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American Literature**

**Tradition and the Individual Talent in T.S. Eliot's and Wallace
Stevens' Poetry**

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Stevens's Poetry**

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Declaration

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

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Abstract

This thesis is a comparative study of two American poets, T.S. Eliot and Wallace Stevens, whose poetry exemplifies the two major opposing trends in American Modernism. My aim is to examine the different ways in which the two poets respond to the solipsism of Romantic poetry. Eliot turns to the historical past of Europe to find a cultural transcendental ego to suppress the individual ego of Romanticism. Against the Romantic solipsism and Eliot's appeals to tradition, distant and abstract from the contemporary conditions of modern America, Stevens seeks a poetics that focuses on immediate conditions of American experience to forge a literary tradition more fully responsive to the cultural and material impulses of the new world.

However, to support their position against Romanticism, both Eliot and Stevens turn to many texts by precedent and contemporary writers. They combine American European influences like, Classical myths, legends, Dante Alighieri, John Donne, Charles Baudelaire Ezra Pound and Pablo Picasso with their individual talents and American background to shape new poetry which is both American and European. This combination has given birth to a new literary tradition whose main tenets, such as objectivity, the focus on modern urban life, and the use of the literature predecessors and contemporaries are transported to other cultures, nations, and continents.

Owing to the nature of this topic, this thesis takes its methodological bearings from three theories of influence: Julia Kristiva's intertextuality, Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarization and Harold Bloom's anxiety of influence. The relevance of these theories for this study is based on the fact that all of them, despite their different methods, are concerned with the presence of elements of one text within another and with the great poet's struggle to make his new voice against the overwhelming influence of his precursor.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

WSCPP	<i>Wallace Stevens: Collected Poetry and Prose</i>
FECB	<i>The Flower Of Evil</i> by Charles Baudelaire
CPTSE	<i>Collected Poems</i> by T.S Eliot
CWWHAP	<i>The Complete Works of W. H. Auden: Prose</i>
SPJA	<i>Selected Poems</i> by John Ashbery
SPCT	<i>Selected Poems</i> by Charles Tomlinson,
SPJD	<i>Selected Poetry</i> by John Donne.
LWS	<i>Letters of Wallace Stevens</i>

Introduction

This research work is a comparative study of the concept of literary tradition in the works of two American poets, Wallace Stevens and T.S. Eliot. It is also concerned with whether the influence of both literary predecessors and contemporaries reduces the freshness, the novelty and the originality of their poetry. Indeed, these two poets wrote during a special period in the history of the United States: the violent chaotic and spiritless twentieth century. These two poets belonged to a literary movement called Modernism. The Modernists strove to find new ways of writing to produce a work of art that reflected in style and form the instability of modern existence. Marlowe A. Miller wrote that the Modernists "made it new in an attempt to respond to and reflect the radically, catastrophically altered world pre-, during, and post-World War I."¹

Although Stevens and Eliot shared the same desire to break with the Romantic aesthetics, they are often regarded as opposing poets who exemplify two trends of Modernism and offer two different understandings of what new arts should be. In fact, they both resisted the Romantic use of nature as a setting, or even a subject. Instead, Eliot and Stevens wanted to continually confront aspects of the modern world by creating a poetry that would focus on immediate urban conditions.

Moreover, Eliot and Stevens attempted to cure poetry from Romantic emotionalism, subjectivity, and solipsism. While the Romantics celebrated their own experiences of beauty in the natural world, Eliot and Stevens attempted to understand the world around them objectively. This tendency to objectify poetry is the result of Eliot's and Stevens' distrust of the human self and their doubt about the value of the individual. In fact, Stevens' and Eliot's skeptical view of the individual was favoured by the general intellectual climate in which the

1. Marlowe A. Miller, *Masterpieces of British Modernism* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 9.

belief in the relative weakness and fragility of the human self, asserted by such social theorists as Freud, Marx and Darwin, came into vogue.

If Stevens and Eliot shared the same anti-romantic stance, they rebelled differently against their immediate Romantic predecessors. Eliot offered tradition as an anti-romantic conception of poetic personality. For him, tradition should function as a "cultural transcendental ego"² which "overlook[s] and situat[es] the endeavors of individual egos."³ Because of the absence of a pure American tradition, Eliot turned to the historical past of Europe or what he called "the mind of Europe" to develop the historical sense to limit his own personal voice. Stevens, on the other hand, attempted to create an awareness of a trend as alien to the old European roots. His poetry is a revelation of America's images of everyday life rather than America's as the inheritor of the European tradition. The historical condition of Europe was not America's and the classical and medieval sensibilities were not the sensibilities of modern America. Stevens saw that the poet could not recreate the past art in the condition of the present America. According to him, the freshness of the new continent resulting from the absence of tradition could also be a source of vitality.

Another difference between Stevens and Eliot was their religious sensibilities. Though raised in conventionally believing families, both poets failed to retain the faith of their ancestors. Eliot abandoned Unitarianism to embrace Catholicism. His religious zeal affected his aesthetics in form and content. His poetic career was a struggle to return to Christianity to overcome the problems of modernity. In contrast, Stevens never demanded a revival of orthodoxy because, for him, Christianity was anachronic; thus, he hoped that poetry would substitute for traditional religion.

2. Rafey Habib, *The Early T. S. Eliot and Western Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 167.

3. Ibid.

Eliot's classicism and Christianity opposing Stevens' anticlassicism and atheism may explain the oddity of the grouping choice of these two poets. First, it is widely assumed that Stevens and Eliot, beyond Pound's motto "make it new," had little in common, and their stylistic devices, thematic preoccupation and poetic careers would suggest important differences rather than similarities. Second, as the main subject of this thesis is literary tradition, it would seem much reasonable to associate such theme with classicist bends and poetics of such Modernists as T.S. Eliot or James Joyce, but it would be irrelevant to relate it to the anti-classicist Wallace Stevens.

One reason which may explain why Eliot and Stevens have not been thoroughly studied together is the divide and rule strategy of the twentieth century criticism. This strategy tended to divide the Modernist writers into incompatible groups. For example, in his essay "the Modern," Frank Kermode formulates the division of Modernism into Paleo-modernism and Neo-modernism. Paleo-modernism is the Modernism of such classicist writers as James Joyce, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot whereas Neo-modernism is the Modernism of William Carlos Williams, Gertrude Stein, and John Cage. Although Kermode associates Stevens with the Paleo-modernist phase, Stevens "is defined by the majority of critics and this on the basis of Kermode's own criteria, as pre-eminently neo-modernist."⁴

In her essay "Pound / Stevens: Whose Era?" Marjorie Perloff discusses the difficulty to define Modernism. Two contending groups attempt to solve this problem. Perloff explains how one's definition of Modernism depends on whom one considers as the leading figure. The first group led by Hugh Kenner Donald Davie, Guy Davenport, and Christine Brooke-Rose defends Ezra Pound as the iconic Modernist and dismisses Stevens. The second group headed by Harold Bloom, Hillis Miller, Helen Vendler, and Frank Kermode promotes Stevens

4. Edna Rosenthal, *Aristotle and Modernism: Aesthetic Affinities of T S Eliot, Wallace Stevens and Virginia Woolf* (Sussex: Sussex Academic Press, 2008), 3.

as an iconic figure. At the end of her essay, Perloff suggests "to call the first half of the twentieth century the Eliot Era."⁵ For Perloff, Modernism or the puzzle of Modernism will remain unsolved unless critics recognize their neglect for Eliot.

Two comparative studies, one by Leon Surette, the other by Edna Rosenthal, have dealt with Eliot and Stevens. Both studies emphasize the differences rather than affinities between the two poets. Surette discusses how Eliot and Stevens after abandoning their ancestral faith, Unitarianism for Eliot and Presbyterianism for Stevens, both poets offered humanism as the most prominent substitute for Christianity. Yet, later both poets rejected humanism and showed dissatisfaction with it. Surette concludes that "Eliot suffered from the development and the religious front- that was stuck in a state of belief that Stevens . . . had left behind."⁶ Stevens did not join any community of believers as Eliot did when he became Catholic. Thus, "the contrasting nature of Eliot's and Stevens' poetry reflects the different curves of their spiritual lives."⁷

Edna Rosenthal's *Aristotle and Modernism: Aesthetic Affinities of T. S. Eliot, Wallace Stevens, and Virginia Woolf* is an attempt to analyze the shared Aristotelian underpinnings of Eliot and Stevens. The two poets are attracted to two different notions which belong in the frameworks of Aristotelian aesthetic assumptions. She argues that Eliot adopts Aristotle's *Poetics* to modern poetry as an "organising principle in his conception of literary history"⁸ while Stevens' interests in *Poetics* "appear diametrically opposed to Eliot's classicist-oriented dramatic criteria,"⁹ for Stevens' aesthetics "centers on the poet [not tradition] as the

5. Marjorie Perloff, "Pound / Stevens: Whose Era?" *Modernism*, ed. Michael H Whitworth, (Malden, Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2007), 94.

6. Leon Surette, *The Modern Dilemma: Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, and Humanism* (Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008.), 11.

7. *Ibid.*, 7.

8. Rosenthal, *Aristotle and Modernism*, 6.

9. *Ibid.*

maker of poetry and on poetry as a structure of metaphors constitutive of our knowledge of reality."¹⁰

From here, what is important to retain is that most critics tend to consider Eliot and Stevens as opposite poets; that is, associating Stevens with a given group means placing Eliot in another opposing group. This explains why Eliot and Stevens seem to be more different than alike. Stevens himself pointed out that there was nothing in common with his poetics and Eliot's: "After all Eliot and I are dead opposites and I have been doing about everything that he would not likely to do" (LWS, 277).

This thesis is an attempt to correct this too familiar view that Stevens and Eliot are mainly different. When one examines the precedent and contemporary artists' influence on both poets, Eliot and Stevens' poetry becomes less conflicting and less controversial than it appears to be, and the closeness of their poetry appears under a new light if one considers this affinity. The basis for that comparison is simply that the same predecessors and contemporaries seem to have served Eliot and Stevens in their struggle to protect their art from Romanticism and in their progress toward a style of Modernism. Indeed what makes them different is their personal sensibility and their individual talent.

My methodology will be mainly based on three theories: Julia Kristeva's intertextuality, Viktor Shklovsky's defamiliarization and Harold Bloom's theory of influence. Intertextuality, as coined by Julia Kristeva, helps in reading literary texts in relation with other texts or groups of other texts. It is a process that makes any text to be read as a transformation of another text or group of other texts. For her, "each word (text) is an intersection of words (texts) where at least one other word (text) can be read"¹¹ and "any text ... is constructed as a mosaic of

10. Ibid.

11. Julia Kristeva, *The Kristeva Reader*, ed. Toril Moi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 37.

quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."¹² In this respect, any work of art does not emerge from nothingness, but rather interacts with other texts. As a whole, this thesis argues that Eliot and Stevens are two contrasted cases in presenting the modes of intertextuality. Eliot uses literary tradition to confront the past with the present to show how the values of the past have been ignored in the present. In contrast, Stevens employs tradition to challenge the Paleo-modernist view that the spiritual vacuum of modern times can only be filled through the revival of the past. In fact, Stevens incorporates elements of the past to show how the past is no longer credible in the present life.

To discuss the use of allusion in the two poets, I will rely on the theory of defamiliarization that the Russian Formalist Viktor Shklovsky developed in his essay "Art as Technique." For him the main aim of the artist is to guard art against automatization because "automatization eats away at things, at clothes, at furniture, at our wives, and at our fear of war."¹³ Consequently, "complex life of many people takes place entirely on the level of the unconscious, then it is as if this life had never been."¹⁴ Shklovsky believes that art has the potential to help the reader see the world afresh by adopting literally unconventional stylistic devices: "The purpose of art, then, is to lead us to knowledge of a thing through the organ of sight instead of recognition. By 'enstranging' objects and complicating form, the device of art makes perception long and 'laborious.' "¹⁵

Despite attaching a high level of importance to innovation, the formalists do not deny the importance of tradition. To Shklovsky, innovations in literature arise because the

12. Ibid.

13. Viktor Shklovsky, *Theory of Prose*, trans. Benjamin Sher (Elmwood Park, IL: Dalkey Archive Press, 1990), 4.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid., 6.

perceptibility of a given tradition tends to decrease over time: "The new form makes its appearance not in order to express a new content, but rather, to replace an old form that has already outlived its artistic usefulness."¹⁶ In this respect, Shklovsky contends that "a work of art is perceived against a background of and by association with other works of art. The form of a work of art is determined by its relationship with other pre-existing forms."¹⁷ Thus, the literariness of a text depends on the ability of conventions which constitute a tradition to give way to new ones that defamiliarize them afresh.

To examine the nature of Eliot's and Stevens' influence on younger poets, I shall operate from Harold Bloom's theory of influence. According to Bloom, a strong poet learns to appreciate poetry through the irresistible work of precursors. To make his new voice, a strong poet misreads precursors. Yet, he cannot escape the awareness that his imaginative vision is born out of the very achievements of the past poets. This awareness gives rise to immense anxieties of indebtedness that must be denied and which Bloom calls the poet's "anxiety of influence." Bloom likens the "anxiety of influence" to an oedipal relation of son to father. The defensive mechanism the belated poet uses against his precursor is "poetic misreading or misprision"¹⁸ which is a process through which he sublimates his precursor's influence: "poetic influence – when it involves two strong, authentic poets, - always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, as an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation. The history of fruitful poetic influence, which is to say the main tradition of Western poetry since the Renaissance, is a history of anxiety and self-saving caricature, of

16. Ibid., 20.

17. Ibid.

18. Harold Bloom, *The Anxiety of Influence* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973), 14.

distortion, of perverse, willful revisionism without which modern poetry as such could not exist."¹⁹

Bloom identifies six distortive processes through which a belated poet operates in reading his precursor poem. He calls them reversionary ratios and means them to represent the developmental stage of the ephebe. Clinamen is a "poetic misreading or misprision proper."²⁰ Tessera is "completion and antithesis."²¹ Kenosis is a "movement towards discontinuity with the precursor."²² Daemonization is "a movement towards a personalized Counter Sublime, in a reaction to the precursor's Sublime."²³ Askesis is a "movement of self-purgation which intends attainment of a state of solitude."²⁴ Apophrades is "the return of the dead."²⁵

To implement my research, this thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter covers three main subjects. The first is the Romantic failure to cope with the new circumstances such as the moral crisis and the disintegration of the social bond following the Industrial Revolution. Instead of facing their new realities, the Romantics turned to nature and their self to seek refuge. The second subject concerns the Modernists's reaction against Romanticism. To cure poetry from the Romantic solipsism and escapism, two American contending Modernist trends suggested two different methods. The Paleo-modernists led by Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle appealed to "the mind of Europe" in the face of a degraded modernity. The Neo-modernists among them William Carlos Williams and Hart Crane,

19. Ibid., 30.

20. Ibid., 14.

21. Ibid., 67.

22. Ibid., 14.

23. Ibid., 15.

24. Ibid.

25. Ibid., 139.

against both the Romantic reliance on the self and Eliot's and Pound's appeal to European cultural traditions, offered a literature that focuses on the immediate conditions of American experience. The third subject concerns Eliot's and Stevens' theories of poetry which arise in part out of their reactions against the conventional standards by the Romantics and their concern with the personality of the artist. Eliot and Stevens view that the poet must build the poem around an impersonal idea. To attain a high level of objectivity, they adopt two contradictory attitudes. For Eliot, the artist must always surrender himself to literary tradition. On the other hand, Stevens, against the Romantic attitudes, asserts that poetic creation is a process in which reality and the imagination meet. He, against Eliot, believes that to attain this meeting, the poet must guard the imagination against the preconceptions of the past. Thus, while Eliot's appeal to tradition to validate his work places him in the Pale-modernist aesthetics, Stevens' radical break from tradition makes him an adherent of Neo-modernism.

The second chapter examines the use of Classical myths and legends in Eliot's and Stevens' poetry. Both poets use a known myth as a skeleton to structure their poems. This is the case with Eliot's use of the Grail legend in "The Wasteland," and Stevens' incorporation of the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha in "The Comedian as the Letter C." Though Eliot and Stevens follow the same pattern of departure, initiation, and return found in the respective original myths, they exemplify two modes of intertextuality in different manners. Eliot appropriates the Grail legend in his poem in order to juxtapose the alienation of the individual in the present with the sense of the community of the past. Stevens' aim in adopting the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha in his poem is different. He uses the Classical myth to highlight the importance of focusing on American local places as poetically generative places and lessening the influence of European traditions to forge a poetics more reflective of the unique conditions of modern American.

The third chapter explores the way Eliot and Stevens respond to the medieval Italian poet, Dante Alighieri, to address the issue of the loss of belief. In their responses, there is a contrast between Eliot's Christian beliefs and Stevens' atheism. Eliot's use of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* is an attempt to restore the medieval religious authoritativeness in modern times. However, the intertextual relation between Dante and Eliot's early poetry reveals that Eliot incorporates elements from Dante's work for ironic purposes to contrast the medieval religious consciousness and the modern shallow convictions and to express extraordinary difficulties involved with developing a Christian aesthetics if compared to medieval poets. However, Dante's presence in Eliot's post-conversion poetry tends to be less ironic as his religious convictions grow strong enough to emphasize the relevance of Christian orthodoxy to modern readers. Unlike Eliot, Stevens' intertextual relation with Dante reveals the neutrality of Christian authority. In fact, Stevens reworks Dante's text to exploit the tension between the religious and the secular by challenging the orthodox view that only Christianity can fill the spiritual vacuum in modern societies. He also reverses the ideology of the original text by offering poetry based on reality as the legitimate substitute for religion in modern times.

The fourth chapter analyses how Eliot and Stevens establish a modern link with the 17th century Metaphysical poet, John Donne. In fact, Donne appealed to the Modernist poets for his method which objectifies emotion through the use of a poetic device called the conceit. Eliot's objective correlative and Stevens' concept of resemblances, which are equivalents to Donne's conceit, are adopted to achieve the extinction of personality. Indeed, many of the three techniques are allusions to the literature of the past. Though the three poets draw their allusions from the same sources, each poet enacts his aesthetic sensibility and his individual talent to revitalize these worn-out allusions. In Shklovsky's terms, these defamiliarizing methods enable the three poets to present their subject matters in a fresh way.

The fifth chapter shows that the sensibility displayed by stylistic innovations that characterize both Eliot and Stevens' poetry resembles that which animated the technical experiments of their contemporaries namely the French Symbolists, Imagists and Cubists. To get rid of the Romantic emotionalism and escapism, Eliot and Stevens turn to these movements to find models for urbanizing and objectifying their poetry. However, though Eliot and Stevens incorporate the Symbolist urban elements, the Imagist concrete visual images and the Cubist techniques of collage and perspectivism, their poetry departs from these movements in many ways. Their differences in appropriating elements from these movements suggest that Eliot and Stevens are not slavish followers of their contemporaries, but strong poets who enact their poetic sensibility and individual talents in order to make their aesthetics unique and original.

After exploring the different traditions that influenced Eliot's and Stevens' poetry, the sixth chapter examines how these two poets turn to masters whom the young poet must "misread" to carve out space for their own work and vision. Their voices which combine European tradition, American experiences and individual talents enable the two poets to change radically the way in which English poetry was written. More importantly, their poetry has become one of the most influential, not only in America or England but in the world. Relying on Harold Bloom's theory of influence, this chapter looks closely at the direct influence exerted by Eliot and Stevens on younger poets from different nationalities. It examines the influence of Eliot on Robert Lowell from America, W. H. Auden from England, and Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab and Muzaffar Al-Nawab from Iraq, and that of Stevens on John Ashbery from America, Charles Tomlinson from England, and José Ángel Valente from Spain.

Chapter One: Theories of Modernism Against Romanticism

One achievement of Romanticism, a movement that preceded Modernism, was its awareness of the disunity between man and his world which Eliot calls the "dissociation of sensibility." Rather than striving for reconciliation, the Romantics attempted to create an ideal world through art that focused on the self and offered a purely imagined nature as a refuge against the real world from which they felt alienated.

A group of poets led by Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle that Frank Kermode calls the "Paleo-modernists" formulated a poetic approach that relied on Classical European tradition to veer away from Romantic art that celebrated the individual as the source of great art. Against the Romantic account of poetry as originating in the poet's individual genius, they used allusions to European literary tradition as a more objective and coherent response to their contemporary experiences. However, this reliance on tradition which was part of the Old World hindered a literature that would afford the uniqueness of the American culture from emerging. Thus, another group of poets that Kermode calls "Neo-modernists" headed by William Carlos Williams and Hart Crane appealed for a literature that focused on the immediate experience of America. The poetic theories of Eliot and Stevens reflected the differences of these two trends of Modernism. Eliot's ideological appeals to tradition made him a "Paleo-modernist" while Stevens, by rejecting the European tradition, aligned himself with Neo-modernism.

This chapter is divided into four parts. The first part provides an overview of the historical and intellectual backgrounds which were responsible for the formation of Modernism. The second looks at the Romantic poet's escape to nature and their retreat to the self from the realities of modern chaos instead of rebelling against them. The third deals with the origins and the main anti-romantic tenets of Paleo-modernism and Neo-modernism, the

two trends of Modernism to which Eliot and Stevens respectively adhered. Finally, this chapter examines the poetic theories of Eliot and Stevens which they crafted against the Romantic subjective aesthetics.

A- Modernism: Aesthetic of Change to Cope with Change

Marlowe A. Miller wrote that the Modernists "made it new in an attempt to respond to and reflect the radically, catastrophically altered world pre-, during, and post-World War I."²⁶ The era Miller refers to was an era of change as radical new social theories, industrialization, new advances in technology, and two brutal world wars changed the face of the world forever. Such swift changes disoriented humanity, sowing a deep distrust in old institutions that had guided American life too long. Many Modernist writers began to question the credibility of these institutions.

Darwin, Marx, and Freud questioned the humanist confident attitude that placed man at the centre of the universe, revealing his dependence on laws and structures outside his control and even sometimes beyond his knowledge. Darwin's conception of evolution and heredity situated humanity as no more than the latest product of "the very process of natural selection,"²⁷ a conception which dissolved the boundaries between human and animal leading to the belief that "man is derived from some lower animal form."²⁸ Marxian material determinism argued that it is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness. Marx believed that the "mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual

26. Marlowe A. Miller, *Masterpieces of British modernism* (London: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 9.

27. Charles Darwin, *The Origin Of Species* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 183.

28. Charles Darwin, *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 360.

life."²⁹ Freud's theory of the unconscious revealed that "the powers motivating men and women are mainly and normally unconscious."³⁰ Freud believed that man is driven by the same basic instincts as animals. This tendency can be seen in the sexual and aggressive behaviours. He also believed that man often struggles against the society that stresses the control of these impulses. Darwin's, Marx's and Freud's theories threatened the humanist self-confidence and provoked a feeling of ideological uncertainty.

This distrust was further aggravated by social and political changes. Industrialization and urbanization became even larger factors in American society as the nation moved further from its agricultural roots into a new existence as a large factory nation. This industrialization of the country "created great fortunes, widening the gap between the rich and the poor and creating a new bureaucratic hierarchy which gave business its recognizably modern form."³¹ Between 1890 and 1910, the country's population increased by fifty percent including thirteen million new immigrants. In 1860, immigrants made up 40 percent of the populations of major American cities. By 1910, the population of immigrants and their American-born children had increased to 70 percent in major cities.³² Accordingly, the country became "less rural, less agricultural, less ethnically homogenous, and less divided into distinct male and female spheres of work – all the while growing . . . more racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse."³³

29. Karl Marx, *Karl Marx on Society and Social Change* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), 5.

30. Ross C. Murfin, "What is Psychoanalytic Criticism?" *Heart of Darkness: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1969), 114.

31. Leonard Cassuto and Clare Virginia Eby, *The Cambridge Companion to Theodore Dreiser* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3.

32. Susan L. Mizruchi, *The Rise of Multicultural America: Economy and Print Culture, 1865-191* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 77.

33. Cassuto, *Theodore Dreiser*, 3.

The twentieth century was also an era of wars. The two World Wars broke out killing thousands of both military and civilian people with the help of a new technology which promised to make life better. Sherwood Anderson describes this era as "the most materialistic age in the history of the world, when wars would be fought without patriotism, when men would forget God and only pay attention to moral standards, when the will to power would replace the will to serve and beauty would be well nigh forgotten in the terrible headlong rush of mankind toward the acquisition of possessions."³⁴

In such confused context, the confident view of history that things were progressively improving as science and rationality brought their social benefits looked false. While Beatrice Webb once wrote that "by science alone . . . all human misery would be ultimately swept away,"³⁵ the two world wars were further evidence that history rather tended towards loss and destruction.

