man with a feeling of exile, the ‘correspondences’ allow a retreat into one’s home represented in that meaningful aura of canonical experience. And if the price of modernity is the ‘loss of the aura’, the ‘correspondences’ allow a revival of the tastes and the scents of the past, which Marcel Proust would call “la saveur profonde du pays.” The correspondences are thus the ties that restore the link with an eternity modern man has lost as they allow an encounter with Baudelaire’s previous life, a life the French poet imagines in images of caves and vegetation, a life close to a garden of Eden, a life close to the Eternal and to the eternal values of the world.

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ANNEXES

Figure I: Thomas Cole (1801–1848): *Catskill Creek* (1845)

Figure II: Thomas Cole (1801–1848): *Desolation* (1836)

Figure III: Albrecht Dürer: *Melencolia I* (1514)

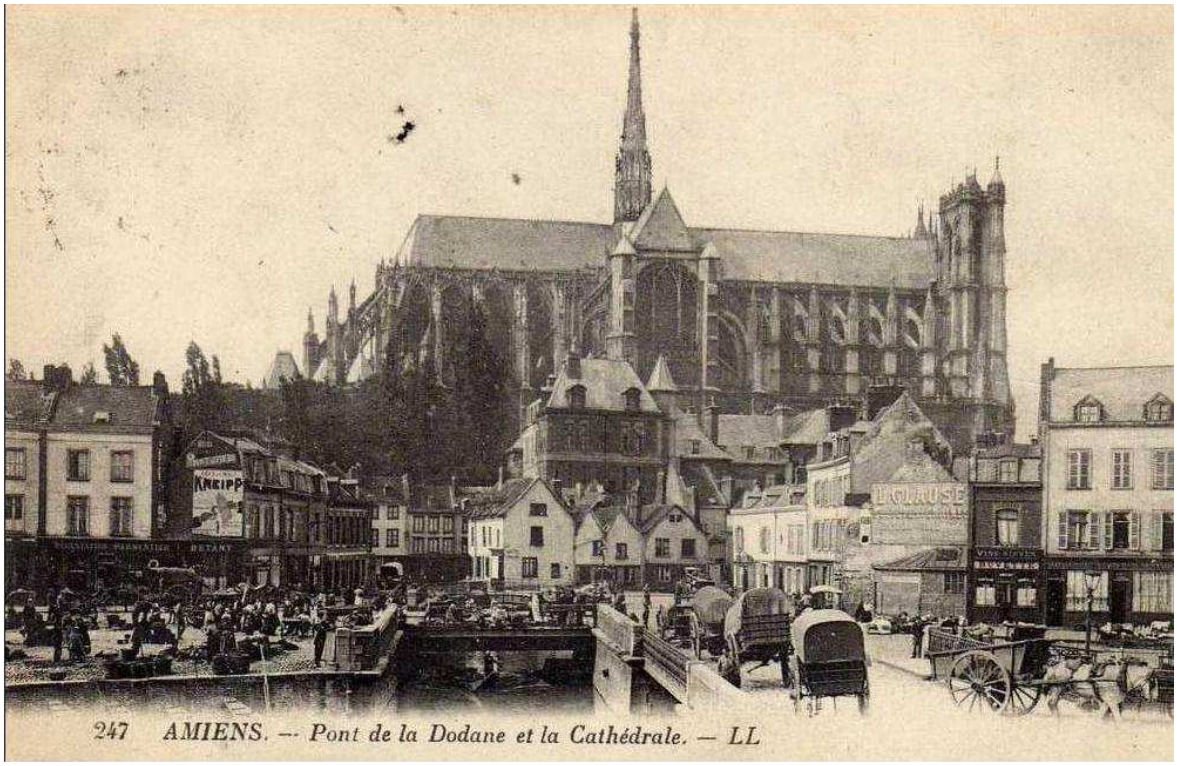

Figure IV: *Amiens - The Cathedral and the "Pont de la Dodane"*

Figure V: *Amiens – General View of the Cathedral*

Figure VI: *Amiens – An early postcard showing cobble-stoned alleys and old trolley cars*

Figure VII*: Ouled Naïl Dancers*

Figure IX: Nasreddine Dinet (1861 - 1929) - *Scarf Dance*

Figure X: Nasreddine Dinet (1861 - 1929) – *Meddah*[1]

[1] Through his artisan performance, Dinet's *Meddah* produces a recital rich in human experience and wisdom. As such, he offers a vivid example of Benjamin's figure of the storyteller.