Even religion which had served as an important spiritual support was affected by these changes. In fact, Christianity underwent crises of faith as many people started to question Christian beliefs that the universe had been designed by an intelligent, benevolent creator. Proclaiming the death of God, Nietzsche's fictional madman exclaimed: "After Buddha was dead, his shadow was still shown for centuries in a cave – a tremendous, gruesome shadow. God is dead; but given the way of men, there may still be caves for thousands of years in which his shadow will be shown. – And we – we still have to vanquish his shadow, too."³⁶ According to Pericles Lewis, Nietzsche's declaration of the death of God created a dilemma among the Modernists: "on the one hand, the death of God [left] humanity facing an abyss of

34. Sherwood Anderson, *Winesburg, Ohio* (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 40-41.

35. Beatrice Webb, quoted in Nicholas Drake, *The Poetry Of W.B. Yeats* (London: Penguin, 1991), 73.

36. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 109.

moral relativism; on the other hand, God's 'gruesome shadow' continue[d] to haunt even those who proclaim[ed] their atheism."³⁷

This new understanding of human society and human nature brought about by new advances in technology, radical new social theories, and wars contributed to new style and new subject matter in the Modernist poetry. Ezra Pound once famously exclaimed, "Make it new!" Pound's motto implied that this new world could only be adequately reflected in the most innovative modes of expression which questioned Romanticism.

B- Modernism against Romanticism

Romanticism that flourished in almost every country of Europe and the United States was a cultural movement that lasted from around 1750 to about 1870. It reacted against the Classical and Neo-classical conventions of the Enlightenment also called the Age of Reason. Relying on "the power of reason to discover the truth about humanity and the world,"³⁸ the Enlightenment valued reason as the only reliable source of information and neglected emotions while people sought answers to all of life's mysteries through science and logic. By the second half of the 18th century, the Romantics reacted against the Classicist sensibility, which urged the poet to be led by the principle of order and external authority, adopted the cult of the individual and championed the freedom of the human spirit. Romanticism was built on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's ideas that "man, the individual, is an infinite reservoir of possibilities and if you can so rearrange society by the destruction of oppressive order then these possibilities will have a chance and you will have Progress."³⁹

37. Pericles Lewis, "Religion" *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture*, eds. David Bradshaw and Kevin J. H. Dettmar (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006), 21.

38. James M Byrne, *Religion and the Enlightenment: From Descartes to Kant* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 5.

39. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, quoted in Robert F. Gleckner, *Romanticism: Points of View* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1975), 57.

The Industrial Revolution further shaped Romanticism. One consequence of the Industrial Revolution was the shift from an agricultural based economy to a manufacturing based economy. This new economic system caused inequality as a result of class division. Many peasants left the countryside to seek work in the factories that were growing in the cities. With the fast increase of population and the growth of urbanization many devastating effects of the Industrial Revolution, such as poverty, squalor and diseases became rife. However, the Romantics, instead of facing the unpleasant realities provoked by the Industrial Revolution, sought and found in nature a refuge and a resolution to the suffering, conflict, and injustice they experienced in the city's urban life.

In terms of literature, it is difficult to define the exact tenets of Romanticism. As a literary movement, Romanticism was characterized by several strains which proved to be "exceedingly diverse and often conflicting."⁴⁰ In fact, the Romantics were "revolutionary and counterrevolutionary, individualistic and communitarian, cosmopolitan and nationalistic, realist and fantastic, retrograde and utopian, rebellious and melancholic, democratic and aristocratic, activist and contemplative, republican and monarchist, red and white, mystical and sensual."⁴¹ These contradictions permeated not only the movement but also "the life and work of individual authors, and sometimes even individual texts."⁴² A famous intellectual historian, Arthur O. Lovejoy, made his reputation by insisting that people should give up Romanticism and instead use only the plural Romanticisms:

We should learn to use the word 'Romanticism' in the plural. This, of course, is already the practice of the more cautious and observant literary historians in so far as they recognize that the term 'Romanticism' of one country may have little

40. Arthur O. Lovejoy, quoted in Gleckner, *Romanticism*, 4.

41. Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre, *Romanticism against the Tide of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), 1.

42. Ibid.

in common with that of another ...But the discrimination of Romanticisms which I have in mind is not solely or chiefly a division upon lines of nationality or language. What is needed is that any study of the subject should begin with recognition of a *prima-facie* plurality of 'Romanticisms,' of possibly quite distinct thought-complexes, a number of which may appear in one country.⁴³

Despite their differences, the Romantics shared a certain number of common tenets.⁴⁴ One of them is an emphasis on the poetic creation based on feeling and imagination. William Wordsworth, an outstanding Romantic poet, says in his "Preface to Lyrical Ballads" that "all poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings."⁴⁵ For Wordsworth, emotion is the fundamental condition of poetry. Without emotion and powerful feelings, poetry cannot be written. Elsewhere, Wordsworth says of the poet that "he is a man speaking to men: a man endowed with more lively sensibility, more enthusiasm and tenderness a man pleased with his own passions and volitions."⁴⁶

From this statement rises the second Romantic contention which is individualism. Consistent with their emphasis on the importance of feeling and emotion, the Romantics insisted that the individual is unique, different and incomparable. They glorified their isolation from the surrounding community and celebrated their lack of human communication. In fact, this separation was a way to express their unique nature and set themselves free from social obedience because, as Shelley argues,

43. Arthur O. Lovejoy, quoted in Gleckner, *Romanticism*, 68.

44. Because of these differences, it is difficult to define the theory of Romanticism that may cover the aesthetic diversity of such talents as William Blake, Lord Byron and William Wordsworth. Thus, in search of the Romantic theory, I would rather discover a set of common features in the writings of several major English Romantic poets, such as "The Preface" of Wordsworth, "The Biographica Literaria" of Coleridge, "The Defence of Poetry" by Shelley, and letters by Keats by Blake.

45. William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, *Lyrical Ballads* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 98.

46. *Ibid.*

Obedience,
Bane of all genius, virtue, freedom, truth,
Makes slaves of men, and of the human frame,
A mechanized automaton.⁴⁷

The other assumption shared by the Romantics was acute awareness of nature and natural surroundings. Accordingly, they used nature as a vehicle of conveying the very personal emotion of the poet. In relation to the omnipresence of nature in the Romantic poetry, David Perkinson points out that "among the conventions of more traditional verse in England and the United States throughout the nineteenth century was obviously the use of nature and landscape as subject matter, setting, symbols, or metaphor."⁴⁸

To better understand the assumptions of Romanticism, it is relevant to consider William Wordsworth's poem "I Wandered Lonely as A Cloud," a poem that embodies all the Romantic tenets. The first is the Romantic belief in poetry as a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings and emotions. The first part of the poem describes the speaker's loneliness using such words as "vacant,"⁴⁹ "pensive"⁵⁰ and "solitude."⁵¹ However, being isolated from the community is a way of cultivating his emotion through a deep communion with nature. In the second part of the poem, the words "glee,"⁵² "gay"⁵³ and "bliss"⁵⁴ show the speaker's joy while he is alone with nature.

47. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Selected Poetry and Prose of Shelley* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 23.

48. David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: From the 1890s to the High Modernist Mode* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1976), 4.

49. William Wordsworth, *The Complete Poetical Works of William Wordsworth, in: 1801-1805* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2008), 202.

50. *Ibid.*, 203.

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*, 202.

53. *Ibid.*

The other important Romantic tenet is the idolization of nature. In Wordsworth's poem, the speaker has a real affinity with nature which is shown in the way he describes the scene and his emotions toward it. After describing the daffodils, the poem shifts to concentrate on the mind of the speaker: "A poet could not but be gay, / In such a jocund company."⁵⁵ Later, while alone in his room, the memory of the daffodils revives and fulfils the psychological vacancy of his self, and now his heart "dances with the daffodils."⁵⁶

The third Romantic tenet epitomized in the poem is the idea of individuality. The repetition of the first person pronoun which is even the first word of the poem "I wandered"⁵⁷ makes of the poem an account of the speaker's individual experience of nature. Individuality is further supported by that fact that the speaker is wandering lonely and thus detached from the rest of society.

However, with the early 20th century changes, Romanticism became the subject to attack. The two main reasons for this attack were solipsism and escapism. The Romantics, though living in the middle of the urban chaos, could not create art in the condition of the present. They remained devoted to nature and ignored the city where they lived. This return to nature is a form of escapism from the harsh realities of the cities that resulted from the Industrial Revolution.

The second reason was solipsism. In fact, the Romantic solipsism is the result of the adoption of Rousseau's principle that man is by nature good, that is, the belief that what is special in a man is to be valued over the conventions of society. This idea led to a belief that the self is the only certain part of reality, and reality is only a product of the self's awareness. Wordsworth's daffodils are only the product of the poet's self's awareness. From here, it is

54. Ibid., 203.

55. Ibid., 202.

56. Ibid., 203.

57. Ibid., 202.

obvious that "the poet does not merely describe objects of nature, but projects his own subjective state onto natural objects and then describes not the object itself but his own state."⁵⁸

The political, economic, social, and cultural changes favoured the modernist departure from Romanticism. In fact, the urbanization, the horror of the war, and the loss of spirituality increased the modernist sense of alienation from reality and engendered awareness that the Romantic escapist approach to reality is no longer adequate to reflect these changing circumstances. In addition, the radical new social theories that revealed the self as a pawn in a process dominated by an inaccessible unconscious play of forces prompted the Modernist to challenge the Romantic solipsism and to find new methods to get rid of it.

For the Modernists, it is clear that this new world could only be adequately reflected in the most innovative modes of expression. From here, Pound's motto "make it new" became the "most frequent quotation from the period."⁵⁹ However, what this motto came to mean varied from writer to writer. One of the subjects of dispute among the Modernists was the place of tradition. Frank Kermode in his essay "the modern" sums up these contending attitudes toward literary tradition by formulating the division of Modernism into Paleo-modernism and Neo-modernism. According to Kermode, "Paleo-modernism sought to rewrite its past, while Neo-modernism is more blatantly antihistorical."⁶⁰

C- Paleo-modernism: The Tradition of Return

The Paleo-modern claimed that Modernism as a way to cultural health implied a strenuous process of return to Classical culture and to antiquity. In contrast, the Neo-modernists believed that the dependence on the past threatened the mind seeking a link with

58. D. J. Moores, *Mystical Discourse in Wordsworth and Whitman* (Leuven: Peeter, 2006), 58.

59. Rebecca Beasley, *Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 19.

60. Frank Kermode quoted in Astradur Eysteinnsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 106.

the world of the present.

The precursor of Paleo-modernism was the German Classicist scholar Frederick Nietzsche, who used the ancient world to draw some lessons for the modern one. For Nietzsche, modernity lacks direction because it ignores the past. Building a new future depends on the ability to see the continuity with the strengths of the past. His aim is to direct society towards the proper usage of history, which would fulfil its function of serving life: "Historical education is wholesome and promising for the future only in the service of a powerful new life-giving influence."⁶¹ In addition, by emphasizing the view that history is not an end in itself, but rather a means to serving life, Nietzsche underlines how history can be used as a tool for modernity. It is important for him, however, to forget those elements of the past that are not life giving. This ability to forget the past is inherently necessary to the experience of happiness: "Whoever cannot settle on the threshold of the moment forgetful of the whole past... will never know what happiness is."⁶² Therefore, modern man must be able to appropriate the elements of the past that are usable and forget those that are not and therefore are unnecessary and harmful.

One lesson that Nietzsche learns from the past is how to face fragmentation caused by modernity. For him, fragmentation is the result of the Enlightenment's progressive views which disparaged Classical myth as superstitious and as something to be overcome. Science and rationality, as the prevalent myths of modernity, are believed to be alone able to find the answers to all the questions of humanity. He argues that the "prejudice in favour of reason compels us to posit unity, identity, continuity, substance, cause, tangibility, and being – when in fact all of those things are chimerical in a world hopelessly and inevitably beset, or perhaps

61. Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*, trans. Peter Preuss (Indianapolis: Hackett Pub, 1980), 14.

62. *Ibid.*, 9.

set free, by contradiction and chaos."⁶³ However, the emphasis on reason leads to the loss of the instinctive life-giving which is for Nietzsche an important human faculty. Accordingly, whereas the positivistic views of humanity concern themselves with good and evil, Nietzsche believes that people concern themselves with the life-giving. If the instinct is seen as a heresy, since it exists and is therefore life giving, its repression means an attack on the root of existence itself.

To face fragmentation, modern society is in need of a new myth that recognizes both the rational and the instinctive. Ancient Greek culture with its rich mythology provides the best example to follow. *The Birth of Tragedy* presents a new theory of the origins of Classical Greek culture. Nietzsche believes that Greek culture could best be understood as resulting from a conflict between two central principles of the Apollonian and the Dionysian. The Apollonian was represented by Apollo, the god of the sun and order. The Dionysian was represented by Dionysus, the god of wine and intoxication. The Apollonian was a drive to create clarity and order. It was "the belief in the explicability of nature and in knowledge as a panacea."⁶⁴ It is the "shell of logical schematism"⁶⁵ through which the Apollonian drive tried to redeem the horrors of the real world by giving it the illusion of order and beauty thus making it tolerable. The philosophies of Socrates and Plato with their "blind faith in logic at the expense of art"⁶⁶ represented the Apollonian realm.

63. Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, quoted in Peter Marden, *The Authoritarian Interlude: Democracy, Values and the Politics of Hubris* (Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), 64.

64 Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Clifton P. Fadiman (New York: Dover Publications, 1995), 61.

65. Joan Stambaugh, *The Other Nietzsche* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 18.

66. Ibid.

On the other hand, Nietzsche criticizes Socrates and Plato "for bringing this rationality to excess, silencing the other aspects of life."⁶⁷ Among these aspects are the Dionysian qualities which represented "the most savage natural instincts [which] were unleashed,"⁶⁸ and which encompassed spontaneity, irrationality, and the rejection of discipline. Nietzsche takes these qualities to be characteristic of the Hellenic world as a whole (at least prior to Plato) and its human values: "The delight in drunkenness, delight in cunning, revenge, envy, slander, obscenity—in everything which the Greeks recognized as human and therefore built into the structure of society and custom. The wisdom of their institutions lies in there being no gulf between good and evil, black and white. . . . Where did the Greeks acquire this freedom? Clearly from Homer." ⁶⁹

Nietzsche's interpretation of history would impact the Modernist writers in many ways. Many Modernists would show indifference to the behaviours and attitudes upheld by contemporary morality, whether positivist or Christian. Aware of conflicts and contradictions, complexities and fragmentation of their societies they turned to the past to create their own myths to bestow meaning on those societies. They drew upon the tradition to adequately express their meaning or experience.

Many American Modernist writers, among them T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound and Hilda Doolittle answered Nietzsche's call for the return to the past, particularly the literary past. Pound resorted to elements from Classical traditions to juxtapose the stable cultures of the past with the superficiality of modern culture, as the following passage from section three of Pound's cantos reveals:

The tea-rose tea-gown etc.

67. Katrin Froese, *Rousseau and Nietzsche: Toward an Aesthetic Morality* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2001), 98.

68. Nietzsche, *Birth of Tragedy*, 6.

69. Frederick Nietzsche, *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), 90.

Supplants the mousseline of Cos,

The pianola "replaces"

Sappho's barbitos.⁷⁰

The use of quotation marks on "replaces" shows that the new forms of culture cannot "replace" the old ones; they only fulfill a factitious function. The "tea-rose," the "tea-gown," and the "pianola" represent the debased versions of authentic musical instruments. On the other hand, the "mousseline," produced on the Greek island of Cos, and the "barbitos," or lyre, of the ancient Greek poet Sappho are the genuine work of art. While tea-gown is artificial, the simple muslin cloth of the Classical era was pure. Unlike the pianola, which plays from a roll of perforated paper without any contact with the musician, the "barbitos" represents the unity of the human voice and music.

Like Pound, Hilda Doolittle needed Classical mythology to interpret contemporary life. To make sense of her era, she mixes the characters and stories of ancient time with the people and actions occurring in her generation. In section fifteen of the poems "The Walls Do Not Fall," she addresses her audience and stresses that the role of the poet is to bind "all humanity / to ancient wisdom / to antiquity."⁷¹ To accomplish this task, she urges the poets to give a historical sense to concrete objects since their meanings are timeless:

our joy is unique, to us,
rape, knife, cup, wheat
are symbols in eternity,
and every concrete object
has abstract value, is timeless

70. Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems* (New York: New Directions, 1957), 8.

71. Hilda Doolittle, *Trilogy* (New York: New Directions, 1998), 15.

in the dream parallel.⁷²

In the same poem, she reveals her optimism that the civilisation can counteract the violence of the war through the healing power of writing. Addressing the sword, she reminds it that its "Triumph, however exultant, / must one day be over, / in the beginning / was the Word."⁷³ In the following passage, H.D refers to mythological figures credited with inventing writing in order to suggest how writing may transcend death. These figures include the Egyptian Thoth, the Greek Hermes, and the Roman Mercury:

beyond death; Mercury, Hermes, Thoth
invented the script, letters, palette;
the indicated flute or lyre-notes
on papyrus or parchment
are magic, indelibly stamped
on the atmosphere somewhere,
forever; remember.⁷⁴

The reference to figures belonging to different eras and cultures implies that words are immortal, and "we take them with us / beyond death."⁷⁵ Despite the devastation caused by the weapons of war, writing and civilisation will survive.

D-Neo-modernism: Against Tradition

The Paleo-modernists' reliance on European traditions, tradition grounded outside of America, to interpret the present ended up with the same sense of strangeness and even escapism that the Romantic poetry suffered from. Accordingly, many other American poets, among them Wallace Stevens, Hart Crane, and William Carlos Williams sought to

72. Ibid.

73. Ibid., 10.

74. Ibid.

75. Ibid

disassociate their work from the appeal to tradition. They were the poets that Kermode calls the Neo-modernists. For them, relying on tradition means commitment to what is distant and abstract from the contemporary American conditions. The following quotation from Williams explains the main differences between the two groups: "I have maintained from the first that Eliot and Pound by virtue of their hypersensitivity (which is their greatness) were too quick to find a culture (the English continental) readymade for their assertions. They ran from something else, something cruder but, at the same time, newer, more dangerous but heavy with rewards for the sensibility that could reap them."⁷⁶ This passage contains Williams' argument against the direction in which the Paleo-modernists had guided modern poetry. The "something" European that Pound, Dolittle and others sought is alien to America. The verb "ran" implies that any reliance on tradition other than American is seen as a form of escapism. More importantly, for Williams, American culture which is "newer" is also rewarding.

To establish a viable American tradition, the American Neo-modernists focused on two principles: the distrust of history and the trust in American space. In this respect, William Carlos Williams in a letter to Kay Boyle states, "You know, I think, enough of me to understand that I have no belief in the continuity of history. To me the classic lives now just as it did then—or not at all. . . . Everything we know is a local virtue—if we know it at all."⁷⁷

These poets found inspiration in the writings of Walt Whitman and Ralph Waldo Emerson who were the fathers of the authentic American poetry because of their attempt to produce works that would distinguish American literature from the literary tradition of Europe. Yet American Poetry had been produced for many centuries by Native

76. William Carlos Williams, quoted in Harold Kaplan, *Poetry, Politics, and Culture: Argument in the Work of Eliot, Pound, Stevens* (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 10.

77. William Carlos Williams, *The Selected Letters of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions Publishing, 1957), 130.

Americans and since the seventeenth century by European immigrants and African captives.⁷⁸

In his influential essay "The Poet," Ralph Waldo Emerson laments the absence of a true American poet:

I look in vain for the poet whom I describe. We do not, with sufficient plainness, or sufficient profoundness, address ourselves to life, nor dare we chant our own times and social circumstance. If we filled the day with bravery, we should not shrink from celebrating it . . . We have yet had no genius in America, with tyrannous eye, which knew the value of our incomparable materials, and saw, in the barbarism and materialism of the times, another carnival of the same gods whose picture he so much admires in Homer.⁷⁹

In the same essay, he observed that "the experience of each new age requires a new confession, and the world seems always waiting for its poet."⁸⁰ In Emerson's view, the poet that America was waiting for would have an entirely new subject matter, for "Our log-rolling, our stumps and their politics, our fisheries, our Negroes, and Indians, our boasts, and our repudiations, the wrath of rogues, and the pusillanimity of honest men, the Northern trade, the Southern planting, the western clearing, Oregon and Texas, are yet unsung."⁸¹ Yet he rhapsodizes, "America is a poem in our eyes; its ample geography dazzles the imagination; and it will not wait long for metres."⁸²

Emerson called for America's cultural independence which can be reached only through

78. For example, Joel Barlow, in his *Columbiad*, made the first attempt to begin an American poetic tradition suitable for the American experience to create an American epic. Although the subject matter of the poem is America as it tells the story of a hero who embarks on a tale of the progress of freedom in the America, he heavily uses European traditional epic devices, such as a focus on superhuman activities and epic couplets.

79. Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Essays and Lectures* (Lawrence, KS: Digireads.com Publishing, 2009), 240.

80. Ibid, 231.

81. Ibid, 240.

82. Ibid.

writing new poetry based on the American reality rather than tradition. It is this kind of poetry that would define the American character:

Our age is retrospective. It builds the sepulchres of the fathers. It writes biographies, histories, and criticism. The foregoing generations beheld God and nature face to face; we, through their eyes. Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe? Why should not we have poetry of insight and not of tradition, and a religion by revelation to us, and not the history of theirs?

. . .

The sun shines to-day also. There is more wool and flax in the fields. There are new lands, new men, new thoughts. Let us demand our own works and laws and worship.⁸³

However, to establish a typically American literature was not an easy task. In this context, Philip Freneau, the poet who fought in the American Revolution, warned that "the first [American independence] was accomplished in about seven years, the latter [Artistic independence] will not be completely affected, perhaps, in as many centuries."² For his part, Brander Matthews, professor of English at the Columbia University, argues that the use of English language by American writers makes their literature inseparable from English literature: "English literature is the record of the thoughts and the feelings and the acts of the great English-speaking race. . . . It is no matter what the nationality of the author may be, whether he is a citizen of the United States or a subject of the British crown; if he uses the English language he contributes to English literature."⁸⁴ Similarly, Henry S. Pancoast considered American literature as a "continuation of English literature"⁸⁵ not only because of

83. Ibid.,7.

84. Brander Matthews, quoted in Pavel Drábek, et al., *Theory and Practice in English Studies* (Brno: Masaryk University, 2003), 26

85. Henry S. Pancoast, quoted in Cary D. Wintz, *Analysis and Assessment, 1980-1994* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 128.

the English language that they inherited from England, "but also because of the English character of their civilization."⁸⁶ A further difficulty stems from the absence of an established American literary tradition which may provide poets with readymade figurative language. Therefore, any attempt to formulate a new poetic language for American poetry "would derive too many of its words from the roots used to signify canals, railroads, and steamboats."⁸⁷

Due to the newness of their tradition, American poets face more difficulties than their English peers. In this respect, Christopher Beach states that "in England, for example, a twentieth-century poet could refer to the work of Victorians like Robert Browning and Matthew Arnold to the poetry of Romantics like William Wordsworth and John Keats, and from there back to the even more firmly established canon of John Milton, William Shakespeare, and Geoffrey Chaucer."⁸⁸

Despite these difficulties, Walt Whitman took great pains to answer Emerson's call. Whitman shared Emerson's optimism that the United States would be able to produce great works of art and great people. In the following passage from *In Democratic Vistas* Whitman echoes Emerson's desire to produce a specific American poetry:

Our fundamental want to-day in the United States, with closest, amplest reference to present conditions, and to the future, is of a class, and the clear idea of a class, of native authors, literatures, far different, far higher in grade, than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with our occasions, lands, permeating the whole mass of American mentality, taste, belief, breathing into it a new breath of life, giving it decision, affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage, with results inside and underneath the elections of Presidents, or Congresses—

86. Ibid.

87. William Cullen Bryant, quoted in Christopher Beach, *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 14.

88. Ibid., 4.

radiating, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing . . . a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States.⁸⁹

Like Emerson and Whitman, William Carlos Williams aimed to forge a poetics more fully responsive to the American cultural and material impulses. Williams explains this endeavour in a letter to Horace Gregory: "our chief occupation as artists, singly and jointly, should be the clarification of form, new alignments, in our own language and culture."⁹⁰ One condition to achieve this goal is to free poetry from the shackles of tradition. In 1943, he wrote to James Laughlin that tradition makes up "the dry mass of those principles of knowledge and culture which the universities ... have cloistered and made a cult"⁹¹ linking tradition and academia together in the smothering of poetry. As a result, poetry has frozen:

the craft
subverted by thought, rolling up, let
him beware lest he turn to no more than
the writing of stale poems . . .
Minds like beds always made up,
(more stony than a shore)
unwilling or unable.⁹²

Owing to the poet's mind that still obeys the principle of tradition, poetry is in danger of becoming stale. The following passage from *The Embodiment of Knowledge* clarify this idea: "The classics have done something to the words. They have fixed them into an apparent

89. Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas* (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 2009), 5-6.

90. Williams, *The Selected Letters*, 226.

91. *Ibid.*, 214.

92. William Carlos Williams, *Selected Poems*, ed. Charles Tomlinson (New York: New Directions, 1985), 260.

building which can do nothing but crumble and disappear like the Parthenon . . . Fixed in words-in the very classics are many-most if not all of the stupidities which enthrall us. . . . To read, while we are imbibing the wisdom of the ages, we are at the same time imbibing the death and the imbecility, the enslaving rudeness of the ages." ⁹³

In addition to freeing poetry from tradition, the poet has also to focus on American local places. In this vein, he states, "There is a certain position of the understanding anterior to all systems of thought, as well as of fact and of deed—that is common to all: it is that in which the thinker places himself on the near side of reality—abjures the unknowable and begins *within* a certain tacitly limited field of human possibility to seek wisdom."⁹⁴

Producing a poem that focuses on the contemporary American experience feeds his desire to liberate poetic diction from archaic forms. In fact, one of the most distinctive innovative aspects of Williams' work is the use of everyday language, including slang, colloquial speech, and words with distinctly un-poetic associations. Williams wanted to use the language really used by Americans. "The Market" deals with the theme of American capitalism in general:

whose cars are about
the finest on
the market today –
And so it comes
to motor cars –
which is the son.⁹⁵

93. William Carlos Williams, *The Embodiment of Knowledge* (New York: New Directions, 1977), 107.

94. *Ibid.*, 132.

95. Williams, *Selected Letter*, 74.

The presence of the car as an essential decorative element of the landscape creates an American modern June morning. Therefore, the description of cars gives the poem an even more modern quality that stresses the poem's departure from past literary subjects and diction.

However, William's unceasing rejection of tradition inscribes him unwittingly in the very Romantic tradition that he sets out to reject because of its European origin. Williams wrote that "He [the poet] is usually in a rebellion against the world, I think. I think that's a rule."⁹⁶ This poet's "continuity of upheaval"⁹⁷ to install his own aesthetics as the new tradition is what Harold Bloom calls "Romantic epicycle."⁹⁸ It is the same reason that makes Stevens call Williams "a Romantic poet" (WSCPP, 98), that is, because Williams "has spent his life rejecting the accepted sense of things." (WSCPP, 98) Williams' Romantic impulse can be seen in *Paterson* when the library and its books that symbolize the stagnant tradition as a "veil / closing about the mind . . . cutting the mind away"⁹⁹ is burned down. This vivid image of the burning library represents the toppling of Classicism in favour of Romanticism. Yet both traditions are originally European.

William Carlos Williams was not the only follower of Whitman's tradition to create a typical American poetry. Hart Crane was among those who tried to make Whitman's project of creating an authentic American aesthetic possible. As a response to Eliot's "The Wasteland," Crane wrote "The Bridge" to make a decisive turn towards the contemporary local American space in order to show his departure from the international traditions reflected in Eliot's "The Wasteland." In A letter to Gorham Munson, Crane shows his intention to differentiate his poetic sensibility from Eliot's: "However, I take Eliot as a point of departure

96. William Carlos Williams, "An Interview with William Carlos Williams," *The Massachusetts Review* 14, no. 1 (1973): 137.

97. Harold Bloom, *A Map of Misreading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35.

98. *Ibid.*

99. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (New York: Penguin, 1983), 101.

toward an almost complete reverse of direction. His pessimism is amply justified, in his own case. But I would apply as much of his erudition and technique as I can absorb and assemble toward a more positive, or (if [I] must put it so in a sceptical age) ecstatic goal."¹⁰⁰

This excerpt reveals Crane's rejection of Eliot's emphasis on a cultural past without the present as the source of value for new art. Eliot's pessimism that Crane wants to use as a point of departure to make a complete reverse of direction suggests Crane's attempt to find an affirmation of the value inherent in the conditions of modern America. The focus in Crane's "The Bridge" is on the contemporary landmark of the Brooklyn Bridge to reflect the prevailing conditions and ways of life.

However, Crane recognizes the role of capitalism in shaping a cultural confusion as part of the immediate conditions and ways of life in America. The following lines from "The Bridge" show a cultural confusion as a surplus of names and naming driven by consumerism:

Stick your patent name on a signboard
brother -- all over -- going west -- young man
Tintex -- Japalac -- Certain-teed Overalls ads
and lands sakes!¹⁰¹

The confusion initiated by names related to trade and manufacture such as a dye "Tintex"(dye), Japalac (a varnish)", and "teed Overalls" (a brand of overalls) is deepened by technology, with its "telegraphic night coming on"¹⁰² and its "fast express rushing by."¹⁰³ The inclusion of such elements shows Crane's commitment to portraying his contemporary

100. Hart Crane, quoted in Brian M. Reed, *Hart Crane: After His Lights* (Alabama: University of Alabama Press, 2006), 161.

101. Hart Crane, *The Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose of Hart Crane*, ed. Brom Weber (New York: Anchor Books, 1966), 62.

102. *Ibid.*

103. *Ibid.*

cultural conditions but with crucial awareness of the potential confusion inherent in these conditions. This confusion represents another challenge that "The Bridge" must face to affirm relevance to its era.

Although Crane's use of the Brooklyn Bridge suggests an emphasis on local experience rather than traditional authority, his desire for cultural relevance in his work requires some purely American connections. Crane takes American figures such as Columbus, Pocahontas, and Whitman, adapting them to fit his version of American culture in the early twentieth century. This move constitutes an appeal to a tradition relevant to America to construct a distinct American culture independent from Europe. He further disassociates his work from the ideological appeals to European tradition made by Pound.

Crane's use of Columbus as an instrument to better explain his challenge to write the poem that tackles the cultural confusion of his era. In "The Bridge," Columbus's situation is similar to that of the poet for both have discovered a truth that they are presently attempting to translate into a "word."¹⁰⁴ Columbus is trying to bring back the word of his discovery of Cathay, and despite his failure to see that what he has discovered is the New World, he insists on finding a safe way to bring back the news of his discovery: "I bring you back Cathay. . . . The Chan's great continent."¹⁰⁵ Though untrue, Columbus's account becomes decisive in defining an American identity. The act of naming for Columbus and the act of writing poetry for Crane, by going beyond their failure to represent to become culturally meaningful, would likely provide Crane further impetus for facing the challenge of writing poetry credible to the American present in "The Bridge."

The reason for Crane's doubt about his success to achieve his goal in "The Bridge" is known later in the poem as he fails to find the assurance of continuity between Whitman's

104. Ibid., 48.

105. Ibid.

cultural vision and his own confronting the technological marvel of the airplane in the section, "Cape Hatteras." In this section, Crane's desire to affiliate his work with the American tradition of Whitman is seen in the epigraph from his poem, "Passage to India": "The seas all crossed, weathered the capes, the voyage done."¹⁰⁶ In "Passage to India," Whitman himself struggles to define a cultural present that is in harmony with the past. Whitman seeks to include in one continuum the great mechanical and technological achievements of the present, such as the building of the Suez Canal, the laying of the Atlantic cable, and the completion of the transcontinental railroad along with those of the past like "the antique ponderous Seven."¹⁰⁷ This progression makes "present after all but the growth out of the past."¹⁰⁸

However, in spite of alluding in this section's epigraph to "Passage to India," in which Whitman asserts a continual progression from past to present, Crane fails to show a confident voice that would connect the different technological products. He doubts whether his historical moment can be filled with as much significance as it was in Whitman's era. Fearing that the changes in his own time are too tremendous to be viewed as a continuous progression from Whitman's time, Crane incorporates into his poem the airplane which was the most significant technological invention of his era. Yet the airplane sends "rancorous grenades whose screaming petals carve us / Wounds that we wrap with theorems sharp as hail!"¹⁰⁹

Owing to these inconsistencies, as he approached the completion of the poem, Crane grows concerned with a feeling of failure to achieve an acceptable unity and coherence. His belief in the necessity to focus on the physical and local qualities of the Brooklyn Bridge and to keep his belief in an American culture grounded on historical and material facts seems at odds with the poem's move toward the transcendent vision of its final section, "Atlantis."

106. *Ibid.*, 87.

107. Walt Whitman, *Works of Walt Whitman*, 372.

108. *Ibid.*, 372.

109. Crane, *Complete Poems and Selected Letters and Prose*, 91.

Unlike the previous sections of the poem where the bridge is described as a real object in the external world, the bridge in "Atlantis" becomes a "steeled Cognizance"¹¹⁰ which implies its wholly imaginary and symbolic quality. The notion of a clear movement away from material reality and toward a symbolic bridge is an iron-clad proof of Crane's failure to keep his commitment to the immediacy of the physical world. The shift from the material bridge to the metaphysical bridge in the section constitutes the motive for Crane to begin with the epigraph to "Atlantis"¹¹¹ taken from Plato: "Music is then the knowledge of that which relates to love in harmony and system."¹¹²

The reference to Plato and his "Atlantis" leads to a second element that Crane fails to maintain in "The Bridge": the historical realities of the New World. In addition to Plato's mythical island of the epigraph, this section is fraught with allusions to Tyre and Troy, Jason and Aeolus, and other symbols drawn from the European tradition. Thus, Crane is trapped in the tradition he desperately wants to escape and his aesthetics in "The Bridge" integrates elements from European Classical cultures urged by Eliot and Pound whose attachment to the past he disagreed with.

From the above discussion, it is important to retain that though the Modernists shared the similar goal of facing the Romantic self-expression and escapism to capture the changes that occurred in the twentieth century, they did not agree on how to attain this goal. From here, Modernism can be divided into two conflicting groups. The first group led by Pound and Doolittle relied on the established European literary tradition to validate their work. The other group led by Williams and Crane attempted to explore the uniquely American cultural circumstances of the era without resort to the European tradition.

110. Ibid., 115.

111. The title "Atlantis" refers to a mythical lost island that supposedly sank into the ocean in a single day, and was first mentioned by Plato in his dialogues.

112. Ibid., 113.

E- Eliot's Paleo-modernism Versus Stevens' Neo-modernism

a- Eliot's and Stevens' Biographies

Stevens' focus on the American space places him in the tradition of Williams whereas Eliot's defence of the European tradition associates him with the group of Pound. But before moving to their poetic theory and practice, it is profitable to investigate the similarities and differences in their personal backgrounds that could explain why they produced similar and different works.

Stevens was born on October 2, 1879, in Reading while T.S. Eliot, Thomas Stearns Eliot, was born in St. Louis Missouri in 1888. Though they were rough contemporaries, they did not know each other. To William Van O'Connor's claim that Stevens knew Eliot "through correspondence,"¹¹³ Stevens replied, "as a matter of fact I don't know him at all and have no correspondence whatever with him"¹¹⁴ One reason that explains this lack of contact is the fact that Eliot did not stay in America but travelled to France, England and Italy, and became a British citizen. It was also there in Europe where he built a reputation. In contrast, Stevens "accepted his [American] origins in a way few American writers ever accept them."¹¹⁵ Except for a couple short-term trips to Cuba, Stevens never left the United States.¹¹⁶

Despite these differences, Eliot and Stevens' biographies reveal many common features. Both came from a similar Anglo-Saxon cultural background. Whereas Eliot's family had prominent New England roots,¹¹⁷ Stevens' parents were of Dutch and German ancestry.¹¹⁸

113. William Van O'Connor, quoted in Leon Surette, *The Modern Dilemma: Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, and Humanism* (Québec: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008), 3.

114. Ibid.

115. Thomas F. Lombardi, *Wallace Stevens and the Pennsylvania Keystone: The Influence of Origins on his Life and Poetry* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 1996), 21.

116. Fabio Akcelrud Durão, *Modernism and Coherence* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 65.

117. Russell Elliott Murphy, *Critical Companion to T. S. Eliot* (New York: An imprint of Infobase Publishing, 2007), 3.

118. Lombardi, *Wallace Stevens and the Pennsylvania Keystone*, 39.

Both Stevens and Eliot received classical education in Greek and Latin. Eliot was educated at Smith Academy in St. Louis until his 16th year where he studied Greek and Latin.¹¹⁹ He continued to study Latin and Greek literature and philosophy at Milton Academy in Milton, where he attended his last year of secondary education in 1905.¹²⁰ At Harvard, as an undergraduate in 1906, he continued to study Latin, Greek literature and philosophy.¹²¹ Stevens was also educated in classics (including both Latin and Greek) at Reading Boys' High School from 1893 to 1897 and at Harvard from 1897 to 1900.¹²²

Concerning religion, both poets came from protestant families but neither could maintain his faith in Protestantism in the face of the late nineteenth and early twentieth religious scepticism. Eliot derived his interest in religion from his grandfather, William Greenleaf Eliot, who left New England for St. Louis in 1860 and established a Unitarian church there.¹²³ However, in 1927, he turned to the Anglican Church. Like Eliot, Stevens was raised in a Christian family. His mother "sent [him] to parochial elementary schools and to Sunday-school classes; sang hymns with the family as she accompanied herself on the piano on Sunday evenings, and read Bible stories to [him] at bedtime. Stevens in adolescence participated in the sacred service as an altar boy and, moving toward manhood, sang hymns himself, . . . for two years in the choir of Reading's Christ Cathedral."¹²⁴ Yet at Harvard, he gave up his orthodoxy and recognised that art was the most suitable candidate substitute for Christianity.

119. Alzina Stone Dale, *T. S. Eliot: The Philosopher Poet* (Wheaton: Harold Shaw Publishers, 1988), 26.

120. Dushiant Kumar Rampal, *Poetic Theory and Practice of T. S. Eliot* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1996), 3.

121. *Ibid.*

122. Joan Richardson, "Wallace Stevens: A Likeness," *The Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*, ed. John N. Serio (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 10.

123. Murphy, *Critical Companion to T. S. Eliot*, 514.

124. Richardson, "Wallace Stevens: A Likeness," 10.

In terms of profession, the two poets were successful executives in the respectable business. Eliot worked as a clerk at Lloyds Bank in London.¹²⁵ In addition to writing poetry and editing it for various publications, Eliot founded the *Quarterly Criterion* in 1922 editing it until its end in 1939. Eliot was also a successful head of a British publishing firm Faber and Faber. Like Eliot, Stevens had a successful professional career outside poetry. After leaving Harvard in 1900, "Stevens first tried his hand briefly at journalism, working as a reporter for the New York Tribune."¹²⁶ In 1909, on his father's advice, he entered the New York Law School.¹²⁷ In 1904, he passed his bar examinations and was admitted to practice."¹²⁸ However, he failed in his law practice and joined the Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company in 1916.¹²⁹ He had also been appointed vice president of the Hartford Insurance Company in 1934.¹³⁰

A look at these biographical facts shows that their personal backgrounds contain many elements in common. Both came from the same Anglo-Saxon origins, were born and grew up in protestant households, and were educated in Greek and Latin cultures. However, Stevens and Eliot's poetical attitudes, at least in terms of theory, let out that Eliot and Stevens are diametrical opposites or to put it in Stevens' words "dead opposites." Eliot's defence of the European tradition makes him very different from Stevens who claimed to create poetry from a blank mind free from all preconceptions of the past.

b- Eliot's Poetic Theory: In Defence of Classicism

125. Joseph Maddrey, *The Making of T.S. Eliot* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2009), 79.

126. Lisa Goldfarb and Bart Eeckhout, *Wallace Stevens, New York, and Modernism* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 7.

127. *Ibid.*, 57.

128. Lombardi, *Wallace Stevens and the Pennsylvania Keystone*, 53.

129. Goldfarb and Eeckhou, *Wallace Stevens, New York, and Modernism*, 24.

130. Richardson, "Wallace Stevens: A Likeness," 19.

Eliot's poetry and prose are concerned with the social consequences of neglecting the cultural inheritance and of the values of that inheritance. The break with the past has engendered intellectual and spiritual emptiness from which modern man enormously suffers. In many of his poems, Eliot emphasizes the break of modern society with its past and the sense of conflict that results from this rupture by means of images from the past and the present. These images contribute to contrast the happy ordered stable lives of the past with the life of futility, immorality and impotence that characterize the modern world.

In fact, Eliot's passion for order lies at the basis of his Classicist attitude, starting with his rejection of Romantic literature that asserts the individual will as the only measure of judgment. In his "Preface to *Homage to John Dryden*," Eliot emphasizes that the Classical school achieved "elegance and a dignity absent from the popular and pretentious verse of the Romantic poets."¹³¹ In another essay, "the Function of Criticism," he points out that the difference between the two schools is that between "the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic,"¹³² a fact which shows that Eliot appreciates the completeness and formal perfection of Classical poetry whose balance could be achieved through discipline and authority. Thus, Eliot's obsession with Classicism stems from his desire for order which can be achieved only through the poet's impersonality, his recognition of tradition as an authority, and his reliance on his individual talent.

Eliot rejects the Romantic view that emotion is the fundamental condition of poetry. He believes that "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."¹³³ Instead of expressing

131. T.S Eliot, *Homage to John Dryden: Three Essays on Poetry of the Seventeenth Century* (New York: Gordon Press, 1928), 197.

132. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt, Brace Jovanovich, 1950), 15.

133. T.S Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," *The Sacred Wood* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1921), 52-53.

personal emotions, the poet has to transform what is personal into something universal: "the poet has not a personality to express but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experience combine in a peculiar and unexpected ways. Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry, and those important in the poetry may play quite a negligible part in the man, the personality." ¹³⁴

To develop further his theory of the impersonality of poetry, Eliot compares the mind of the poet to a catalyst and the process of poetic creation to the process of a chemical reaction. The catalyst represents the mind of the individual while the two gases represent the fragmented experiences. The catalyst that initiates and enables the chemical reaction to take place remains unchanged.¹³⁵ In a like manner, the mind of the individual forms fragmented emotions into new wholes which contain no trace of the poet's mind. Thus, this metaphor borrowed from chemistry implies that the poet should not incorporate his souls in his work. In Eliot's words, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates."¹³⁶

Too much emphasis, indeed, upon the personality and the individuality of the poet can prevent the artist from recognizing the order and unity provided by tradition. Accordingly, the artist must surrender to tradition throughout his career by allowing his poetic sensibility to be molded by the past. For Eliot, the best part of a poet's work is that which shows the continual influence of the writers of the past: "Whereas if we approach a poet without this prejudice, we

134. Ibid., 50-51.

135. Ibid., 48-49.

136. Ibid., 48.

shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual part of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously." ¹³⁷

Eliot gives a new meaning and magnificence to tradition when he provides it with historical sense. According to Eliot, tradition is something more than the dead works of the past. The identification of tradition with a historical sense serves to confirm its importance in evaluating the works and the function of poets and poetry: "The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order."¹³⁸

This larger personality is made of the "dead poets and artists,"¹³⁹ which is part of a still larger entity which he calls "the mind of Europe." That mind is what the poet "learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind."¹⁴⁰ Thus, "the mind of Europe" serves as a guide for the poet throughout his own critical career. Eliot further elaborates, "No poet, no artist has a complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone, you must set him from contrast and comparison among the dead."¹⁴¹

Though Eliot emphasizes that the poet's self-realization depends on his relationship with the tradition, the poet's individual talent cannot be denied. Individual talent is needed not only to acquire the sense of tradition but also to modify it. Eliot ratifies the dynamic nature of tradition: "The existing monument form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is

137. Ibid., 4.

138. Ibid., 68.

139. Ibid., 69.

140. Ibid., 70.

141. Ibid., 44.

complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art towards the whole are readjusted; and this in conformity between the old and the new."¹⁴²

c- Stevens' Poetic Theory: The Imagination Pressing Back Against Reality

If Eliot definitely and clearly rejects Romanticism, Stevens' reaction to this movement is problematic and ambiguous. In the following lines from "Sailing After Lunch," Stevens addresses the question of how prevalent the Romantic should be in literature:

The romantic should be there.

It ought to be everywhere.

But the romantic must never remain. (WSCPP, 99)

Stevens is attracted to Romantic spontaneity and rejection of strict literary conventions that offer the possibility to continuously make new poetry. In a letter to Ronald Latimer, he explains the reason behind this statement: "poetry is essentially romantic, only the romantic of poetry must be something constantly new and, therefore, just the opposite of what is spoken of as the romantic. Without this new romantic, one gets nowhere; with it, the most casual things take on transcendence, and the poet rushes brightly, and so on. What one is always doing is keeping the romantic pure: eliminating from it what people speak of as the romantic" (LWS, 677).

Stevens shares with the Romantics the additional belief that by the means of the imagination the poet can bridge the split between reality and the self. On account of this concern, many critics place him in the Romantic tradition. Yet, he rejects the Romantic imagination which tends to result in a divorce of the imagination from reality. This Romantic detachment from reality is the reason for his comment that "romantic inevitably falsifies"

142. Ibid., 44-45.

(WSCPP, 780). He further explains that "the imagination is the liberty of the mind. The romantic is a failure to make of that liberty. . . . The achievement of the romantic . . . lies in minor wish-fulfilments and it is incapable of abstraction" (WSCPP, 728). M. H. Abrams describes the project and the limits of Romanticism as follows: "It was at the same time an attempt to overcome the sense of man's alienation from the world by healing the cleavage between subject and object. . . . To establish that man shares his own life with nature was to reanimate the dead universe of the materialists and at the same time most effectively to tie man back into his milieu."¹⁴³

In fact, the Romantic poet, according to Stevens, fails to achieve a union between reality and the imagination. This failure can be noticed in much of Wordsworth's poetry. Whereas "I wandered Lonely as a Cloud" celebrates the ecstasy afforded by harmony of nature and man, in other instances one side dominates over the other. "At the crossing of the Alps" describes the power of the imagination which usurps his consciousness, creating the "invisible world":

This is the very spirit in which they [the higher minds] deal
With all the objects of the universe:
.....
But quickened, roused, and made thereby more fit
hold communion with the invisible world.¹⁴⁴

The poet attempts to fulfil his desire for a marriage between the imagination and nature, but this desire is only attained with the usurpation of reality by the imagination. The imagination takes over reality and the poet finds himself cherishing the fallacious world of his imagination in which reality implicitly disappears. The supremacy of the imagination over reality ends up with a world of dreams and fantasies that denies reality.

143. M. H. Abrams, *The Mirror and the Lamp: Romantic Theory and the Critical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1953), 65.

144. *Ibid.*, 310.

Rejecting these Romantic attitudes, Stevens stresses that "the imagination is not a free agent. It is not a faculty that functions without reference" (LWS, 677). The reference is reality or the physical world. The second section of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" affirms that the imagination loses its solidity when the imagined object does not belong to the physical world. This section supposes the "houses" to have no reality except as they are "composed of ourselves" in the mind. If the houses existed only in the operations of the mind, they would be without substance, "impalpable" and "transparent":

Suppose these houses are composed of ourselves,
So that they become an impalpable town, full of
Impalpable bell, transparencies of sound,
Sounding in transparent dwellings of the self,
Impalpable habitations that seem to move
In the movement of the colors of the mind. (WSCPP, 397)

Consequently, the mind becomes "uncertain," "indefinite," and "confused" in its transformations of even the clearest fact, such as "the clearest bells."

On the other hand, Stevens rejects the world of the absolute fact or a reality apprehended without the projection of human imagination. The defeat of the imagination by reality shows the problem of sustaining an ideal world. There are many occasions in Wordsworth's *Prelude* in which reality overwhelms the imagination. The following lines illustrate well this case:

That day we first
Beheld the summit of Mount Blanc, and grieved
'Ib have a soulless image on the eye
Which had usurped upon a living thought

That never more could be.¹⁴⁵

The speaker is thoroughly overwhelmed by the soulless image of Mont Blanc. His imagination fails to press back against the pressure of reality exerted by this mountain. The usurpation of the imagination by reality shows the dominance of reality over the imagination. The world of the absolute fact or a reality apprehended without the projection of human imagination becomes chaotic. Thus, the poet finds himself in the position of "intelligent men / at the center of the unintelligible" (WSCPP, 422) and consequently alienated from this very reality.