ملخص رسالة ماجستير بعنوان:

"همسات الخلود في أراضي الخراب"

من خلال أعمال الأديبين: : توماس ستيرنز إليوت وفرانسيس سكوت فيتزجيرالد

تتناول هذه الدراسة جملة من المواضيع المرتبطة ب "الحداثة"، فقدان المعنى"، و"الحنين" في أعمال نموذجية خاصة بحركة الحداثة الأدبية الأمريكية التي تروي في جوهرها أزمة العصر الحديث. وقد اعتمدت في هذا البحث على مجموعة من المصادر تتمثل أهمها في:

The Hollow Men (1925), The Waste land (1922) للشاعر الأمريكي ت. س. إليوت

The Great Gatsby (1925), Tender Is The Night (1934) للروائي الأمريكي ف. س. فيتزجيرالد

وقد حاولت من خلال هذه الدراسة استعراض جمالية الأسلوب الباروكي مستعينة بذلك بتحليل المنظّر والتر بنجامين في كتابه The Origin of German Tragic Drama(1928) وبقراءته المميزة لأعمال شارلز بودلير ومارسيل بروست في كتابه On Some Motifs in Baudelaire (1939) وباستعماله لمصطلح "الأورا" الذي طوره في كتابه The Story Teller (1936). وعلى ضوء هذه الأعمال حاولت الكشف عن بعض مظاهر الحياة الحديثة، حيث أن سعي رجال العصر الحديث وراء الجماليات "العابرة" قد أورثهم الاغتراب عن ذواتهم وعن عالمهم الذي يفتقر إلى الوحدة والانسجام. وأن اتصالهم بجماليات العصر القديم (ما قبل الحداثي) قد يساعدهم على إعادة الصلة بعالم منسجم يتميز بالصفاء، والعذرية، وبراءة الطفولة، أو بمعنى آخر: عالم يتميز بالماضي وحسب... وقد أوضحت أن عوالم إليوت وفيتزجيرالد المنهارة، وذواتهم المشتتة لا تخلو من الانسجام لأن الاتصال بالدمار في حد ذاته يشكل عودة نوعية للشخصيات التي تحتك به مما يسمح لها بالعودة إلى الأزمنة الغابرة والاستفادة من جمالياتها "الخالدة".

وقد قسمت هذه الدراسة إلى ثلاثة فصول، تناولت في الفصل الأول المشهد الرمزي في أعمال الفنانين المذكورين الذي يمثل في مجمله محاكاة للصحراء الجرداء القاحلة. وهو مشهد لا يخلو من إمكانية ترميمه وتحسينه، انطلاقا من فكرة أن الدمار والخراب "يحوي في طياته جوهر الحياة البشرية". وتتجسد هذه الفكرة بدقة في أعمال إليوت وفيتزجيرالد حيث يصبح الدمار صورة معقدة تحمل في الوقت نفسه صورتي الرعب والمجد المتعلقين بالمعركة الروحية للإنسان الحديث. أما الفصل الثاني فقد خصصته للمشهد الحضري في أعمال الفنانين الأمريكيين، الذي أكشف من خلاله كيف أن اعتزاز الشخصيات بكل ما هو عصري وحديث قد يؤدي إلى فقرهم الروحي الإنساني وانتهاك العالم المحيط بهم. ويتجسد الانهيار والدمار في المشهد الحضري في شخصية "تائه المدينة" (the city flâneur) الذي تتمثل مهمته في إعادة تجميع القطع المتناثرة للعالم الحديث. أما الفصل الأخير فقد اعتمدت فيه على المشهد الريفي عند الفنانين المذكورين، وحاولت إظهار كيف أن شخصيات كل من إليوت وفيتزجيرالد تصارع من أجل خلق الماضي الرومانسي الخاص بها من خلال الذاكرة والاتحاد مع الماضي أو "الحياة السابقة" حسب مصطلح بودلير. ويرى القارئ أن هذه الشخصيات تجد أخيرا لحظات من الانسجام في عالم متصل بالطبيعة وببراءة الطفولة. وأتوصل في نهاية هذا البحث إلى الإقرار بأن الحياة الروحية والطقوس الدينية ذات أهمية بالغة في خلق صلات مع الماضي المنسجم وإضفاء معنى أقوى على الحياة. وأن هذه الروابط في حد ذاتها هي التي تشكل قيمة الحياة الإنسانية وشعاع التجربة القيمة.