This Romantic feeling of alienation dominates in the "Disillusionment of Ten o'clock," a poem whose title points at people deprived of the illusion created by a healthy imagination. All of them wear white "night-gowns" (WSCPP, 52) representing some kind of uniform to show how they want to fit in and to be part of the crowd. Then, Stevens plays with color symbols. White does not refer just to the "spooks" (WSCPP, 52), but also to people's minds which are completely blank and with no proper ideas and creativity. These people are unable to live in the colored world of the imagination:

None are green,
Or purple with green rings
Or green with yellow rings
Or yellow with blue rings
None of them are strange. (WSCPP, 52)

For Stevens, poetry is the interplay between reality and the imagination; it is the power of the poet's imagination to transform this reality. To attain this transformation, according to Stevens, poetry should fulfil three conditions: abstraction, change and pleasure which the titles of the three sections of his long poem "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" suggest: "It

145. Wordsworth, *Complete Poetical Works*, 479.

Must Be Abstract," "It Must Change," and "It Must Give Pleasure." Thus, the mind, which is a point of creative power, must become a blank mind free of preconceptions to match up perfectly with reality. This blank mind is compared to a "listener, who listens in the snow" and who is nothing himself:

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is. (WSCPP 8)

Like the snowman, the listener knows winter with a mind of winter and its strictest reality, stripped of all previous knowledge and feeling. Stevens terms this stripping of characteristics and this expelling of images as seeing "the first idea." In an attempt to explain what he means by the "first idea," Stevens says: "If you take the varnish and dirt of generations off a picture, you see it in its first idea. If you think about the world without its varnish and dirt, you are a thinker of the first idea" (LWS, 427).

To get rid of reality with "its varnish and dirt," the poet's imaginative power should transform the bare ugly reality into an embellished reality. This is where Stevens parts with eighteenth century, as the rationalist tradition values reason and empirical observation as the only reliable source of information about the world and about human beings. John Locke's theory of the human mind and epistemology holds that the mind is a non-distorting mirror to the outside world. Like a blank sheet upon which experience inscribes ideas, it is passive to the outside world. From here, poetry's only legitimate role is to depict reality as it is. To quote Alexander Pope

True expression, like th' unchanging sun,
Clears and improves whate'er it shines upon,

It guilds all objects, but it alters none.¹⁴⁶

Stevens rejects this model of relation between the mind and the outside world. He claims that the human mind is capable of abstracting reality. Louis L. Martz states that "by abstract Stevens seems rather to imply a quality of being taken out, abstracted in the root sense, from that world we call the outer universe: something concrete taken out of this and taken onto the mind."¹⁴⁷ What is taken into the mind is abstract and it has no correspondence in the real world. Stevens argues that "the fictive abstract is as immanent in the mind of the poet, as the idea of God is immanent in the mind of the theologian" (LWS, 434).

In addition, Stevens rejects Locke's view that what is inside, like the imaginative thinking, is suspect because it brings a false view of what is real. Locke's concrete dualism, which makes the word idea stand indifferently for thing and thought, exalts reason but not imagination. On the other hand, the poetic world of Stevens, or his *mundo*, as he likes to call it, lies, as he puts it in *The Necessary Angel*, beyond "the gaunt world of reason"; it is "the *mundo* of the imagination in which the imaginative man delights and not the gaunt world of reason. The pleasure is the pleasure of powers that create a truth that cannot be arrived at by the reason alone, a truth that the poet recognizes by sensation" (WSCPP, 679).

Stevens rejects this Lockean concrete understanding of dualism which satisfies only the reason without the imagination. According to Stevens, "the poet, in order to fulfill himself, must accomplish a poetry that satisfies both the reason and the imagination. . . . Thus poetry, which we have been thinking of as at least the equal of philosophy, may be its superior" (WSCPP, 668).

146. Alexander Pope, *Alexander Pope: Selected Poetry and Prose* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15.

147. Louis L. Martz, "Wallace Stevens: The World as Meditation," *Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marie Borroff (New York: Prentice Hall INC, 1962), 145.

To get rid of the "Varnish and dirt of generations,"¹⁴⁸ the poet must guard himself against the past. According to Stevens, the dependence on the past threatens the mind's seeking to link with the world of the present; therefore, Stevens strives "to clear away all that intervenes between the perceiving mind and the world as presently perceived."¹⁴⁹ In "Dutch Graves in Bucks County," Stevens celebrates a day to day renewal of life which represents a break from history that lets the mind free in agreement with the present:

Know that the past is not part of the present

.....

Freedom is like a man who kills himself

Each night, an incessant butcher. (WSCPP, 260)

The poet must even disassociate himself from his contemporaries in so far as they carry the past onto the present. In "Comedian as the Letter C," Stevens states that the poet's purpose is "To rive away / The shadow of his follows" (WSCPP, 30) in order "To make a new intelligence prevail" (WSCPP, 30).

Thus, Stevens is sceptical about all that comes from the past including Classical myths and Christianity. The poet has to clear away "the monuments . . . that may be called the authorized version of cultural history [which] are an active threat to the mind seeking to relate itself to the world of the present."¹⁵⁰ In "The Pure Good," Stevens writes "the solar chariot is junk" (WSCPP 291). The poet has to get rid of the ancient sun-god that "may interpose itself

148. Ibid., 426.

149. Marie Borroff, "Wallace Stevens: The World and the Poet," *Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marie Barroff (New York: Prentice Hall INC, 1962) 3.

150. Ibid.

between us and the sun, and the names and legends of the constellation may similarly obscure the stars."¹⁵¹

Stevens equally refutes Christianity whose supernatural divinity is only an image that comes "in silent shadows and in dreams" (WSCPP, 53). The real world provides enough compensation for the lost heaven. Even Jesus Christ no longer inspires with the promise of eternal life: "The tomb in Palestine / Is not the porch of spirits lingering. / It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay" (WSCPP, 56).

In addition to abstractness, poetry must fulfil two other closely related conditions: change and pleasure. For Stevens, poetry, to be worth reading, must constantly change. Poetry is "The freshness of transformation"(WSCPP, 344) which is necessary for "the freshness of ourselves" (WSCPP, 344). All that does not change becomes obsolete. The Statue of General Du Puy in "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" becomes "rubbish in the end" (WSCPP 388) because it does not change. The statue represents the stagnant ideal left behind by dynamic history. Stevens writes in *The Necessary Angel*, "It seems, nowadays, what it may very well not have seemed a few years ago, a little overpowering, a little magnificent" (WSCPP, 647). Thus, there is nothing fixed or absolute, and poetry is related to particular periods. In this context, Bonnie Costello points out that "our 'supreme fictions,' our metaphysical inventions, learn their changes less from autonomous compositional laws than from physical surroundings"¹⁵²

Since poetry fulfills the conditions of existence and maturity, of abstraction and change, it is supposed to have ripened enough to give pleasure. It is the irrational moment which gives delight by interweaving the imagination with reality. In the second section of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," the waiting bride presented as "the blue woman" (WSCPP, 647)

151. Ibid.

152. Bonnie Costello, *Shifting Ground: Reinventing Landscape in Modern American Poet* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009), 69.

symbolizes the imagination. In the third section, the groom known as "the lasting visage" (WSCPP, 646) and described as "red with the color of reality"¹⁵³

153. Harold Bloom, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction: A commentary," *Wallace Stevens: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Marie Barroff, 89.

The following three chapters deal with Stevens' and Eliot's works to see whether their poetry reflects their poetic theories. My purpose is to show that Stevens who claimed to begin for the poetry of the age and the vision of his age, and Eliot, "who made to himself a new concept of the past, produced a poetry that came as a reaction to the same literary tradition, including mysticism and legends, Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and John Donne's *Metaphysical Poetry* which are important constituents of "the mind of Europe."

The following chapter discusses Eliot and Stevens's view (WSCPP, 440) legends as a crucial pleasure in the structure and the sense of the poetry. Being the pleasure of reality and the imagination is the pleasure of the poet's knowledge. However, as the poet's true pleasure transcends the limits of the European tradition, Stevens and Eliot have the pleasure of Stevens and Eliot have that find the pleasure not only in the past but in their subject matter. The poet recognizes by sensation" (WSCPP, 679). It is the poet's sensation that offers a manner in which the exercise of the imagination "helps people to live their lives" (WSCPP, 661).

Stevens' denial of the historical legacy in poetry makes him different from Eliot who believes that the artists must be understood and appreciated in relation to those who precede them. For Eliot, the artist has to mix his memory of the past and desire of the present in order to juxtapose the literary past with the context of contemporary life so as to shed a fresh and illuminating light on both the past and the present. On the other hand, Stevens who is profoundly sceptical of history believing in the necessity of always beginning anew and in poetry based on discovery rather than on memory: "To discover an order . . . / Out of nothing" (WSCPP, 349) that comes from tradition.

Chapter Two: Myth as a Structuring Device in Eliot's "The Wasteland" and Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C"

This chapter examines how Eliot and Stevens use myths for structural and thematic purposes. They select a common myth manipulating it more to make it relevant to the present time. Though their methods of using myths are very similar, Eliot's and Stevens' choice of myth reveals fundamental differences. Owing to his Christian sensibility, Eliot often turns to the medieval Christian Grail legend to juxtapose order, unity and spiritual solace of the medieval period with fragmentation, chaos and unbelief of modernity. In this context, Eliot's "The Wasteland" and Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C" are the clearest instance of this practice and have, therefore, been selected for examination. In his poem, Stevens uses the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha whereas Eliot employs the Grail legend.

Though their methods of using myths are very similar, Eliot's and Stevens' choice of myth reveals fundamental differences. In many of his essays, Eliot shows his attachment to Classical mythology. In his "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," he praises James Joyce's use of the Classical myth of Odysseus in his *Ulysses* as a way of giving meaning to futile contemporary

history. However, owing to his Christian sensibility, Eliot turns to the medieval Christian Grail legend to juxtapose order, unity and spiritual solace of the medieval period with fragmentation, chaos and unbelief of modernity.

For his part, Stevens uses myth to question its authenticity and authority. On the other hand, the handling of myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha further belies Stevens' claim that his poetry is a tabula rasa. His tendency to rewrite myths is further evidence of his need for the European past, namely Classical mythology in order to forge a new American mythology. In "Comedian as the Letter C," the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha is an indispensable framework for defining American culture and refuting the European tradition.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part presents a brief overview of the use of myth in literature by European and American writers over the centuries. It shows that while Classical mythology in which European culture is so deeply grounded, it has been a matter of controversy among American writers for religious and patriotic reasons. The second and the third parts argue that both Eliot and Stevens follow the same pattern of departure, initiation, and return that feature their borrowed myth. Eliot follows these patterns in "The Wasteland" to re-envision the heroic quest, yet he recognizes the limitation of this quest in the midst of the chaos of modern life. Stevens also follows the same steps to transform Classical myths so as to make it relevant to modern American culture.

A- Myth and European Literature

Before moving to the use of myth in Stevens and Eliot, it is essential to introduce, in first part, what is meant by myth and to give an account of its use in literature. Across the world, each nation has a common background; a unique mythological past. Mythology is itself a type of literature, a form of written and oral communication that has the same aims. For Malinowski, myth "expresses, enhances, and codifies belief; it safeguards and enforces morality; it vouches for the efficiency of ritual and contains practical rules for the guidance of

man."¹⁵⁴ Myths seek to explain the world, just as other literary genres do. Western literature has often borrowed myths, using them as a device for developing literary plots and themes. The relationship between myth and literature has taken on varying shapes and forms.

Much literature during the Middle Ages referred to Classical mythology to justify the Christian sensibility of the medieval authors. In his poem entitled "Troilus and Cressida," Geoffrey Chaucer wrote versions of the tragic love story of Troilus and Cressida.¹⁵⁵ The poem includes many mythological materials not as subjects of belief but as a means to question the truths of Classical mythology. Criseyde's appeal to the divine river Simois, with its "every god celestial,"¹⁵⁶ is an allusion to Virgil's river god, Tiberinus, who in the *The Aeneid* assists Aeneas in his foundation of the Roman Empire. In the book, Aeneas meets Tiberinus who promises Aeneas to "lead [him] along the banks and straight stream so that, carried by [his] oars, [he] may overcome the opposing current,"¹⁵⁷ a prophecy which comes true. In Chaucer's poem, however, the river Simois fails to help Criseyde keep her oath. For Chaucer, Criseyde's failure to use the authority of the Simois results from the falsehood of the pagan system she calls upon:

Lo see, the pagan's cursed ancient rites:

Lo see, how much their gods avail:

Lo see, this wretched world's appetites:

Lo see, the end and reward of the travail

154. B. Malinowski, quoted in Harvey Birenbaum, *Myth and Mind* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1988), 152

155. During the Trojan War, Troilus has fallen in love with Criseyde, the daughter of a Trojan seer, Calchas. Calchas has fled Troy to the enemy Greek camp, taking his daughter with him Criseyde. Then Criseyde joined Troilus in Greece Calchas convinces the Greeks to demand his daughter in exchange for the release of a Trojan prisoner. Before Criseyde leaves Troilus, she promises to return to him in ten days, and she makes her oath on the river Simois. On the tenth day, she is seduced by a Greek prince, Diomedes and remains with the Greeks. When Troilus discovers, he runs into battle in a rage, fighting Diomedes whenever he can, and finally he is killed by the great Greek warrior, Achilles.

156. Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Canterbury Tales, and Other Poems* (New York: W. W. Swayne, 1872), 268.

157. Virgil, *The Aeneid* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1995), 172.

of Jove, Apollo, Mars, their rascally tale:
Lo see, the form of ancient clerks' speech
in poetry, if you their books should seek.¹⁵⁸

Thus, the aim of Chaucer's use of mythological pagan materials instead of Christianity is to recall the desperate human need for Christian benevolence.

Likewise, John Milton, the puritan poet of the Cromwellian and Restoration eras used many elements from Classical mythology in his epic poem *Paradise Lost* though the Christian subjects of the two epics offer little opportunity for the incorporation of such pagan mythology. For example, he uses the infernal rivers of Classical mythology, such as Styx, Lethe, Acheron, Cocytus, and Phlegethon to reinforce the hatred and the horror of hell:

Abhorred Styx the flood of deadly hate,
Sad Acheron of sorrow, black and deep;
Sad Cocytus, nam'd of lamentation loud
Heard on the ruful stream; fierce Phlegeton.¹⁵⁹

For the same purpose, Milton also makes references to mythological monsters "Gorgons and Hydra, Chimera"¹⁶⁰ at the bounds of Hell.

Greek myths were also attractive to the English Romantic poets offering an imaginative escape from the ugliness of urbanization. The Romantics incorporated mythological elements to serve the same escapist function as nature did in their poetry. The Romantics through Classical myth provided an image of a place distant spatially and temporally, a place where they felt more relaxed than where they actually reside. For example, Lord Byron's "The isles of Greece" in Canto III of *Don Juan* is filled with the artistic celebrities of the Classical world

158. Chaucer, *Canterbury Tales*, 273.

159. *Ibid.*, 42.

160. *Ibid.*, 68.

of Ancient Greece, such as Sappho, Delos and Phoebus whose thought and style were utterly superior to his own: "And must their lyre so long divine, / Degenerate into hands like mine."¹⁶¹ Yet, little is said about England and its present.

Like Byron, the other Romantic poet Keats seeks escape to Ancient Greece. He rarely devotes himself to the pressing problems of the present. A good illustration is the following lines from "In Hyperion," a poem about the despair of the Titans after their fall to the Olympians. He describes the Titans as

symbols divine,

Manifestations of that beauteous life

Diffus'd unseen throughout eternal space.¹⁶²

These lines sum up Keats's poetic ambition to write what Stevens calls a poem "without a reference" (WSCPP, 679). It is the world of pure imagination which is inhabited only by such supernatural beings gods without human beings.

In "Ode on a Grecian Urn," Keats depicts pictures frozen in time on an ancient Grecian urn. One of the pictures shows a young man playing a pipe, lying with his lover beneath a glade of trees: "Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard / Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes play on."¹⁶³ The escapist world of imagination can be seen when the unheard melodies of the unreal world becomes sweeter than the melodies that really exist. This shift into the imagination feeds on escapism.

B- European Modernism and Myth: The Tradition of Return

From this perspective, the Modernist interest in Classical myth seems inadequate. Besides, whereas Classical myth is traditional and superstitious, Modernism is innovative and

161. George Gordon Byron, *The Works of Lord Byron: Including the Suppressed Poems. Also a Sketch of His Life* (Paris: A. and W. Galignani, 1831), 599.

162. John Keats, *Keats: Selected Poems and Letters*, ed. Robert Gittings (Oxford: Heinemann, 1996), 81.

163. *Ibid.*, 193.

secular. Ironically, the rewriting of myth became a common practice in most Modernist texts. The Modernist poets, indeed, found expression for the dilemma of modern man in the recreation of the ancient myths and had already formed part of what Jung calls "Collective Unconscious." In this vein, Jung explains that mythical stories help "make sense of the confusion of our society and our psyches. Myths voice the truths of our unconscious selves . . . the gods, goddesses, and heroes of myth embody aspects of creativity, cleverness, grief, joy, aggression, and ecstasy. The monsters of myth are really monsters of the mind."¹⁶⁴ In the same context, Terry Eagleton states, "if the surfaces of life seem random, arbitrary, chaotic, it's also true that lurking beneath them is some inexorable form of determinism, some far deeper structure (whether you call it language or mythology or the unconscious or pure form or mental categories or whatever) which is secretly organising and manipulating all this apparently random stuff we observe around us."¹⁶⁵

Many reasons explain this function of myth. One of them is its timeless quality. In fact, myths unlike history are permanent and the appeal to them may ease the burden of change regardless of the era in which this change occurs. Philip Rahv argues that "the mythic is the polar opposite of what we mean by the historical, which stands for process, inexorable change, incessant permutation and innovation. Myth is reassuring in its stability, whereas history is that powerhouse of change which destroys custom and tradition in producing the future. . . . Hence what the craze for myth represents most of all is the fear of history."¹⁶⁶

Equally attractive to the Modernists is the apparent universality of myth. To Joseph Campbell's question "[w]hy mythology [is] everywhere the same, beneath its varieties

164. Carl Jung, quoted in Janet Parker and Julie Stanton, *Mythology: Myths, Legends, and Fantasies* (Sydney: Hodder Headline Australia, 2003), 12-13.

165. Terry Eagleton, "Contradictions of Modernism," *Modernity, Modernism, Postmodernism* (Santiago de Compostela: University of Santiago de Compostela, 2000), 40.

166. Philip Rahv, "The Myth and the Powerhouse," *Myth and Literature*, ed. John B. Vickery (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1966), 110-111.

of costume,"¹⁶⁷ Robert Alan Segal's answer is either because a "myth originated in a single society and spread elsewhere from it,"¹⁶⁸ or because myth are invented by "the mind of all mankind [which] is fundamentally the same."¹⁶⁹

Many European Modernist writers further use myth to explain by analogy and contrast the chaos of their world. For example, Yeats uses references to classical Celtic mythology to confront issues of his own epoch. In "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," he uses images of modern art juxtaposed with images of Ancient Greek culture to express his view on the relationship between art and history. Yeats perceives the rise of modern art as a threat for stability and permanence because of its dismissal of antiquity. In the first stanza, he juxtaposes majestic sculptures of the Classical artists, such as "Phidias' famous ivories / And all the golden grasshoppers and bees famous ivorie"¹⁷⁰ and the modern works of "toys."¹⁷¹ He laments the widespread disfavor of Classical art in front of the unfounded splendor of modern aesthetics; consequently, "many ingenious lovely things are gone / That seemed sheer miracle to the multitude."¹⁷²

When Irish myth and folklore had been suppressed by the church doctrine and British control of the school system, Yeats recreated Irish myth in such poems as "The Wanderings of Oisín," "The Death of Cúchulainn" and "The Stolen Child" as a means for developing Irish nationalism. Yeats's "The Wanderings of Oisín" is about the conflict between Oisín and St. Patrick which is analogous to the conflict between the modern Irish revolutionary organization and the Catholic Church. The Celtic mythological figures are depicted as free

167. Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 2004), 3.

168. Robert Alan Segal, *Joseph Campbell: An Introduction* (New York: Garland Publishing Inc, 1987), 126.

169. *Ibid.*, 101.

170. William Butler Yeats: *The Collected Poems of W. B. Yeats* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 2000), 175.

171. *Ibid.*, 175.

172. *Ibid.*

and "unchainable as the dim tide."¹⁷³ They resist the Christian God who rules by threatening and enslaving his subjects: "He rules you with an iron rod, / He holds you with an iron bond."¹⁷⁴ Both characters react to the thunder but interpret it in their own way. Even though the Celtic and Catholic mythologies conflict with each other, the poem shows that they still coexist. For example, both Oisín and St. Patrick react to the thunder but interpret it in their own way. According to St. Patrick, the thunder is God speaking "His angry mind"¹⁷⁵ and to Oisín it reminds him of the sound of battle. This is an indicative that both Catholic faith and Celtic mythology exist side by side.

C-Myth as a Subject of Controversy in American Literature

Classical mythology and in particular Greek mythology has always been a matter of controversy in the United States. Despite the many appeals for giving up Classical myths, these have always been part of American literature. In colonial America, due to the puritan spirit of the Americans, many voices attempted to portray the dangers and the irrelevance of myths to Christianity. For ethical reasons, Cotton Mather believed that Classical poetry was dangerous for the soul: "Preserve the chastity of your soul from the dangers you may incur, by a conversation with the Muses that are no better than harlots."¹⁷⁶ Ironically, despite this hostility towards Classical myths, George Sandys translated Ovid's *Metamorphoses* which enabled colonial Americans to read Classical myths in colonial times.¹⁷⁷

173. W B Yeats, *The Poems*, ed. Daniel Albright (London: D. Campbell, 1992), 10.

174. *Ibid.*

175. *Ibid.*, 18.

176. Cotton Mather, quoted in Mark P. O. Morford and Robert J. Lenardon, *Classical Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 182.

177. Geoffrey Miles, *Classical Mythology in English Literature: A Critical Anthology* (London: Routledge, 2002), 15.

After the American independence, Joel Barlow attempted in *The Columbiad*, a poem about the American Revolution and American Republicanism, to incorporate many references to Greek mythology and history:

Deep groan the shrines of all her guardian gods,
Sad Pelion shakes, divine Olympus nods,
Shock'd Ossa sheds his hundred hills of snow,
And Tempe swells her murmuring brook below;
Wild in her starts of rage the Pythian shrieks,
Dodona's Oak the pangs of nature speaks,
Eleusis quakes thro all her mystic caves,
And black Trophonius gapes a thousand graves.¹⁷⁸

In this passage, Barlow compares the American war of independence with the Persian Wars. This comparison suggests that "the British 'Persians' have invaded Greek America, the culminating cradle of 'Democracy,' and in doing so have violated America's sacred places. The mountain ranges appearing in the middle of the stanza are interrelated. Pelion . . . is a lofty mountain range in Thessaly on the summit of which was a temple sacred to Zeus, and it was famous in the Greek myth of the Giants's war with the Olympian gods, when the Giant heaped Ossa on Pelion in order to scale Heaven."¹⁷⁹

Emerson and Whitman attacked the classics as a sign of the dependence of America on the Old World. In 1837, Emerson argued: "We have listened too long to the courtly muses of Europe."¹⁸⁰ Whitman also invokes the muses to come to America and to forget the old worlds with its Classical myths:

178 . Barlow, Joel. *The Columbiad: A Poem*. London: Richard Phillips, 1809.

179. Steven Blakemore, *Joel Barlow's "Columbiad": A Bicentennial Reading* (Knoxville: Tennessee university Press, 2007), 164.

180. Ralph Waldo Emerson, quoted in Morford and Lenardon, *Classical Mythology*, 563.

Come, Muse, migrate from Greece and Ionia;
Cross out, please, those immensely overpaid accounts,
That matter of Troy, and Achilles' wrath, and Eneas', Odysseus' wanderings;
Placard "Removed" and "To Let" on the rocks of your snowy Parnassus;
Repeat at Jerusalem "place the notice high on Jaffa's gate, and on Mount Moriah;
The same on the walls of your Gothic European Cathedrals, and German,
French and Spanish Castles, and Italian collections,
For know a better, fresher, busier sphere"
a wide, untried domain awaits, demands you.¹⁸¹

Nevertheless, many authors thought that Classical mythology had some relevance to America and therefore did not follow Emerson and Whitman's call. Nathaniel Hawthorne integrated some of Classical myths to many of his stories. For example, in "The Pomegranate Seeds" Hawthorne adapted Persephone myth.¹⁸²

With the rise of Modernism, myth became a frequent practice. What is striking is the fact that Classical myth was found not only in the works of such classicists as Pound, Doolittle and Eliot but also in those of such anti-classicists as Williams and Crane. For example, Williams, who asserted that American poetry must stem from its locality and must break from European tradition, often employed figures from Classical mythology. His poem "At the Faucet of June" provides a good example. Though it presents distinct American contemporary features, the poem includes elements from Greek mythology. The poem

181. Walt Whitman, *The Works of Walt Whitman* (Ware: Wordsworth Editions, 2006), 182.

182. Persephone was the daughter of Zeus and Demeter, and the queen of the underworld. She was abducted by Hades, the god of the underworld, infuriating her mother who made the crops wither and the earth barren. Zeus intervened and tried to bring Persephone back to the world of the living; however, Persephone ate the seeds of a pomegranate that Hades had given to her, binding her to him for one third of the year. Thus, it was decided that Persephone would spend four months in the underworld and eight months on earth with her mother. The period in the underworld corresponded to the winter season, during which Demeter would make the soils barren due to her grief, while her return marked the start of the spring.

contains American speech rhythms and antipoetic diction to bring poetry closer to the physical and emotional realities of modern American life. However, Williams' allusions to both Persephone (Kora) and J.P.M. emphasize how strong Williams' linkage to Classical myths is

pulling at the
anemones in
Persephone's cow pasture –
When from among
the steel rocks leaps
J.P.M.
who enjoyed
extraordinary privileges
among virginity.¹⁸³

This is a modern version of Pluto raping Persephone. Like Pluto, J. Pierpont Morgan is someone with great power, an American millionaire who made his fortune as a banker. Thus, Williams' poetics which focuses on the American space does not prevent him from juxtaposing the past and present and blending ancient Classical European myths with contemporary American references.

In what follows, I shall contend that Eliot and Stevens are no exception to the modernist practice of incorporating myths and legends in their texts. Before discussing the way Eliot and Stevens incorporate myths and legends in their poetry, it is worth highlighting Joseph Campbell's concept of monomyth on which basis I structure my discussion on the intertextual relation between Eliot's "The Wasteland" and the Grail legend, and Stevens' "The Comedian" and the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha.

183. Ibid., 46.

D- Joseph Campbell's Monomyth as Common Structure of Myth:

Joseph Campbell terms "the monomyth" to refer to the traditional basic patterns of the hero's journey. Campbell claims that nearly all myths have a journey with three stages: separation, initiation, and return. The first stage, the hero receives the call to adventure and his vocation is revealed to him. He answers the call and crosses the first threshold. Often aided by supernatural helpers, the hero becomes involved in the passage into the realm of night, or what Campbell calls "the belly of the whale,"¹⁸⁴ or "night-sea journey."¹⁸⁵ In the second stage, having begun the hero's journey in a new and exciting world, the hero "moves in a dream landscape of curiously fluid, ambiguous forms, where he must survive a succession of trials."¹⁸⁶ The final phase is called the return. Having faced the tests and completed the given task, the hero must "return to his society with the charismatic energy and moral vision"¹⁸⁷ Thus, at the end of his quest, the hero overcomes the obstacles he is faced with and achieves a spiritual maturity and wisdom. After examining the departure, the initiation, and the return, let's take a close look at the contrast and parallel between the basic patterns of the hero's quest in Eliot's "The Wasteland" and the Grail legend and in Stevens' "The Comedian" and the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha.

E- The Grail Legend as a Structural Device in Eliot's "The Wasteland"

a- Eliot and Classical Mythology

Eliot acknowledged his debt to two mythological sources: Sir James Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* which constitute the basis of his poem. In his note on "The Wasteland," Eliot acknowledges his debt to Frazer: "To another

184. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 83.

185. *Ibid.*, 87.

186. *Ibid.*, 89.

187. Michael E. Salla, *The Hero's Journey Toward a Second American Century* (Westport: Praeger, 2002), 2.

work to anthropology I am indebted in general, one which influenced our generation profoundly: I mean *the Golden Bough*; I have used especially the two volumes Adonis, Attis, Osiris. Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references to vegetation ceremonies" (CPTSE, 80).

In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer studied fertility cults and vegetation myths in an attempt to find the origin of religion. In his elucidation of Eliot's sources in his "The Wasteland," Jewel Spears Brooker gives a subtle explanation of the killing and the plucking of the golden bough:

He [Frazer] concludes that all myths derive from a single myth, a monomyth. . . . In the parent myth . . . the vitality of the land and of the people is intertwined with that of the king. When the king is healthy, the land is prosperous; when he is sick, the land is blighted, becoming a wasteland. The greatest misfortune would be sexual weakness or impotence in the king for in the primitive agricultural economy, the king's reproductive abilities are inseparable from those of his people. To preclude the certain disaster that would accompany his physical decline, he has to be killed and replaced before his vitality wanes. In order to insure the transmission of the king's vitality, his successor must pluck the golden bough, for the life force was associated with the energy of the sun and was thought to be contained in the golden bough of an oak tree.¹⁸⁸

In addition to Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Eliot expresses his gratitude to Jessie. L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. He says, "Not only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on

188. Jewel Spears Brooker, *Mastery and Escape: T. S. Elliot* (Massachusetts: the University of Massachusetts, 1994), 117.

the Grail legend: *From Ritual to Romance*."¹⁸⁹ In Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, the term "waste land" appears many times. Borrowing material from Frazer and from other anthropologists, Weston tried to discover the relationship between the ancient vegetation myths and fertility ceremonies. She traced further the relationship of the myths and the rituals with the Holy Grail legend. She found a pattern of the fertility myth in the story of the Fisher King whose infirmity caused the infirmity of his land which became a barren waste land.

In the Grail myth, a king falls ill or becomes impotent. As a result, his kingdom turns desolate. The ravaged lands need a remedy. So a brave knight heads off on a quest to obtain the Holy Grail, which will bring life and fruitfulness back to the kingdom. The knight must face numerous obstacles, and near the end of his journey goes through a mysterious chapel, where the Grail Symbols are kept. It is a nightmarish place that represents his biggest challenge. In the various versions of the Grail legend, the secrets of the Grail are only perceived by the quester who having barely gone through all trials on the chapel is able to ask a liberating question about the significance and the symbol, in such a way the king is cured and the wasteland is restored to fertility. The mysterious Chapel is referred to as the chapel perilous.

One fundamental question is whether the myth, which was used to reflect the ordered, stable and inherently meaningful worldview of the past, can relate to the chaos of modernity. The intertextual relationship between Eliot's "The Wasteland" and the Grail legend may help answer this question. My analysis is an attempt to show that Eliot misreads the Grail legend to create new meaning in his poem. It is in my intention thus to study the contrast and parallel between the basic pattern of the hero's quest which consists of departure, initiation, and return in Eliot's "The Wasteland" and the Grail legend.

b- Departure: Individual Sin versus Community's Sin

189. Ibid.

The setting in both *The Golden Bough* and "The Wasteland," partakes of what Northrop Frye calls in *The Great Code*, the "demonic"¹⁹⁰ settings inhabited by the peoples who do not worship the god of Israel. According to Dídac Llorens Cubedo, such settings may include images of "drought, withering vegetation, barren earth, dangerous fauna, suffocating heat"¹⁹¹ and "signals the future degradation."¹⁹² In the Grail legend, paradise has become a desert of rock and sand due to God's anger at the king's sinful behaviour. The demonic setting can be well illustrated in the following passage quoted by Miss Weston from one of the Grail stories:

For here no fertile seed is sown,
Neither peas nor grain are grown,
Never a child of man is born,
Mateless maidens sadly mourn,
On the trees no leaf is seen
Nor are the meadows growing green,
Birds build no nests, no song is sung,
And hapless beast shall bear no young
So if is while the sinful king
Shall evil on his people bring . . .¹⁹³

In Eliot's poem, the setting presents the same features of sterility and sin. The description of Eliot's "The Wasteland" in the first and the last sections of the poem as hot, dry and stony conjures up the harsh aridity of the setting in the Grail legend:

What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow

190. Northrop Frye and Alvin A Lee, *The Great Code: The Bible and Literature* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 160.

191. Dídac Llorens Cubedo, *T.S. Eliot and Salvador Espriu* (València: Universitat de València, 2013), 51.

192. *Ibid.*

193. Jessie L Weston, *From Ritual to Romance* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2005), 22-23.

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. (CPTSE, 63)

The dryness of the landscape caused by the lack of water is also underlined in the fifth section of the poem, "What the Thunder Said":

If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water. (CPTSE, 76-77)

Although the two settings present some common features, such as the sterility, the reasons behind the quest are different. In the Grail legend, the Fisher King is the sinner. As a result, all members of his community are punished. In Eliot's "The Wasteland," the contemporary chaotic world with its sordidness, sterility, and spiritual death reflects the individual alienation from their community brought about by the tradition of liberal democracy. In his essay "Literature and the Modern World," he attacks liberal democracy as damaging both the person and the community:

When society is conceived as merely a sum of individuals, you get the chaos of liberal democracy. When the person is wholly subordinated to society, you get the dehumanization of fascism or communism. These extremes, however, may meet. For what liberal democracy really recognizes is a sum, not of persons, but of individuals: that is to say, not the variety and uniqueness of persons, but the purely

material individuation of the old-fashioned or Democritean atom. And this is disrespect to the person. For the person is no longer a person if wholly isolated from community; and the community is no longer a community if it does not consist of persons.¹⁹⁴

"The Wasteland" highlights both this loss of personality and community in contemporary life. The first section of the poem the "Burial of the Dead" depicts a community of the dead who have lost a sense of community as they "prefer living in proximity to one another."¹⁹⁵ Being socially isolated, each member avoids the glance of others and "fixed his eyes before his feet" (CPTSE, 65). The theme of individual isolation is also presented in "What the Thunder Said" in which Eliot regrets that "We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison" (CPTSE , 79).

In the Grail legend the king's illness represents the true motives for the knights to go on a quest for a healing grail. In Eliot's "The Wasteland," each reference to a king, which should be associated with Fisher King, is preceded or followed by a sin committed by a member of the modern community. Each individual becomes a sinner involved in a particular immoral behaviour causing the victimization and damnation of the Fisher King. The king is described implicitly or explicitly as violent and weak, absent and useless, or corrupt and dead to reflect the flaws and vices which are inherent in the inhabitants of Eliot's waste land.

The weakness of the king is implied in the first section of the poem, the "Burial of the Dead" by the hyacinth garden where the love story of hyacinth girl and his girlfriend moves to unhappy ending:

Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,

Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not

194.T.S. Eliot, quoted in Cleanth Brooks, John Thibaut Purser, and Robert Penn Warren, *An Approach to Literature* (New York, Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1952), 571.

195. John P. Bequette, *Christian Humanism: Creation, Redemption, and Reintegration* (Lanham: University Press of America, 2004), 78.

Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
Od' und leer das Meer. (CPTSE, 64)

Though the passage does not directly refer to the king, the last line in German comes from a section of *Tristan und Isolde*, in which King Mark is deceived by his wife Isolde who is involved in an affair with Tristan. "Od' und leer das Meer" which comes from the final act of Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* translated as "waste and empty is the sea" is said by Tristan as he dies waiting for Isolde. In the Wagnerian opera, Tristan waits for Isolde to come to heal him, but she does not come on time and Tristan dies. The reference to the king being betrayed and the tragic end of Tristan and Isolde is significant. Though the couple in the garden show passion for each other associated with an exchange of Hyacinths, their love has now died out.

In "A Game of Chess," the king is referred to as violent and brutal which implies the failure of the stories of two women from different social classes. In this section, the King is Tereus who rapes Philomela in the Roman poet Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The two modern women, raped by their male partners, end up with the same degree of victimization as Philomela.

The first is a rich upper class unnamed woman. The second is the Poor Lil. Yet, both women combine to suggest the absence of true connection and the lack of spiritual and romantic values, the first through the emphasis on material goods, the other by the crudeness of its characters. The wealthy woman and her husband seem to be good at doing nothing but getting at each other's nerves. The scene is filled with elegant objects suggesting luxury. The elegant drawing room contains a woman sitting in a chair "like a burnished throne" (CPTSE, 66). Within this description, the woman is hardly described at all. This focus is on objects which suggest materialism as one of the reasons why the modern world is debased. She sits

there, bored out of their surroundings and herself. What then follows is the couple's one-sided conversation in which the female speaker introduces a series of disturbing quotations after which she complains that her "nerves are bad to-night" (CPTSE, 67). Yet, her partner never apparently responds to her complaints directly but thinks, nevertheless, about how bored he is.

Filled with crude language, sexual desire and the possibilities of procreation, the second scene is similarly devoid of spirituality. Lil and Albert are just common people, and their story is no less sad or tragic than the wealthy couple's sharing a loveless marriage in the midst of their comfortable surroundings. Lil and Albert's marriage continues with five children and an abortion. Albert has just been released from military service after four years, having been in the war for the duration. In order to please her husband, Lil gives up "look[ing] so antique" (CPTSE, 68) and makes herself more beautiful. After he has been in the army, she has to get her teeth pulled and replaced with new ones. The story of Albert and Lil shows how love and responsibility have withered into a simple sexual pleasure demanded by the husband as recompense after his four years in service.

In the third section, "The Fire Sermon" three kings are referred to as weak or corrupt to foreshadow the vulgar scene that depicts the clerk and the typist. The three kings are the King Alonso from William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, king Anfortas from Paul Verlaine's poem which refers to Richard Wagner's opera, *Parsifal*, and king Tereu from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. The two lines "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him" (CPTSE, 70) which refer to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* are from the shipwrecked Ferdinand, the heir of Naples who mistakenly believes that his father, Alonso, King of Naples, has died at sea. In the course of the story, Alonso aids Antonio to overthrow the former ruler of Naples. As a result of the king's betrayal, Prospero and his daughter Miranda are marooned on an unknown island. In Wagner's opera, the knight Parsifal fails at first to find the grail to heal the king Anfortas. Anfortas's wife, Kundry, attempts to

seduce Parsifal. Kundry is also responsible for making the king vulnerable to wounding. Yet, the reference to Parsifal is followed by lines recalling Philomel's rape by the king Tereu: " So rudely forc'd / Tereu" (CPTSE, 71).

Antonio's betrayal of Prospero, causing harm to both Prospero and Miranda, the seductive power of the story of Kundry cuckolding her husband the king, and the story of barbarous king raping Philomel suggest the disintegration of the king and his kingdom. This negative image of the king is significant since it foreshadows the failure of love in the episode involving the typist and the clerk. The scene is close to a scene of rape:

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
Endeavours to engage her in caresses
Which are still unreproved, if undesired.
Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
Exploring hands encounter no defence;
His vanity requires no response,
And makes a welcome of indifference. (CPTSE, 72)

He carefully calculates his moves. He considers "The time" and decides it "is now propitious" for action. The woman is "bored and tired" but does not try to avoid his action. She considers his moves "unreproved" though they are "undesired." The behaviour of the man is described as an "assault," and the woman is markedly without any resistance or reciprocity to the man's ardour:

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over.'

When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone. (CPTSE, 72)

This objectification of sexuality points at a lack of emotion. The reference to Olive Goldsmith's *The Vicar of Wakefield* in "When lovely woman stoops to folly"¹⁹⁶ invites to contrast the behaviour of the typist with that Goldsmith's character Olivia. Whereas Olivia sings of shame after the seduction, the typist ignores the assault and "puts a record on the gramophone."

c- Initiation: The Failure to Redeem the Community

After giving a concise explanation of how the community of sinners has provoked the sterility of the modern world, the fifth section "What the Thunder Said" discusses initiation in the form of a quester's journey towards regeneration and renewal. Although there is a basic resemblance between the two quests, the Grail legend fails to provide a model for a successful quest. In Eliot's poem, the motives that contribute to the success of the quest in the original Grail legend are absent.

The first motif that indicates that the quest is no longer operational in the modern waste land is the lack of prophecy. In the romance of Percival, another version of the Grail legend in which the king and his impotence are reflected on the land, the quester's journey and the regeneration of both king and land come in the form of prophecy. Merlin spoke to King Arthur about it: "And when the knight (of the round table) will be so exalted that he will be able to come to the court of the noble Fisher King and when he will have asked what it is that the Grail has served and what it is it serves, then immediately will the Fisher King be cured.

196. Oliver Goldsmith, *The poetical Works of Oliver Goldsmith, with a Sketch of his Life and Writings* (London: Chiswick Press, 1818), 94.

And then he will tell him the secret words of our Lord and he will pass from life to death , and this knight will have the keeping of the blood of Jesus Christ, and then will fall the enchantment from the land of Britain, and then the prophecy will be entirely fulfilled."¹⁹⁷ The first indication of the failure or the absence of prophecy lies in Eliot's choice of the epigraph which describes the Sibyl of Cumae. This Sibyl, granted eternal life but not eternal youth by Apollo, is therefore so shrivelled that she could fit into a bottle. The importance of the prophetess is to introduce the descent of the hero to the underworld. In Eliot's poem, the sibyl fails as a prophetess. She provides no vision or help to questor who sets out to the adventure to redeem the wasteland. To the question about what she wants, she answers "I want to die" (CPTSE, 61). In her desire for death, she does little for the quest.

In the first section "The Burial of the Dead," Eliot introduces the reader to another prophetess Madame Sosostriis reputed "to be the wisest woman in Europe" (CPTSE, 64), but with little ability to foretell the future. Her prophecy "fear death by water" (CPTSE, 64) appears in the fourth section to confirm her blindness to the restorative principle of water:

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.
A current under sea
Picked his bones in whispers. (CPTSE, 75)

The death of Phlebas, the Phoenician Merchant, further illustrates Eliot's ironic use of the fertility rituals. Relying on his understanding of some passages from Jessie L. Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* and in an attempt to explain the above lines, Cleanth Brooks notes that drowning is an act that recurs every year in which "the drowned Phoenician sailor recalls

197. Dell Skeels, trans. *The Romance of Perceval in Prose*, (Washington: University of Washington Press, 1966), 6.

the drowned god of the fertility cults. Miss Weston tells that each year at Alexandria an effigy of the head of the god was thrown into the water as a symbol of the death of the powers of nature, and that this head was carried by the current to Byblos where it was taken out of the water and exhibited as a symbol of the reborn god."¹⁹⁸

In the Grail legend, the fertility rituals that involve water usually herald regeneration both for the king and the land. In *From Ritual to Romance*, Weston explains that in ancient Aryan prototype for the Grail legend the restoration of the land is conditioned by "the freeing of the waters."¹⁹⁹ Phlebas appears as the drowned sailor who is an emblem of failed spiritual redemption. In fact, Phlebas is not resurrected or transfigured since the bones of his dead body still sway under water.

Another ironic use of the fertility ritual and its uselessness in the modern wasteland is further found in the last section "What the Thunder Said":

AFTER the torchlight red on sweaty faces
After the frosty silence in the gardens
After the agony in stony places
The shouting and the crying
Prison and place and reverberation
Of thunder of spring over distant mountains
He who was living is now dead
We who were living are now dying
With a little patience. (CPTSE, 76)

198. Cleanthes Brooks, "The Waste Land: Critique of the Myth," *T.S. Eliot: "The Waste Land,"* ed. C.B. Cox (London: Macmillan, 1988), 149.

199 Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, 22-23.

These lines recapture the moments when Jesus Christ was crucified, but in the modern waste land even Jesus's death, like that of Phlebus, brings no resurrection. Instead, his death leads to "the frosty silence in the gardens" suggesting a lifeless land which reflects the death in life of its inhabitants. The absence of God brings ruin to the great cities of Western history Jerusalem, Athens, Alexandria, Vienna, London. No sooner are these locales permitted to relive the stories of Rudolf and Marie (Vienna), Antony and Cleopatra (Alexandria), Elizabeth and Leicester and Lil and Albert (London) that those cities are said to be "unreal":

Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air

Falling towers

Jerusalem Athens Alexandria

Vienna London

Unreal. (CPTSE, 77)

Another indicative of the failure of the quest is "the empt[iness] of the chapel" (CPTSE, 78) which is supposed to be the resting place of the Holy Grail, the cup that would bring salvation to the Fisher King. Weston identifies the chapel as the locale in which the Grail knight faces a serious and mysterious peril: "At a much later point Manessier tells how Perceval, riding through the forest, is overtaken by a terrible storm. He takes refuge in a Chapel which he recognizes as that of the Black Hand. The Hand appears, Perceval fights against and wounds it; then appears a Head; finally the Devil in full form who seizes Perceval as he is about to seek the veil of which he has been told."²⁰⁰

d- Return: A Quest for only Individual Redemption

In Eliot's poem, the Perilous chapel contains nothing: "There is an empty chapel, only the wind's home" (CPTSE, 78). Now with the journey completed, the hero has reached an

200. Ibid., 177.

understanding that the Holy Grail and its miraculous powers to heal the Fisher King, and thus to heal the land as in the Grail legend are no longer efficient in the modern world. Instead, a possible cure to the illness of the community is presented by the thunder that reveals itself and tells the three key virtues "Datta" (CPTSE, 78)," Dayadhvam " (CPTSE,79) and " Damyata " (CPTSE, 79) suggesting the Hindu ideals of "give," "sympathize," and "control." The solution comes from heavens; thunder in all mythologies is the voice of God. To give is the giving of the self a moment of surrender and the loss of selfhood. To sympathize suggests a way to transcend the barriers between the isolated individuals of the "wasteland." To control involves man's mastery over his desires.

However, the replacement of the Grail by the Hindu virtues of "give," "sympathize," and "control" raises the question whether the quest in "The Wasteland" is fulfilled or not. Many critics who have studied Eliot's poem have not agreed on the subject. For example, F.R Leavis's comments that the poem "exhibits no progression" ²⁰¹and adds that "the thunder brings no rain to revive the wasteland and the poem ends where it began."²⁰² John B. Marino shares Leavis's view as "Eliot sees potential in metaphorical Grail narrative. But the myth has only potential that is never realized."²⁰³ On the other hand, many other critics disagree with the view that there is no progression in the poem. For example, Khagendra Singh states that "a process of deeper understanding of the situation is quite evident. A journey to Chapel Perilous is undertaken, the thunder has proclaimed the conditions for redemption, and the protagonist thinks of setting his land in order."²⁰⁴ Like Singh, Robert Langbaum emphasizes

201. F.R. Leavis, "Eliot," *Modern Writings on Major English*, eds. James R. Kreuzer, Lee Cogan, and Ardent Media (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1963), 669.

202. Ibid.

203. John B. Marino, *The Grail Legend in Modern Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2004), 109.

204. Naorem Khagendra Singh, *T S Eliot: A Reconsideration* (New Delhi: A.P.H. Publishing Corporation 2001), 173.

the actual fulfilment of the quest. Langbaum explains that "the quest is for personal order, that leads to cultural order and cultural order that leads to personal order, then the poem turns out more positive than we used to think it."²⁰⁵

It is true that the sickness of modern world is diagnosed and the cure may be the realization of the three values coming in the voice of the thunder. In the original Grail myth, gaining the grail to heal the infirm king is the only condition to restore fertility to the land. In Eliot's "The Wasteland," in which all members of society are sinners, each individual can heal only himself. The solution to meaninglessness and hopelessness of the present day can only be achieved by the participation of every individual who makes up that community. The Grail quest undertaken by the lone protagonist is not enough to bring fertility to the waste land. In this way, "what is needed is a communal myth [like the Hindu virtues] to replace the discarded traditional belief system."²⁰⁶

However, since the three values exist in other cultural communities and not in Eliot's portrait of modern London, the question that arises is whether the inhabitants of modern waste land can hear the voice of the thunder and thus give themselves to some noble causes to be able to sympathise, and self-control that may lead them to establishing community. To answer this question, it is important to examine the following lines with which Eliot ends his poem:

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina
Quando fiam ceu chelidon—O swallow swallow

205. Robert Langbaum, "New Modes of Characterization in The Waste Land," *Modern American Poetry*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2005), 159.

206. Marino, *The Grail Legend*, 109.

Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie

These fragments I have shored against my ruins

Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe

Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata

Shantih shantih shantih. (CPTSE, 79)

The image of fishing suggests the possibility of rebirth. According to Weston, "the Fish is a life symbol of immemorial antiquity, and that the title of Fisher has, from the earliest ages, been associated with Deities who were held to be specially connected with the origin and preservation of Life."²⁰⁷ Fishing here is more promising for the speaker than that one experienced "in the dull canal" (CPTSE, 70) near "the gas house" (CPTSE, 70) in the beginning of "The Fire Sermon" because the arid plain is now behind him. But what is behind is still populated by a community of emotionless men and women who fail to adopt the required attitudes to revitalize the community.

The use of the personal pronoun "I" means that the protagonist has turned away from community and withdrawn into his own world: He has been working out his personal salvation rather than that of the community. As for the rest of the community, to whom "April is the cruellest month" (CPTSE, 63), there is no indication that they are setting out on a quest in search of the message of the thunder as a substitute for the traditional grail to transform their waste land into a fertile land.

From "A heap of broken images" (CPTSE, 63) of the first section to the "fragments" (CPTSE, 79) of the last section, the quester has assembled a number of fragments and broken images which constitute the poem as a shield against his own destruction. The verb "shored up" suggests that he is individually saved, but he has failed to "set [his] lands in order." In this respect, Harold Bloom argues, "The fragments, the broken images are the remains of

207. Weston, *From Ritual to Romance*, 125

something that was once, presumably, solid but is now in ruins. The poet sees himself as a fragmented man, as ruins not reconstituted but 'shored up,' supported in his ruined condition and kept from crumbling entirely by the fragments he has gathered in the poem."²⁰⁸

F- Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C," and the Myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha

a- Stevens and Classical Myth

Unlike Eliot who recognizes the modern relevance of past myths, Stevens denies its credibility in the present. In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," the speaker urges the ephebe, a student of poetry, "to become an ignorant man" (WSCPP, 329) and to see the world in "an ignorant eye" (WSCPP, 329) without the intervention of the dead formulae of Classical mythology:

Let purple Phoebus²⁰⁹ lie in umber harvest,

Let Phoebus slumber and die in autumn umber,

Phoebus is dead, ephebe. (WSCPP, 329)

Many reasons may explain Stevens' attitude against Classical mythology. As a secular poet, he attempts to live locally in "a world without heaven" (WSCPP, 104) and to develop an earthly poetics reflecting a desire to create a balance between the imagination and reality.

While Greek and Latin myths involve gods and therefore rest mainly on supernatural foundations, the imagination of Stevens has as its foundation the physical reality. The second reason has to do with Stevens' defence of the present and his scepticism about the past. His poetry tries to find what is fresh and attractive in the present divorced from traditional beliefs which he views as "a noble falsification of the present based on the assumption of the past."²¹⁰

208. Harold Bloom, ed. *T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2007), 28.

209. Phoebus, a mythical figure also known as Apollo, is the Latin god of music, prophecy, medicine, poetry, and archery, but he is most widely known as the sun-god or the god of light. In poetry, Phoebus traditionally represents the sun.

210. Ronald Sukenick, *Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure: Readings and Interpretation* (New York: New York University Press, 1967), 2.

Thus, poetry must be born out of blankness and the poet must set his mind free from all preconceptions that come from the past. He says in *The Necessary Angel* that poetry could not "ever invent an ancient world full of figures that had been known and become endeared for its reader for centuries" (WSCPP, 731). Even Classical myths with their timelessness and universality may affect the imagination. In this context, Sebastian Gardner argues that Stevens struggles "to break cleanly with the past, and does not either recycle old mythologies, or attempt to model a new, personalized mythology on the old."²¹¹ A third reason is the purpose of his poetry which is to finish Emerson's and Whitman's project of redefining America and its culture and to establish a background for American literature away from the Old World. Thus, Stevens' poetry that springs from what Joseph N. Riddel calls "American roots"²¹² relates him to a trend in American culture that redefines American identity against the European culture. From here, any reliance on European tradition like Classical mythology may hinder the poet's endeavour to reach his aim.

In what follows, I shall discuss Stevens' special relationship with Classical mythology. This discussion rests on the assumption that Stevens who was educated in Greek and Latin cultures at Reading Boys' High School and at Harvard fails to get rid, at least structurally, of Classical mythology. Indeed, the presence of the Greek and Roman myths in Stevens' poetry cannot be denied. Unlike Eliot whose interest in myths is mainly religious, myths in Stevens' poetry are secularized and Americanized: secularized because they are stripped of the metaphysical additions, such as the gods, and Americanized because they focus on the American experience.

211. Sebastian Gardner, "Wallace Stevens and Metaphysics: The Plain Sense of Things," *European Journal of Philosophy* 2, no. 3 (1994): 325.

212. Joseph N. Riddel, quoted in Marie Borroff, *Wallace Stevens* (New Jersey: Princeton-Hall, 1963), 30.

In his "The Comedian as the Letter C," Stevens acknowledges nowhere his debt for any myth. It is not hard, however, for any reader familiar with Classical mythology to recognize the presence of the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha²¹³ as an important source for his poem. In addition, the poem contains a direct reference to the Classical mythical figure of Triton. In comparing the adventures of Crispin with those of Deucalion and Pyrrha, it is evident that both stories have adopted Campbell's structure of the departure and initiation, and return. The heroes in both stories experience very dark moments, face temptations, and eventually obtain rewards namely procreation and rebirth at the end of stories. However, Stevens is far from being an imitator. As an American secular anti-classicist poet, he makes use of the myth as an intertextual practice to question the validity of Classical mythology in the New World. His aim is to disassociate his work from the ideological appeals to non-American traditions made by Eliot and Pound, and to support Whitman's and Williams' call to redefine the American aesthetics through the cultivation of the local yet with the same mythical structure.

b- Departure: From Religious to Secular Motives

In Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C," Crispin is a European average man who becomes an alien to the new American reality. He is the American immigrant in search of the self and of meaning to give to his new American existence. It is from his scepticism of the

213. In the Iron Age, the gods appeared and witnesses human impiety. In particular, Jupiter visited the house of the Lycaon, who treated Jupiter with the greatest disrespect, even trying to murder him in his sleep. In Greek mythology Lycaon, the king of Arcadia, had sacrificed a boy to Zeus, who was appalled by this cannibal offering and decided to put an end to the Bronze Age. Outraged, Jupiter decided to punish humanity with a flood. Because of their piety, Deucalion and Pyrrha survive. Zeus loosed a deluge, so that the rivers ran in torrents and the sea flooded the coastal plain, engulfed the foothills with spray, and washed everything clean. Deucalion, with the aid of his father Prometheus, was saved from this deluge by building a chest. When the god Jupiter saw that none is alive he remembered that they were faithful believers in the gods he ordered the north to drive the clouds, and disclose the sky to earth, and earth to the skies. Neptune ordered Triton to blow on the shell. Then Neptune ordered Triton to blow on his shell and sound a retreat to the waters. The waters obeyed the sea returned to its shore the rivers to their channels.

Then Deucalion and Pyrrha found refuge in a temple. All alone in the world they wanted company, and to repopulate the earth they approached an altar and asked for help and guidance. In answer to this need, an oracle (in another version the goddess of prophecy Themis cryptically) told them to leave the temple "head veiled and the garment unbound, and throw and cast behind [them] the cast of [their] mother."²¹³ Pyrrha is distraught at the idea of desecrating her mother's honor by digging up her bones, but Deucalion correctly understood that the "mother" to be Gaia, and threw stones. Those thrown by Deucalion became men and those thrown by Pyrrha became women. They later became the parents of Hellen, the eponymous ancestor of the Greeks.

past inherited from Europe that Stevens, the modern theorist of new aesthetics in his ambition to be the "dead opposite" (LWS, 814) of such highly Classicists as Eliot and Pound with their Eurocentric ways of viewing the world and anything related to tradition, casts his traveller Crispin into a labyrinthine quest to find the appropriate aesthetics for the new world.

At first sight, Crispin has little in common with the mythic heroes, such as Deucalion and Pyrrha, who are close to the gods; his quest is very different from the traditional quest pattern in terms of motives, initiation and return. Though in both stories, impiety constitutes the motive for the journey, the meaning and nature of this sin is very different. Whereas in the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha, the pride and the disrespect with which Lycaon treats Jupiter causes the flood, the motive for Crispin's journey is secular as the object of impiety is the physical environment not the gods. Crispin treats the earth with great disrespect when he believes, for a while at least, that he has the imaginative power to control his environment. His opening motto "man is the intelligence of his soil" (WSCPP, 22) suggests that reality is subject to man's intelligence. Man discovers its nature by discerning and formulating its laws and making it intelligible. Man is the "sovereign ghost" (WSCPP, 22) because with his intelligence he controls his environment.

However, before Crispin comes to accept that "his soil is man's intelligence" (WSCPP, 29) which makes him closer to the American reality, he has first to cleanse himself from the obsolete remnants of the European culture. Though not directly stated at the beginning of the poem, this condition is implied in the following lines from the fourth section:

These bland excursions into time to come,
Related in romance to backward flights,
However prodigal, however proud,
Contained in their afflatus the reproach
That first drove Crispin to his wandering.

He could not be content with counterfeit,
With masquerade of thought, with hapless words
That must belie the racking masquerade,
With fictive flourishes that preordained
His passion's permit, hang of coat, degree
Of buttons, measure of his salt. (WSCPP, 31)

In his discussion of the above passage, Leo Surret makes a list of "the debunked beliefs of the Old World world"²¹⁴ that constitute the core of the European culture. "Bland excursions into time to come" suggests the "Utopian dreams in which Europe has indulged since the Enlightenment,"²¹⁵ one of which is "Marxist Communism."²¹⁶ The "backward flights" are a group of thinkers who "regarded the medieval world as a viable model for a modern society,"²¹⁷ and "Eliot might be included in that group."²¹⁸ The "counterfeit," "masquerade of thought," and "hapless words" are those "European political and social practices and their justifications – royal and aristocratic regimes together with their pomp and ceremony."²¹⁹

c- Initiation: Secularising the Quest for Americanness

To achieve change, the hero experiences many trials and temptations. The first trial Crispin faces is the flood which is reminiscent of the flood loosed by Zeus as a force to purify the earth from sin in the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha. However, Crispin's experience is secular, that is to say, with no godly source. The flood serves to put Crispin in a situation where he finds himself questioning his self-confidence and reducing his pride to the physical

214. Leon Surette, *The Modern Dilemma: Wallace Stevens, T. S. Eliot, and Humanism* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's Press, 2008), 161.

215. Ibid.

216. Ibid.

217. Ibid.

218. Ibid.

219. Ibid.

world. At home, Crispin is accustomed to homely objects that he can control and order. Now he is perplexed in the middle of the deep sea voyage. The sea that he cannot fathom is the place where his personality and his "mythology of self" (WSCPP, 22) dissolve:

What counted was mythology of self,
Blotched out beyond unblotching. Crispin,
The lutanist of fleas, the knave, the thane,
The ribboned stick, the bellowing breeches, cloak
Of China, cap of Spain, imperative haw
Of hum, inquisitorial botanist,
And general lexicographer of mute
And maidenly greenhorns, now beheld himself,
A skinny sailor peering in the sea-glass. (WSCPP, 22)

The heap of phrases Stevens introduces, such as "The lutanist of fleas," "the knave," "the thane," "the ribboned stick," "cloak Of China," and "cap of Spain" suggest no clear definition of Crispin but simply the assumption of fragments of personae. Yet, the use of multiple experiences, such as "The lutanist of fleas," "haw," "lexicographer," and "greenhorns" indicate that he is at least verbose. Now in term of language Crispin has no words to describe the reality that surrounds him. In terms of conception, his fancy is no longer useful to control the "inscrutable world" (WSCPP, 22) of the sea:

The whole of life that still remained in him
Dwindled to one sound strumming in his ear,
Ubiquitous concussion, slap and sigh,
Polyphony beyond his baton's thrust. (WSCPP, 23)

Because he cannot understand the meaning of this new reality, its music no longer reflects the direction of his intelligence. His intelligence is reduced in the sea. Crispin is thus

faced with of "the veritable ding an sich" (WSCPP, 23), a blank world without imagination, onto which he can neither impose meanings nor project his identity. At this stage, Crispin's old "mythology of the self" is destroyed and Crispin is made new. The sea salt paralysed his spirit and his old ideas have melted as if in winter and his old self is dissolved:

The salt hung on his spirit like a frost,
The dead brine melted in him like dew
Of winter, until nothing of himself
Remained, (WSCPP, 23)

After facing the baptism of the sea, Crispin, like Deucalion and Pyrrha has to embark on a new adventure to confront the new world in which he finds himself. As in the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha, Crispin has to accept his reality to fulfill his quest. However, to accept reality is not an easy task because the protagonists in both stories have to face temptations. In the story of Deucalion and Pyrrha temptation comes from the temple where they fail to find a way of restoring mankind to the earth. Yet the solution lies in the earth and the protagonists have to solve the riddle of casting stones to re-populate the earth by throwing the bones of their mother which they interpret as the stones of the earth.

Likewise, Crispin has also to solve the riddle of how to make a new intelligence prevail and to meet many temptations to fulfil his quest. The content of the riddle is implied in the following lines:

What was the purpose of his pilgrimage,
Whatever shape it took in Crispin's mind,
If not, when all is said, to drive away
The shadow of his fellows from the skies,
And, from their stale intelligence released,
To make a new intelligence prevail? (WSCPP, 30)

It is important to note that the riddle Crispin has to solve does not come from what Campbell calls "supernatural helper."²²⁰ It is the question that he raises himself once he is introduced to the new world of the American continent. To solve this riddle, Crispin has to adopt a new way of approaching the American reality different from Eliot's method of adopting old structures of beliefs which he has gathered in a new form. Crispin's desire for a culturally relevant poetry independent from established traditions, from Eliot's "stale intelligence," to validate one's sense of the present.

However, before being ready for this new approach, Crispin has to face many temptations that put his journey at risk. After the experience of the sea, he finds himself on the land of Yucatan where a series of literary temptations threaten to divert him from accepting his new environment. One of these temptations is a poetic tradition which is decadent and unrealistic. Although Yucatan is an exotic locale, the poets, there called Mayan sonneteers, are still devoted to the nightingale of the Romantic tradition:

In Yucatan, the Maya sonneteers
Of the Caribbean amphitheatre,
In spite of hawk and falcon, green toucan
And jay, still to the night-bird made their plea,
As if raspberry tanagers in palms,
High up in orange air, were barbarous (WSCPP, 24).

Critics have offered many interpretations of Mayan sonneteers. Hi Simon suggests that they are "the minor romantics who are still dealing with sentimental conventions and ignoring the crude splendors of the contemporary when Crispin entered the literary scene."²²¹ "Mayan sonneteers," for Harold Bloom, "may include such Harvard poets as

220. Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 66.

221. Hi Simon, quoted in Edward Marx, *The Idea of a Colony: Cross-Culturalism in Modern Poetry* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 145.

Trumbull Skickney, George Cabot Lodge, and even Santayana,"²²² who ignore "the exotic American reality."²²³ Despite these different interpretations, the critics emphasise the inconsistency between the aesthetics of the Mayan sonneteers and their American surroundings. Stevens rejects the model offered by the Maya sonneteers who ignore the real. For Stevens, the true poet must concern himself further with his surrounding; otherwise, the poet fails to understand and manipulate it.

Thus, the first temptation shows that Crispin is not completely purified, and that he is still liable to be swerved from his way to accept reality. To attain the stature of a true poet that deals with the real world, Crispin must face further trials and temptations. Again, Crispin is confronted with another natural phenomenon. As he passes through the streets of Yucatan, he is surprised by an approaching thunderstorm. Crispin flees to the cathedral and endures the second temptation of the cathedral:

His mind was free
And more than free, elate, intent, profound
And studious of a self possessing him,
That was not in him in the crusty
From which he sailed. (WSCPP, 26)

The purification of Crispin after his adventures with the sea and the thunderstorm makes him ready to face the temptation of the cathedral. In fact, the emptiness of the cathedral suggests that his experience is not a religious one. He has an encounter with a new reality whose matter is in flux and whose form is unfathomable. In the thunderstorm, he perceives the magnitude of an ultimate energy "the span of force" (WSCPP, 26) which is the quintessential fact of reality. It is this fact that now he desires to express in speech:

222. Harold Bloom, *Wallace Stevens: The Poems of Our Climate* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1980), 75.

223. *Ibid.*

.....the thunder, lapsing in its clap,
Let down gigantic quavers of its voice,
For Crispin to vociferate again. (WSCPP, 27)

In Stevens' world, there is no room for the supernatural addition of non physical creatures. For him the world is "all of paradise that we shall know"(WSCPP, 54), and the poet derives pleasure from observing particular objects around him. The freedom from metaphysics enables the poetic adventurer to write an American poetry rooted in the soil without heaven and hell. With such freedom and power gained from the thunderstorm, Crispin is ready to contend with reality again.

This section forcefully reminds the reader of the quester entering the chapel perilous in Eliot's "The Wasteland." The empty chapel does not seem to offer a viable solution for Eliot. The solution instead comes from the thunder, a voice in the form of advice that includes to give, to sympathise, and to control. These three words the thunder offers evoke the mythical heritage of Indian culture. In fact, "to give," "to control," and "to sympathize" belong to the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad and describe the three dictums God delivers to his disciples. This reflects Eliot's Classical and internationalist approach to literary Modernism that relies on established Eastern and Western traditions to respond to the experiential realities of the modern era. Eliot's approach, which relies on a tradition of metaphysical essence and geographical remoteness from the American culture, fails to afford an appropriate uniqueness to the American Modernist situation.

Crispin's experiences with the sea, and the storm and the empty cathedral make him ready for the world of the imagination. However, his imagination does not adhere to reality. When Crispin is nearing his poetic home of Carolina which is the ultimate destination of his journey and where he can settle down in his shady home and be a proper poet, he is tempted by an imaginative Carolina. Instead of facing the harshness of the environment of Carolina,

he, like a Romantic, finds refuge in an imagination that ignores reality. Though not as attractive as the garden of Europe, the cathedral or the exotic landscape that Crispin experienced before, the setting of Carolina is an urban and modern one with its polluted river exhaling disgusting smells in an industrial town. The poet's wish to share the common life is realized in this very quotidian reality:

A river bore
The vessel inward. Tilting up his nose,
He inhaled the rancid rosin, burly smells
Of dampened lumber, emanations blown
From warehouse doors, the gustiness of ropes,
Decays of sacks, and all the arrant stinks
That helped him round his rude aesthetic out.
He savored rankness like a sensualist.
He marked the marshy ground around the dock,
The crawling railroad spur, the rotten fence,
Curriculum for the marvellous sophomore. (WSCPP, 29)

The above lines depict Crispin's readiness to accept the dirty aspects of reality. However, the hateful displeasing aspects of that reality along with Romantic aspects that linger in him cast doubt on his acceptance. Although he claims that he has got off the "last distortion of romance" (WSCPP, 24) when he abandons his subjective roles and becomes a realist in search of the starker realities, Crispin continues to have passion for the exotic which is an extension of an essentially Romantic view of nature. The third section of the poem reminds us that no matter how the "sweating changes" (WSCPP, 27) that Crispin has gone through, there is always a part of him allied to another aspect of the stale Romantic which he "never could forget" (WSCPP, 27).

Though this kind of conception may seem attractive, it is not sufficiently productive enough. The poet's mere imagination or "legendary moonlight" (WSCPP, 27) succeeds only in distorting reality. He uses a special aspect of nature for his own ends, and his poetry can only be thus "marginal, subliminal" (WSCPP, 712), for a poet who is directly concerned with confronting the visible world:

The spring came there in clinking pannicles
Of half-dissolving frost, the summer came,
If ever, whisked and wet, not ripening,
Before the winter's vacancy returned.
The myrtle, if the myrtle ever bloomed,
Was like a glacial pink upon the air.
The green palmettoes in crepuscular ice
Clipped frigidly blue-black meridians,
Morose chiaroscuro, gauntly drawn. (WSCPP, 27)

These lines strangely echo the desert in the opening lines of Eliot's "The Wasteland" where fading flowers are the only surviving vegetation. However, the setting here is not a desert but an icy space in which flowers such as "panicles," "myrtle," "palmettos," "meridians," and "chiaroscuro" hardly bloom. The spring is half frosty, the summer is wet and not ripening enough, and the glacial icy winter is almost everlasting.

This fanciful view of reality is also unclear. The mist in "Elusive, faint, more mist than moon, perverse" (WSCPP, 27) and mistiness in "cold in a boreal mistiness of the moon" echo Eliot's "brown fog" (CPTSE, 65) of London where no man dares even look beyond the confines of his feet. However, whereas sterility and the lack of vision in Eliot's "The Wasteland" reflect the spiritual and emotional emptiness of the modern world, they are in Stevens' poem the result of man's denial of the physical reality. The moonlight thoughts are

"like jades affecting the sequestered bride" (WSCPP, 27). They are illegitimate because they evade rather than direct to reality. Crispin wavers between this state and that of his Yucatan experience in which he seeks a vision which includes a reality that is coarse but productive and energetic not turned to a limited and over-refined sensibility.

The "Arctic moonlight"(WSCPP, 28) that Crispin projected on the land "he saw across his vessel's prow" (WSCPP, 28) provides no true liaison with nature; instead, it cuts the poet off from the commonplaces of his world which a less "relentless" poet could make use of. Crispin vacillates between the moon as the Romantic imagination and the sun as reality.²²⁴ The former might provide a "blissful liaison, / between himself and his environment," but it seems unreal and fake:

Perhaps the Arctic moonlight really gave
The liaison, the blissful liaison,
Between himself and his environment,
Which was, and is, chief motive, first delight,
For him, and not for him alone. It seemed
Illusive, faint, more mist than moon, perverse,
Wrong as a divagation to Peking. . . . (WSCPP, 28)

After having undergone three different sets of the external conditions to which he has responded internally, he realises the necessity of the imagination to work consciously upon reality in order to cover "the essential prose" (WSCPP, 29). After this encounter with a harsh reality, Crispin is purged from his Romantic conception of reality even to such an extent that he can reverse the motto with which he began his voyage. Now his motto is no longer "man is the intelligence of his soil" but "his soil is man's intelligence." Thus, he recognizes that the external reality is the source of his creativity and the reason of his internal change and growth:

224. Ronald Sukenick, among many critics, points out that Stevens's use of the sun for reality and the moon for the imagination. (Sukenick, 86).

Nota: his soil is man's intelligence.

That's better. That's worth crossing seas to find.

Crispin in one laconic phrase laid bare

His cloudy drift and planned a colony. (WSCPP, 29)

This passage confirms Stevens' preference for the American art over the European. It corresponds to Vendler's comment that the main aim of the poem consists "of rejecting European aestheticism and asserting that all poetry must be native to its region."²²⁵ The commonplace particulars of the world become a determining factor in Crispin's new vision of reality. The poetic expression of this reality celebrates the "rankest trivia" with a better taste than things falsified by the stale imagination:

Hence the reverberations in the words

Of his first central hymns, the celebrants

Of rankest trivia, tests of the strength

Of his aesthetic, his philosophy,

The more invidious, the more desired. (WSCPP, 30)

Crispin seems to understand his role at last. As a realist, he accepts the visible world and its infinite variety; he does not merely project on nature his own self-conscious roles. His poetry, too, is deliberately constructed from the anti-romantic. Crispin will avoid the temptation to make Carolina "polar-purple" (WSCPP, 27); he will look at things as they are and call them by their proper name: "Abhorring Turk as Esquimau, the lute / As the marimba, the magnolia as rose" (WSCPP, 30).

It is "Upon these premises propounding" (WSCPP, 30) that Crispin bases his art. He is a man of the imagination building upon native traditions. He becomes the spokesman for his native habitat whether from Georgia or from any other American place:

225. Helen Vendler, ed., "Wallace Stevens," *Voices and Visions: The Poet in America* (New York: Random, 1987), 133.

The man in Georgia waking among pines
Should be pine-spokesman. The responsive man,
Planting his pristine cores in Florida,
Should prick thereof, not on the psaltery,
But on the banjo's categorical gut,
'fuck, tuck, while the flamingoes flapped his bays. (WSCPP, 31)

By accepting things that exist on the American soil, the American art can be found "more exquisite than any tumbling verse" (WSCPP, 29). The true American artist plays "not upon the psaltery or lyre of Europe but on the unpretentious guitar or banjo."²²⁶

Stevens' focus on American soil shows his departure from the international traditions favored by Eliot and Pound and places him in the line of Williams and Crane who rely on the American space as an essential component of American poetry. After the explorations of various American locations, Crispin moves toward a more specific American town of Florida. Like Stevens with Florida, Williams, after the explorations of various American locations in *The American Grain*, concerns himself with the more specific American town of Paterson in his *Paterson*. The focus on specific American space reflects the belief of both poets in the possibility of writing a poetry that meaningfully reflects the world in which they live.

However, the residents of Paterson are like Crispin who, as a new immigrant to the new world, fails to recognize the newly reached American reality. Paterson's inhabitants "walk incommunicado"²²⁷ because they are unable to connect with and comprehend the "thoughts"²²⁸ of the city. These thoughts consist of various historical and cultural sources of

226. Ibid., 134.

227. Williams, *Paterson*, 9.

228. Ibid.

the city of Paterson: a deformed young man visited by George Washington,²²⁹ "Hessian deserters from the British Army, a number of albinos among them, escaped negro slaves and a lot of women and their brats released in New York City after the British had been forced to leave."²³⁰

In Stevens' poem, Crispin has first to get rid of the European legacy to recognise his new American environment. Likewise, the inhabitants of Paterson have to break with the past because, in Paterson, even the park, which he compares to the Classical saturnalia, fails to infuse meaning into their modern conditions. Thus, the possible connection between these townspeople and an older established cultural tradition remains redolent in the park and can only serve to intoxicate them: "It is this air! / the air of the Midi / and the old cultures intoxicates them."²³¹

To better apprehend the American reality, Williams, like Stevens, calls for new poetic forms to correspond to this changing world:

unless there is
a new mind there cannot be a new
line, the old will go on
repeating itself with recurring
deadliness: without invention
nothing lies under the witch-hazel
bush, the alder does not grow from among
the hummocks.²³²

229. *Ibid.*, 10.

230. *Ibid.*, 12.

231. *Ibid.*, 57.

232. *Ibid.*, 50.

Williams draws a distinction between novelty and imitation, with the "invention" of "a new mind" offering a contrast from the "recurring deadliness" of the old: "If we can make it new, if we can invent, we can progress. The line in poetry must reflect those changes if it is to maintain any connection to things as they are."²³³

Williams also shares Stevens' optimism and faith in the power of the imagination to replace the European traditional forms which are not compatible with American realities:

But there is a hole
in the bottom of the bag.
It is the imagination
which cannot be fathomed.
It is through this hole
we escape.²³⁴

The poet of the new world has to rely on his imagination rather than on tradition to invent and to communicate a specifically American literary tradition. In order to seize control of language from tradition, Williams extols the imagination as a force which individuals use in conjunction with their perception of reality to experience a moment of pure understanding. This force "gives the feeling of completion by revealing the oneness of experience; it rouses rather than stupefies the intelligence by demonstrating . . . that life is valuable-when completed by the imagination."²³⁵ The imagination vitalizes everything it touches by making everything new.

233. Emily Rosko and Anton Vander Zee, *A Broken Thing: Poets on the Line* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2011), 11.

234. *Ibid.*, 212.

235. William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos* (New York: New Directions, 1986), 194.

d- Return: Settling America and its Locales

After experiencing a series of adventures, it is time for Crispin to go back to the ordinary world. The return is not to Europe with its stale aesthetics but to the new continent which requires new forms of art. The lesson that he brings back after his journey is the necessity to apprehend the American reality as it is immediately experienced.

The end of his journey finds Crispin back to his quotidian or domestic scene where he began and left confronting the world. He becomes a bourgeois citizen. He acquires property and makes plans to establish himself. Married to a "prismy blonde" (WSCPP, 34), Crispin finds himself the "magister of a single room" (WSCPP, 34). Each morning, he is "still curious" (WSCPP, 34) about the meaning of things though less troublesome:

Yeoman and grub, but with a fig in sight,
And cream for the fig and silver for the cream,
A blonde to tip the silver and to taste
The rapey gouts. Good star, how that to be
Annealed them in their cabin ribaldries! Still curious. (WSCPP, 34)

Like Deucalion and Pyrrha, Crispin has to repopulate his colony but without the miracle of springing up humans from stones on the ground. Crispin becomes a father of four "chits" or daughters in a natural and not supernatural sense. His daughters are from the actual world and not metaphysical "cloudy" world that Crispin has rejected throughout his journey:

The chits came for his jigging, bluet-eyed,
Hands without touch yet touching poignantly
Leaving no room upon his cloudy knee. (WSCPP, 35)

The daughters, according to Frank Kermode, are the four seasons as "figuring the cyclical nature of the creative imagination."²³⁶ The seasons connote annual renewal and the

236. Frank Kermode, *Wallace Stevens* (London: Oliver and Boyd LTD , 1960), 34.

cycle of birth and death. The four daughters will secure the poetic vitality by finding new structures to fit the changing reality. The circumstances of the external world are ever-changing and the mind of the four daughters must respond to produce an art in a harmonious union with the American reality.

If procreation in Stevens' poem reflects poetic fertility, in Eliot's "Wasteland," birth is an indication of failure and the sterility of the modern city. In the "Game of Chess," the reproductive function entails abortion, pain and family disintegration. Bearing five children, Lil has lost health and youth. She "nearly died of [the birth of] young George" (CPTSE, 68). She is thirty one but looks much older with her bad teeth. Her appearance may even destroy her family life. Her husband Albert is disgusted with her "antique" (CPTSE, 68) looks and threatens to abandon her for another woman who is still able to give him a "good time" (CPTSE, 68). Under these threatening circumstances, she takes "pills"(CPTSE, 68) to get an abortion.

Eliot's "The Wasteland" and Stevens' "The Comedian as the Letter C" employ the mythic method as a structuring device to convey their themes universally. Eliot incorporates elements from the Grail legend to parallel and contrast the medieval past and the present to communicate the feeling of sterility of modern civilization. In fact, modern man has lost moral values which once constituted a fixed standard to measure the dignity and the degradation of the community. In a like manner, the myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha provides a major structural device in Stevens' poem, but his aim is different from Eliot's. Stevens incorporates myth to show how Classical culture is irrelevant to modern America.

The next chapter sheds light on Eliot's and Stevens' reactions to Dante's *The Divine Comedy* which supports and confirms Christian values, the values in which Eliot and Stevens grew up. It examines the way Eliot and Stevens respond differently to Dante's medievalism. In their responses, there is a contrast between Eliot's Christian beliefs and Stevens' atheism.

Chapter Three: Dante's Medievalism in Eliot's and Stevens' Poetry

Despite their different attitudes toward religion, both Eliot and Stevens share Dante's need to create order out of chaos. In fact, both of them attempt to follow Dante's example to face the fragmented experience of the modern age and to reconcile it with a redeeming poetic ideal. However, Eliot's religious side makes his response to Dante different from that of Stevens. While Eliot turns to Dante to restore the medieval religious authoritativeness in modern times, Stevens' modes of intertextuality reveal his rejection of that authority.

Many critics have discussed Eliot's indebtedness to Dante, which Eliot recognizes in many of his essays. They have examined Eliot's poetic career in relation to Dante's progression from the negative to the positive in *The Divine Comedy* as represented by his way from "Inferno" and "Purgatorio" to "Paradiso." They argue that Eliot's early poetry, including "The Wasteland," is his "Inferno," while "Ash-Wednesday" is his "Purgatorio" and "Four Quartets" his "Paradiso." One weakness of this study is that it does not recognize that Eliot's intertextual relation to Dante is more ironic in his early poetry following a desire to highlight the difficulties he meets in convincing the members of a secular modern society to accept the medieval Dantean theology.

As for Stevens' connectedness to Dante, no thorough study of the relationship between these two poets exists. In this chapter, I argue that Stevens re-works Dante's text to exploit the tension between the religious and the secular and thereby challenging the orthodox view that only Christianity can fill the spiritual vacuum in modern societies. He also reverses the ideology of the original text by maintaining that poetry based on reality is the only legitimate substitute for religions in modern times.

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part examines how the intertextual relation between Eliot's early poetry and Dante's "Inferno" is built on irony, his use of

"Purgatorio" in "Ash Wednesday" is less ironic, and the relation between "The Quartet" and "Paradiso" is hardly ironic. The second part examines Stevens' poetry as an attempt to secularize Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. This secularization requires a revision of Dante's view of evil and pain. Rejecting Dante's view of evil and pain as something alien, Stevens presents them as something natural. Stevens' idea of change which revises Dante's "Purgatorio" is an attempt to assign poetry a humanizing role that was once religion's. It also shows how Stevens offers earthly paradise as a substitute for Dante's metaphysical paradise.

A- Eliot's Response to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*

a- Dante and Eliot: Master and Ephebe in Defense of Religious Orthodoxy

T.S Eliot recognized how important the influence of the medieval Italian poet Dante Alighieri on his work is. When Eliot was asked in 1949 what his favorite period in Italian literature was, he answered, "Dante, and then Dante, and then Dante. No one has had a greater influence on me than Dante."²³⁷ Later in 1961, he confessed his enduring appreciation for Dante's poetry and the influential role it played throughout his life: "There is one poet . . . who impressed me profoundly when I was twenty-two and with only a rudimentary acquaintance with his language started to puzzle out his lines, one poet who remains the comfort and amazement of my age although my knowledge of his language remains rudimentary. . . . the poet I speak of is Dante."²³⁸

In fact, frequent allusions to Dante throughout his poetic career constitute a sign of Eliot's solid allegiance to and great admiration for Dante. Moreover, Eliot refers frequently to the Medieval poet in his essays, and he even writes an essay, "What Dante Means to Me." This essay which is devoted completely to Dante is "a

237. T. S. Eliot, quoted in Kenneth Paul Kramer, *Redeeming Time: T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets"* (Lanham: Cowley Publications, 2007), 269.

238. T.S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic, and Other Writing*, (London: Faber, 1965), 23.

treatise on the literary accomplishment that his masterpiece, *La divina commedia* . . . constitutes." ²³⁹

Eliot turned to Dante for stylistic and spiritual aims. In terms of style, Dante's poetry serves as an example for his theory of depersonalization based on his conviction that the poet should distance himself from his own emotions. Dante's impersonality justified Eliot's belief in the importance of Dante as a master. In Eliot's words, "Dante, I believe, had experiences which seemed to him of some importance . . . [not] because they had happened to him and because he, Dante Alighieri, was an important person . . . ; but important in themselves; and therefore they seemed to him to have some philosophical and impersonal value."²⁴⁰ In other words, Dante's sense of impersonality is achieved through "clear visual images"²⁴¹ which are endowed with meaning and therefore their greater intensity.

Eliot also turns to Dante because of his religious sensibility. Eliot is a Christian poet who seeks a redemptive consolation to the "immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history."²⁴² This pessimistic view of history is the natural outcome of the loss of religious faith and the decline of spirituality in modern times. The evil of modern man can be seen in his bondage to the material and the sensual, and his estrangement from the spiritual. In his late essay "The Social Function of Poetry," he observes, "much has been said everywhere about the decline of religious belief; not so much notice has been taken of the decline of religious sensibility. The trouble of the modern age is not merely the inability to believe certain things about God and man which our forefathers believed, but the inability to feel *towards* God and man as they did."²⁴³

239. Murphy, *Critical Companion to T. S. Eliot*, 145.

240. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950), 233.

241. *Ibid.*, 204.

242. T.S. Eliot, *The Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Frank Kermode (New York: Harcourt, 1975), 177.

243. T.S. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), 25.

This spiritual emptiness which Eliot calls "cultural breakdown"²⁴⁴ may be a cause of cultural pessimism, but Eliot accepts the challenge to open a path toward a cultural regeneration through Christian religious orthodoxy or through the influence of "the Church itself, in which orthodoxy resides."²⁴⁵ To recover the medieval values that are unavailable to the poet's own era, he turns to Dante because Dante's quest for spiritual enlightenment and eternal salvation takes place within the framework of orthodox Christian theology. Eliot extols Dante's *Commedia* for its supporting predication on Catholic philosophy: "From the 'Purgatorio' one learns that a straightforward philosophical statement can be great poetry; from the 'Paradiso,' that more and more rarefied and remote states of beatitude can be the material for great poetry."²⁴⁶ In this respect, Dominic Manganiello writes, "Eliot underlines his master's ability to combine stylistic with spiritual aims and to treat philosophy in terms of vision. Dante's art shows that purgation and even blessedness can be the stuff of great poetry. ... A coherent philosophy, such as the Catholic, provides an objective system of reference for both the poet and reader."²⁴⁷

Eliot's long standing admiration for Dante has not gone unnoticed by critics. For instance, Sister M. Cleophas argues that Eliot employs "Dante's 'The Purgatorio'" to exemplify in a modern form the Christian scheme of sorrow for sin and the amendment necessary for renewing innocence of heart."²⁴⁸ Audrey T. Rodgers examines how Eliot, like Dante, in "Ash-Wednesday," uses the pattern of the quest to explore "the profusion of

244. T.S. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1939), 182.

245. T.S. Eliot, *After Strange Gods* (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), 32.

246. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 213-114.

247. Dominic Manganiello, *T.S. Eliot and Dante* (Hampshire: Macmillan, 1989), 32.

248. Sister M. Cleopha, "Ash Wednesday: The Purgatorio in a Modern Mode," *Comparative Literature* 11, no. 4 (1959): 339.

opposites that constitute contemporary life."²⁴⁹ Viorica Patea, for her part, argues that Eliot's theory of unified sensibility which is strongly similar to Jung's archetypal imagination owes much to Dante's visual imagination.²⁵⁰

Other critics adopt a more general approach to the connectedness of the two poets. They consider Eliot's poetry in terms of Dante's *The Divine Comedy* and equate the three stages of his poetic development to Dante's "Inferno," "Purgatorio" and "Paradiso." Mohit K. Ray, Alzina Stone Dale, and Reed Way Dasenbrock divide Eliot's major poems into the great sections that make up the *The Divine Comedy*, "The Wasteland" being Eliot's "Inferno," "Ash Wednesday" his "Purgatorio" and "Four Quartets" his "Paradiso."

Despite these thorough analyses of the intertextual link between Dante and Eliot, few critics have recognized the complex character of such relation. In fact, in his early poetry, Eliot employs Dante's *The Divine Comedy* for ironic purposes in his early poetry while the presence of Dante's text in the poetry Eliot wrote after his conversion is hardly interpreted as such. The complexity of Eliot's allusions to Dante is due mainly to the fact that the two poets lived in two different ages. Eliot regards Dante as exemplary because of his ability to confirm the orthodox values of the Middle Ages, but the troubling task is how to recover the orthodox values in his modern secular world. Dante was much luckier than Eliot for having lived in an age when philosophy, religion and art were not dissociated. He benefited from "a mythology and a theology which had undergone a more complete absorption into life."²⁵¹ In contrast, Eliot has to face "the compartmentalization of life in general ... the sharp division

249. Audrey T. Rodgers "T. S. Eliot's Purgatorio: The Structure of Ash-Wednesday," *Comparative Literature Studies* 7, no. 1 (1970): 97.

250. Viorica Patea, "Eliot, Dante and the Politics of a United Sensibility," *T. S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe*, ed. Paul Douglass (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011), 23.

251. T.S. Eliot, "Dante," *Sacred Wood*, 147.

between our religious and our ordinary life. I know that in the world in which we live this compartmentalization is constantly being forced upon us."²⁵²

Despite these challenges, Eliot sets himself the task of developing a Christian poetics viable in their secular world, a task even more difficult than it was in Dante's time. Cleanth Brooks explains this difficulty: "Since ours is a secular society, Eliot's poetry was frankly moving against the hard currents of such a society. In view of this fact, he deserved special credit as a man who had to win his way against difficulties and perhaps his basically non-Christian audience deserves some credit too for as much tolerance as it accorded him."²⁵³

Far more than emphasizing the orthodox aspects of Dante's thought, Eliot incorporates different elements of *The Divine Comedy* so as to underscore the difficulties he encounters as a devout modern Christian poet. From here, the tone of his allusion to Dante changes throughout his poetic career. In the early poems, Eliot's use of Dante has ironic purposes. The poems in the "Ash Wednesday" period are less ironic. The poems in the "Four Quartets" period are without apparent irony.

b- Dante's "Inferno" in Eliot's Early Poetry: Irony and the Failure of Communication

In his early poetry, Eliot's use of Dante has ironic effects. The aim of this irony is to reveal the extraordinary difficulties involved with developing a Christian aesthetics, especially in a secular society. Dante has the advantage that his readers shared his religious views; the characters in his "Inferno" know the reasons for their punishment, admit their sins, and communicate them. Though Eliot evokes Dante's "Inferno" to make people aware of the relationship between medieval hell and modernity, the outcomes of such invocation are ironic

252. T.S. Eliot, "Religious Drama: Medieval and Modern," *University of Edinburgh Journal* 9, no.1 (1937): 13.

253. Cleanth Brooks, "The Serious Poet in a Secularized Society: Reflections on Eliot and Twentieth-Century Culture," *The Placing of T.S. Eliot*, ed. Jewel Spears Brooker (Columbia: University of Missouri, 1991), 110.

because the inhabitants of modern London are "unaware of the horror, or spiritual hell in which their souls roam."²⁵⁴ Thus, Eliot becomes aware that he is ideologically at odds with the majority of London's society and that he, as a Christian poet, faces additional difficulties because of the clash between his values and those of his society. Since his religious poetry is irrelevant to a modern secular world, his task to redeem the present from chaos is harder than Dante's.

Dante's Hell is divided into nine circles, according to the seriousness of the sins. The gravity of the sins increases as he descends from one circle to another and punishments grow more severe. In the first circle or Limbo lie those who were not sinful but did not accept Christ. In the second circle of Hell are those overcome by lust. The gluttonous souls are punished in the third circle. The Fourth Circle of Hell is where the souls are punished for their greed. The wrathful and sullen are condemned in the Fifth Circle. The heretics reside in the sixth circle and the violent in the Seventh Circle. The Eighth Circle is occupied by the fraudulent. The ninth is the deepest and blackest circle, where the traitorous shades are punished.

At the beginning of "Prufrock," the epigraph reinforces the ironic relation between Dante's "Inferno" and Eliot's early poetry. The Epigraph consists of lines from Dante's "Inferno," spoken by his character Count Guido da Montefeltro. Dante meets the punished Guido in the eighth circle of Hell, where Guido is imprisoned in a flame. Guido says he is speaking freely to Dante about his evil life only because he thinks Dante is dead and cannot return to earth to report it. This epigraph reads from the original Italian: "If I were to believe that I was speaking to anyone who would ever return to the world, this flame would cease to stir any further, but since no one ever returned alive from these depths, if what I hear is true,

254. Andrija Matic, "Eliot, Dante and Irony," *T. S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe*, ed. Paul Douglass, 90.

then without fear of infamy I respond to you."²⁵⁵ Though Guido is paralyzed in flame, he is aware of his predicament and still remembers the sin he committed to be condemned in Hell. Moreover, he still has the linguistic energy to tell his story to Dante.

Eliot's characters are not sinners who receive punishment in a metaphysical world as is the case in Dante's hell. They are rather victims of the loss of spirituality in the city where they live. Though their city shares the same loneliness and paralysis, their predicament is not the same as the damned souls in Dante's Hell. Sweeney, Gerontion, Prufrock and the inhabitants of "The Wasteland" are not punished for and according to the gravity of their sins by Christian standards. Rather, they are alienated modern men who fall victim to the intellectual, spiritual and social bareness together with the decline of moral values. Contrary to Guido, Eliot's Personas suffer from inarticulateness and inertia. They share both Guido's fear of being exposed and the need to tell the story. However, though there is no visible tongue of flame that obstructs their speech, they fail to use words to express meaning as Guido manages to do. The failure to communicate is due to the loss of religious faith. Eliot explains that this "belief in which you no longer believe is something which to some extent you can still understand; but when religious feeling disappears, the words in which men have struggled to express it become meaningless."²⁵⁶

255. Murphy, *Critical Companion to T. S. Eliot*, 292.

256. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, 25.

As a result of crippling shyness, Prufrock, unlike Guido in Dante's hell, is unable to express his predicament to those who are around him, both men and women. The poem presents two reasons for Prufrock's failure to communicate. The first reason has to do with his fears to be misinterpreted by the lady. She would say, "That is not what I meant at all. That is not it, at all" (CPTSE, 17). In this way, Prufrock never tries a conversation and remains silent. In fact, Prufrock is aware of the women's inability to be engaged in tangible communication although it seems they are having conversations as "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo"(CPTSE, 14). They do not get into a genuine conversation that penetrates to real people's life but into stereotyped talk about Michelangelo who as a source of attraction may divert them from Prufrock's speech. The second cause for Prufrock's silence concerns his mistrust of language to communicate his thoughts. He seems to be willing to express what he has inside, but he thinks "It is impossible to say just what I mean" (CPTSE, 16). Eliot briefly summarizes Prufrock's communicative paralysis: "Full of sentence, but a bit obtuse" (CPTSE, 17).

If "Prufrock" focuses on the alienation of the individual from his environment, "Gerontion" stresses the alienation of the central character who fails to find meaning in his personal experience, religious tradition, and history. Since he is no longer young and because the memory of the love song of the French Prufrock, in the garden and the sense of his half the present. No (CPTSE, 13) is a reminder of the Dante and Hell. How, say, the by saying, the in and self (CPTSE, 46) social spiritual Prufrock's paralytic is the result of his failure. He appears from a history of the god of life and he does not by his / Discompleteness, but (CPTSE, 14) all his history is by the sensitivity of the possibility of a total finality. No and for that, it shall be part of my (CPTSE, 11) "Do I dare to eat a peach?" (CPTSE, 17).

Because of his past heroic failure, history, rather than guiding his consciousness, leads him astray. He is then a victim of his history which betrays him by "cunning passages"

(CPTSE, 40) and "contrived corridors"(CPTSE, 40) leading to "confusion" (CPTSE, 40).

Because of such deception Gerontion's language bears no relation to experience but is merely "The word within a word" (CPTSE, 39) that cannot "speak a word" (CPTSE, 39). Even if it could, it would be in "memory only" (CPTSE, 40). This situation further exacerbates the conditions of misery and spiritual impotence from which the characters suffer.

Like Gerontion, the characters in "The Wasteland" are deprived of any communicative efficiency as a result of their sexual sterility. Despite being close to each other, they fail to enter into communicative interrelationships:

You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
They called me the hyacinth girl.
Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Lying nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (CPTSE, 64)

These are the recollections of the pleasant past of a Romantic encounter of two lovers in a garden full of flowers. Yet as soon as he returns from that fertile and wet environment into a new present, his emotional detachment mirroring immediately begins which results in his failure to speak.

The same sense of isolation and communicative failure prevails in the second section, "Game of Chess." The opening scene begins with a description of a woman home alone, waiting for someone, presumably her lover, with whom she is involved in an obviously sterile relationship. The woman, tortured by the isolation and boredom resulting from the cold relationship, begs a response from her husband or lover:

...Stay with me.

Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.

What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?

I never know what you are thinking. Think. (CPTSE, 67)

The woman's requests "Stay with me" and "Speak to me" suggest her hope to end isolation and to restore the hitherto fulfilling relationships. The man, however, uses language first and foremost to articulate his thoughts rather than establishing a communicative ground with the woman. To relieve this sense of isolation and communicative failure, they content themselves with hearing the same noise of "the wind under the door" (CPTSE, 67).

c- Dante's "Purgatorio" in Eliot's Middle Poetry: Less Irony but Uncertainties about Renouncing the World

While the intertextual connectedness between Eliot's early poetry and Dante's "Inferno" is ironic as they contrast the consciousness of Dante's damned souls and modern men's unawareness of their sins, Eliot's transitional poetry, written immediately after his conversion, including "Ash Wednesday" and "Ariel Poems", is less ironic. In these poems, he draws upon a vast array of Dante's "Purgatorio" to stress his move from spiritual emptiness to hope for human salvation.

These poems are about the poet's anguish as he tries to renounce his old life without experiencing the compensatory assurance of faith. They reveal Eliot's own anxiety after his conversion, when he felt alienated from his friends and acquaintances who rebuked him for his conversion. Ezra Pound blamed Eliot for embracing a faith outdated and incongruous with the modern world when "[t]he fact is that 'religion' long since resigned."²⁵⁷ Similarly, Virginia Woolf expressed her shocked disdain for Eliot's conversion whom she considered as "dead to

257. Ezra Pound, quoted in Jewel Spears Brooker, *T. S. Eliot: The Contemporary Reviews* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 277.

us"²⁵⁸ judging that "A corpse would seem to [her] more credible than he is."²⁵⁹ These poems are also about the poet's fear that the majority of the secular society are irresponsible to his Christian poetics that he develops to "redeem the time" (CPTSE, 100). In Part V, the speaker finds that most people are unreceptive to his message: "Where shall the word be found where will the word 1 Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence" (CPTSE, 102).

In "Ash Wednesday," Eliot evokes Dante to show the value of the purgative process and hence to assert the need for religious submission. He claims that Dante's *Vita Nuova* served as a model for this poem, but "Purgatorio" actually has also a strong presence in this very purgatorial poem. The love that Dante celebrates in the *Vita Nuova* reconciles human emotion with the divine virtue and shows no submission to purely carnal passion that reduces the soul to a passive element at the mercy of the body's drives: "Although her image that continually abode with me, were Love's exultancy to master me, nevertheless it was of so noble a virtue that no time did it suffer Love to rule over me without the faithful counsel of reason, in those things where such counsel were useful to hear."²⁶⁰

Having ascended through the refining flames to "Paradiso" at the peak of Mount Purgatory, Dante meets with Beatrice for the first time in the *Divine Comedy*. Beatrice reprimands Dante for pursuing this erroneous worldly quest:

His steps turn'd into deceitful ways
Following false images o f the good, that make
No promise perfect.²⁶¹

258. Virginia Woolf, quoted in Erik Tonning, *Modernism and Christianity* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 5.

259. Ibid.

260. Dante Alighieri, *La Vita Nuova*, trans. Thomas Okey (London: Dent, 1906), 5.

261. Dante Alighieri, *The Divine Comedy*, trans. Henry F. Cary (New York: P. F. Collier and Son Company, 1909), 270.

In canto XXXI, Beatrice tells Dante that his love for her is tantamount to loving God; What Dante wrote in the *Vita Nuova* now comes to pass; his love for a woman points the way to the divine:

She straight began:

"When my desire invited thee to love

The good, which sets about to our aspirings." ²⁶²

In "Ash Wednesday," the renunciation of the earthly experiences and pleasures to attain spiritual fulfilment is suggested by the title and made more evidently by the opening lines of the poem. The title refers to "Ash Wednesday" the first day of the religious season of Lent, a day of penitence when the penitents have their foreheads marked with ash. It is considered a time of fasting in commemoration of Christ's fast in the wilderness (Matt, iv.2). It is a period when a Christian repents for his past sins and turns away from worldly mundane towards God.

This desire of repentance suggested by the title is also reinforced by the abundant references to the "turning" in the opening lines of the poem:

Because I do not hope to turn again

Because I do not hope

Because I do not hope turn

Desiring this man's and that man's scope

I no longer strive to strive towards such things

(why should the aged eagle stretch its wings?)

Why should I mourn

The vanished power of the usual resign? (CPTSE, 95)

262 . Ibid., 271.

The speaker bespeaks his alienation from God and expresses his readiness to embark on a long spiritual journey in order to attain salvation. These opening lines are the very words of Guido Cavalcanti's poem "'Ballata,' written in exile at Saranza"²⁶³ bidding farewell to his lover. Cavalcanti's lament recalls Dante's separation from the beloved Beatrice in *The Vita Nuova*. Like Cavalcanti and Dante, the speaker in Eliot's poem resolves to accept exile to discard anything that may hinder the soul's journey towards God.

Eliot acknowledges the importance of a divine element to raise human love above flesh. Corporeal purification can be possible only with the help of the invisible influence of the silent lady who honors the Virgin Mary. This lady echoes the character of Beatrice as the hope that lies in an elevated love of God. In the second part of the poem, after refuting the tempting lady's face and voice, he addresses his new "Lady" and appeals for her to help him gain both purification and a new identity:

Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained
In the hollow round of my skull. (CPTSE, 97)

263. Dante Gabriel Rossetti, *Poems and Translations 1850-1870* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1913), 414. Dante Gabriel Rossetti translates Guido Cavalcanti's poem "Ballata, written in exile at Saranza" as:

Because I think not ever to return,
Ballad, to Tuscany, -
Go therefore thou for me
Straight to my Lady's face
Who, of her noble grace,
Shall show thee courtesy.

that consume the flesh under the juniper tree are salutary agents of the disintegrative process. The number three is significant. Dante's own ascent through Purgatory witnesses the purgation of disordered love: lust, gluttony, and avarice - all three divisive elements in the universe and in the individual man. Likewise, the beneficent leopards will affect the transfiguration of disordered love in "Ash-Wednesday."

Another Dantean feature evoked in "Ash Wednesday" is that of the "stairs." Dante's pilgrim in "Purgatorio" ascends the seven terraces on Mount Purgatory. On each of the seven terraces, a specific sin is punished and purified. Here again one is presented with the image of a man ascending and standing every now and then at every turning and constantly looking down on the comforts and pleasures which he has left behind and up at the possibility of his spiritual salvation. In both "Ash-Wednesday" and "Purgatorio," this upward progression symbolizes the steps the penitent takes as he sheds his sins and ascends to God.

The same limits of human vision and spiritual capacity which characterize Dante's pilgrim are present at the close of "Ash-Wednesday." Dante's experience of drinking from purifying holy waters reinforces most pointedly the nature of man's limitations. Like Dante, the penitent has achieved one kind of purification and a second "rebirth" must be affected as he reunites with God. Unlike the Eliot character, the speaker in "Ash-Wednesday" has glimpsed hope. The tiger that descends from the empty void and the side of suffering read and the address to Christ Hudson's beautiful words ("CPA Sat, 98) of "Ash Wednesday" after the words of the Good Shepherd ("CPA Sat, 98) and digests and the poem will be a kind of silence, a time to be, and a light of a new life. The three leopards

Eliot and Dante accept suffering as a purging force toward spiritual submission. However, whereas in "Purgatorio" Dante experiences a total spiritual transformation by forgetting worldly things and becoming ready to enter "Paradiso," the speaker in "Ash Wednesday" undergoes only half purgation. While the quester is, at the end of his journey,

purged from carnal desire after the three leopards have devoured his body, he is still exposed to temptations that may inhibit him from taking a spiritual journey. In this context, F. R Leavis argues that "The modern poet can make no pretence to Dante's certitude- to his firm possession of vision." ²⁶⁴

Despite his renunciation of the body, the speaker doubts his ability to overcome the various kinds of temptations. Temptation in Eliot's poem is not only the sins according to the Bible, but anything that might distract him from God. To avoid spiritual violations, the poet must overcome everything that poses spiritual danger that may divert him from God. In Part VI, for example, the sea images seem to be harmless beauties of nature, but they represent a threat for the religious fulfilment:

..... though I do not wish to wish these things
From the wide window towards the granite shore
The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
Unbroken wings
And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell
Quickens to recover (CPTSE, 104).

It is difficult for the poet to live in a world without responding to its beauty, but "these marvelous evocation of a polymorphous reveling of all the senses in natural beauty shows a divided consciousness which views the physical pleasure as temptation."²⁶⁵ These things are

264. Leavis, "Eliot," 684.

265. Albert Gelpi, *Coherent Splendor: The American Poetic Renaissance, 1910-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 136.

distractive. For a man with "lost heart," "weak spirit" and "blind eye," these worldly objects might function "as temptation [and] as incitement to further treacheries."²⁶⁶

In addition to nature, the speaker's fear stems from the fact that spiritual and artistic values may be somehow incompatible. Much of his poetry and prose reviles both attempts to conflate religion and art and the idea that poetry may be a substitute for religion. With Shelley, poetry reached its highest point of exaggeration when he claimed that "poets are the unacknowledged legislators of mankind"²⁶⁷ Similarly, Matthew Arnold suggested that poetry might replace religion by arguing that "more and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us. Without poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry."²⁶⁸

In many of his essays, Eliot condemns this attempt to make art into a religion. For Eliot, a poet is not a priest that performs religious rites. Eliot claims that "[t]he poet makes poetry, the metaphysician makes metaphysics, the bee makes honey."²⁶⁹ Against Shelley's and Arnold's tenet that poetry has the status of religion, Eliot belittles the power of poetry as a religious force. Eliot claims that "Poetry 'is capable of saving us' ... it is like saying that the wall-paper will save us when the walls have crumbled."²⁷⁰

Eliot thus denies the priestly functions of the poet upheld by the Romantics. The role of the poet consists of preserving and second improving his language. In "Little Gidding," he declares that the poet must endeavor "to purify the dialect of the tribe" (CPTSE, 218). Thus,

266. Leavis, "T.S.Eliot," 684.

267. Percy Bysshe Shelley, *The Works of P.B. Shelley* (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions, 1994.), 660.

268. Matthew Arnold, "The Study of Poetry," *Religion and Literature: A Reader*, eds. Robert Detweiler and David Jasper (Westminster: John Knox Press, 2000), 7.

269. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, 118.

270. T.S. Eliot, *The Letters of T. S. Eliot*, Volume 3: 1926-1927 (London: Faber and Faber, 2012), 340.

poetry and religion are two different spheres and should not be treated as identical. In "The Function of Criticism," for example, he had remarked, "I have assumed as axiomatic that a creation, a work of art, is autotelic."²⁷¹

However, poetry should not be independent from religion. In "Notes Towards the Definition of Culture," Eliot argues that "Aesthetic sensibility must be extended to spiritual perception, and spiritual perception must be extended into aesthetic sensibility."²⁷² If poetry does not contribute to evade earthly attachments, it can be, like nature, dangerously delusive. In "Ash Wednesday," Eliot betrays a fear of allowing his artistic ambitions to hinder his spirituality and to lead him to a less spiritually fulfilling life. The temptation that he encounters on the third stair is that posed by poetry:

At the first turning of the third stair
Was a slotted window bellied like the figs's fruit
And beyond the hawthorn blossom and a pasture scene
The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green
Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.
Blown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,
Lilac and brown hair;
Distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the third stair,
Fading, fading; strength beyond hope and despair
Climbing the third stair. (CPTSE, 99)

Repentance is a spiritual exercise that requires the renouncement of aesthetic enjoyments. Yet, unlike Dante, the speaker is not wholly free from the temptation to relapse into old ways. In his purgatorial ascent towards God, he still remembers the music of the flute.

271. T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (London: Faber & Faber, 1999), 102-103.

272. Eliot, *Christianity and Culture*, 102-103.

Thus, the charms of "distraction" caused by the music of the flute can hold back spiritual progress. Despite the will and the persistence to climb the stairs, he continues to be fascinated by the melodies of the flute. In order to reach a complete purification, the flute should be rendered breathless and "the silencing of the flute (poetry) may be a necessary step in reaching the world."²⁷³ The speaker's fear stems from his incertitude to be able to "handle the tension generated by this attempt to integrate the memories in the past feeling with the movement towards a kind of asceticism and spiritual purification."²⁷⁴

It is also important to note that in the very similar way to "Ash Wednesday," the personae in the transitional poems suffer from hesitation to accept conversion at the end of the journey. They seem to have undergone an incomplete conversion because of their suffering that derives from their inability to either revert to their old values or to submit fully to their new beliefs, as is the case with the "irresolute" soul of "Animula" who is "unable to fare forward or retreat" (CPTSE, 113). The Magi also cannot "fare forward or retreat" since the advent of Christ "has made the old dispensation impossible, but neither are they able to experience the fulfillment of the new dispensation. As the Magus recounts, "We returned to our places, these Kingdoms, / But no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation, / With an alien people clutching their gods" (CPTSE, 110).

"Ash-Wednesday" and other transitional poems betray Eliot's own anxiety after his conversion when he felt alienated from his secular society without experiencing the compensatory assurance of faith. Dante's "Purgatorio" has actually much less ironic presence in "Ash-Wednesday." The penitents of both poems are acutely conscious of the necessity of disciplining the soul through suffering. The character Dante in "Purgatorio," after passing through purgatory, becomes ready for a glimpse of paradise. In contrast, the characters in

273. Kinereth Meyer and Rachel Salmon Dshen, *Reading the Underthought: Jewish Hermeneutics and the Christian Poetry of Hopkins and Eliot* (Washington, D.C. : Catholic University of America Press, 2010), 238.

274. Martin Scofield, *T. S. Eliot: The Poems* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 157.

"Ash-Wednesday" and in other transitional poems, at the end of their spiritual journey, are still hesitant and not completely liberated from the old values. It is only in his later poem "Four Quartets" that Eliot proves capable of definitely renouncing his old values and of fully submitting to his new beliefs.

d- Dante's "Paradiso" in Eliot's Late Poetry: Away from Irony and towards Incarnation in Modern London

While Eliot's "Ash-Wednesday" and other transitional poems seem to be his "Purgatorio," his "Four Quartets" is often called Eliot's "Paradiso" mainly because they are about Eliot's quest for absolute eternity. The poet is searching for a solution to the predicament of modern man to save his damned individual soul. Eliot adapts many elements from Dante's "Paradiso" in order to suggest that despite its sinful nature, human kind can be on a journey to reach eternity. From here, it is important to note that his religious beliefs in the postconversion poetry are more devoted and sincere than they were in his early and transitional poetry. This suggests that his beliefs expressed in his late poetry were so important and that he should not treat them ironically. In "Four Quartets," Eliot does continually allude to Dante's "Paradiso," but unlike the early verse, Eliot's use of Dante's "Paradise" tends to be in accord with its source. In this regard, Helene Gardner points out that in "Four Quartets," there are numerous "quotations and they are not made ironically, as are so many of the quotations in Eliot's earlier poetry,"²⁷⁵ and that, with a few exceptions, when his use of a quotation is compared to its original passage, one sees that "its sense has not been twisted and there is no clash between the original and the context in which Eliot has set it."²⁷⁶

275. Helen Gardner, *The Composition of "Four Quartets"* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1978), 30.

276. *Ibid.*

redemption. To be redeemed, man must confront the burden inherited from Adam, and accept the suffering required by purgation as Eliot demonstrates in "East Coker":

Our only health is the disease
If we obey the dying nurse
Whose constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse. (CPTSE, 201-2)

In order to be expiated from original sin, the sinner's redemption depends on more than suffering; however, Eliot shows that sin itself is necessary for salvation. This idea is treated even more directly in "Little Gidding." Alluding to the medieval Christian mystic Julian of Norwich, Eliot declares, "Sin is Behovely, but / All shall be well, and /All manner of thing shall be well" (CPTSE, 219-20). Sin is necessary in that it is inevitable or "behovely." Julian of Norwich contends that "Adam's sin was the most harm that was ever done,"²⁷⁷ but Christ made the "glorious Satisfaction."²⁷⁸

It is important to note that redemption from sin is motivated by God's love which is also at the centre of Dante's thought. Dante expresses this concept in the following way:

I in one God believe in one God;
One sole eternal Godhead, of whose love
All Heaven is moved, Himself unmoved the While.²⁷⁹

In "Four Quartets," Eliot starts to move beyond the penitential element in *The Divine Comedy* to focus on the role of divine love in the redemption of sins. While "Ash-Wednesday" shows the poet's acceptance of Dante's purgatorial scheme and the belief, which has its roots in his Christian faith, that suffering can be both a torment and a path to

277. Julian of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* (New York: Dover Publications, 2006), 51

278. Ibid., 52.

279. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 390.

causes great suffering, "The Quartets" takes pains to emphasize that its completeness is made possible by God's love. In effect, he equates Christ, "the still point," with love.

Complete redemption through God's love alters Eliot's attitude towards the body: he now believes that without the body the soul cannot be consummated in God. "Four Quartets" does not wish to discard the body, but rather to incorporate it into divine order. This is in itself the essence of Dante's earthly love for Beatrice which triggers a quest that will ultimately transfigure it into divine love. Eliot's acceptance of the body suggests that the body is redeemed and therefore needs not be denied. In other words, the Fall corrupted the body, but Incarnation restores it. The poem therefore presents the body as a meeting point of flesh and spirit." In "Little Gidding," for example, Eliot calls for "not less of love but expanding / Of love" (CPTSE, 219), so that it will "become renewed, transfigured"(CPTSE, 219) into a divine love. The integration of physical love into love of God is Dantean. Eliot's acceptance of the body is reflected in "East Coker," for example, when he describes the people dancing around bonfire:

And see them dancing around the bonfire
the association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie~
A dignified and commodious sacrament.
Two and two, necessarye coniunction,
Holding eche other by the hand or the arm
Whiche betokeneth concorde. CPTSE, 197)

Dante perceives the nature of God within a single point of time which is a point toward which all times converge, a center "where all time and place are present."²⁸⁰ Eliot expresses this perception in verse:

280. Ibid., 407.

Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present. (CPTSE, 189)

It is important to note that redemption is possible only when mankind meets with God "At the still point of the turning world" which is the point of intersection of the timeless with time. It is the moments when one's past and future are intellectually available to oneself in the present moment:

Time past and time present
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable. (CPTSE, 189)

Since man is not living in the past because "the past is all deception"(CPTSE, 206) and he is not living in the future because "The future [is] futureless" (CPTSE, 189), all a man can concern himself with is the present.

Eliot's conception of time can be better understood if one examines the epigraph to "Burnt Norton," which contains two fragments from the Classical Greek philosopher Heraclitus. These two fragments are commonly translated as: "But although the Logos is common to all, the many live as though they had a private understanding" (CPTSE, 189), and

"The way up and the way down are the same" (CPTSE, 189). Heraclitus insists that the temporal time is always in flux. Eliot partly agrees with the idea: "the pattern is new in every moment / And every moment is new and shocking" (CPTSE, 199). However, because of the continual change of time, Eliot asserts that Christ cannot be found in the flux, but He is "At the still point of the turning world" (CPTSE, 191). God is the point where all times are present. Contemplation of the still point which is neither in time nor in space releases the mind from its bondage to time:

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered (CPTSE, 192).

"Four Quartets" emphasizes the importance of the present which is seen through numerous references to everyday life activities, such as riding the tube and the German raid on London (CPTSE, 192) to suggest that the experience of these timeless moments, in which their temporal existence merges with the eternal ("nowhere"), is made available to them in the present. Eliot does not regard the meeting with the still point as a meaningful historical event but something that can be repeated, over and over in the present.

Likewise, Eliot's views on the natural world also changes considerably from his transitional period. Nature is seen as worldly temptation in "Ash-Wednesday." In "Four Quartets," the emphasis on Incarnation validates the nature and the human body which are essential for a Christian writer. In an essay on Kipling, Eliot declares, "It is not a Christian vision, but it is at least a pagan vision; a contradiction of the materialistic view: it is the

insight into a harmony with nature which must be re-established if the truly Christian imagination is to be recovered by Christians."²⁸¹

In "Dry Salvages," Eliot describes nature as a force that strengthens faith. Nature is presented "in all its fury and destructiveness as a means of testing yet affirming the existence of a higher beneficent power."²⁸² This is best illustrated in the balance between the river and the sea. The "river within us"(CPTSE, 205) is a reminder of "commerce" (CPTSE, 205), "bridge"(CPTSE, 205), "machine"(CPTSE, 205) and other things of this world while "brown god is forgotten" (CPTSE, 205). In contrast to the river, the sea with its "many gods" (CPTSE, 205) and its ceaseless flux is a reminder of timelessness.

Moreover, Eliot is no longer upset that language and poetry distract him from god because he, like Dante, has come to see language in a more transcendent light. The failure to fully convey meaning through language is not a sign of punishment but evidence of something transcendent and divine. This awareness of poetry's limits is expressed in the following lines:

a way of putting it - not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion.
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
With words and meanings. (CPTSE, 198)

These lines convey dissatisfaction because the poet's words fall short of articulating his intended meanings. This is reminiscent of Dante's stress on linguistic inadequacy in the closing lines of *The Divine Comedy*:

Oh but how scant the utterance, and how faint,

281. Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, 250.

That it sufficeth not to call it little. (Para. 33.121-3)

However, this linguistic failure is evidence of the poet's desire to search for a transcendent truth that can only be found in God. It is such experience that can point him towards a greater reality:

There are only hints and guesses,
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation. (CPTSE, 213)

"Incarnation" is the key word of this passage. The poet can attain it by resigning his limited vision to which comes not as a goal reached by people, but as a "gift" from God. Thus, poetry is not wholly cast out, but worked into his new outlook to the point at which linguistic problems are taken as proof that man's present situation is limited in nature, but at the same time moves towards a greater end.

B- Stevens' Response to Dante's *The Divine Comedy*

a- Stevens and Dante: Challenging the Master's Religious Orthodoxy

Unlike Eliot and Dante who embrace conventional religion, Stevens rejects any attempt to rehabilitate the traditional beliefs. Instead, he suggests poetry as a substitute, though he does not claim that its function is the creation of a systematic belief. He says in *The Necessary Angel*, "Poetry does not address itself to beliefs. Nor could it ever invent an ancient world full of figures that had been known and become endeared for its reader for centuries" (WSCPP, 731). Stevens "evolve[s] new poetries of the secular-sacred, inscribing himself as a self-conscious artist whose actual words blaze with an art, or artifice that can redeem the human spirit."²⁸³ To my conceit! And it, to what I saw, is such

283. Heather Harrison Thomas, "Ancient Wisdom to Supreme Fiction: Ideas of God in the Poetry of H.D. and Wallace Stevens," *Forum on Public Policy: A Journal of the Oxford Round Table* (2008): 1.

In a letter to Hi Simons, Stevens wrote, "It is a habit of mind with me to be thinking of some substitute for religion.... My trouble, and the trouble of a great many people, is the loss of belief in the sort of God in Whom we were all brought up to believe (LWS, 348). It was this loss of belief in God that opened up for Stevens the question that led him to write his best poems. Stevens' poetry is, indeed, connected with the end of religion. Stevens gave up certain consolatory beliefs in Christianity and looked to poetry for filling the vacuum of values or meanings. This secular attitude consists mainly of the rejection of metaphysical illusions and showing, instead, a high degree of awareness of the real world. Stevens' critique of the supernatural and his concern with the world makes him different from Dante and Eliot whose poetry is meant to transcend realities. Stevens' poetry with its secular creed gives priority to the world he inhabits and renovates a sense of the earth as opposed to Dante's religious imagination that ostensibly devalues them.

Stevens feels the need to impose the human mind on the world and thus to get rid of the supernatural inhuman otherness of traditional religions. He advocates this secular orientation to the world: "The great poems of heaven and hell have been written, and the great poem of the earth remains to be written" (WSCPP, 730). In his poem "The Men that Are Falling," he writes of a man who "loved earth, not heaven, enough to die" (WSCPP, 174). Many of Stevens' poems, most notably "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman" and "Sunday Morning" question the relevancy of religion in the modern world. Considering the Christian religion as "an exhausted culture" (WSCPP, 914), he deems it necessary to throw off the "holy hush of ancient sacrifice" (WSCPP, 53) in favor of the voluptuous "beauty of the earth" (WSCPP, 53) as they are perceived by the senses.

Accordingly, contrary to Dante and Eliot, Stevens strove to explain the importance of living in this world and he developed an earthly poetics reflecting a desire to find in the everyday world of his habitation the spiritual emotions that once belonged in the domain of

religion. Stevens was one of the great spiritual poets of the twentieth century but not in the Dantean sense. His poetry faces the difficulty of living in the everyday world and of the struggling to find "God in the object itself" (WSCPP, 405). It means, to adapt a phrase from Wallace Stevens, "the plain sense of things" (WSCPP, 42).

Though Stevens' secular spirit denoted experiences that occurred without reference to belief in God and that were situated in the actual material world, he did not reject notions of heaven altogether. He rather found a way of including heaven as a part of earth. In a journal entry dated August 1902 when he was yet a young man in his early twenties, he expressed his antagonistic view toward the priest's old orthodoxy ideas of divinity and his desire to replace it with an earthly poetics reflecting the everyday world of his habitation:

Last night I spent an hour in the dark transept of St Patrick's Cathedral where I go now and then in my more lonely moods. An old argument with me is that the true religious force in the world is not the church but the world itself: the mysterious callings of Nature and our responses. What incessant murmurs fill that ever-laboring, tireless church! But to-day in my walk I thought that after all there is no conflict of forces but rather a contrast. In the cathedral I felt one presence; on the highway I felt another. Two different deities presented themselves.... The priest in me worshipped one God at one shrine; the poet another God at another shrine (LWS, 29).

This passage is an index of Stevens' poetic motive of finding gratifications in the physical world. These gratifications are possible to be experienced only if the poet acknowledges that "the idea of heaven is . . . merely an idea of the earth."²⁸⁴ Unlike Dante's metaphysical world of *The Divine Comedy*, Stevens strives to create poetry that fills the same function it did

284. Ibid., 464.

Dante, that is, to fill the spiritual vacuum created by the loss of traditional religions, but without the metaphysical underpinnings it had for Dante.

Stevens' secular attitudes account principally for the lack of critical discussion of his relation to Dante. Jacqueline Vaught Brogan underlines this black spot when she writes that "it is curious that the specific relation of Stevens' text to *Comedy* has been so unexplored, especially since the ongoing influence of Dante on Stevens is generally recognized."²⁸⁵ In fact, many poems, such as "The Comedian as the letter C," "The Emperor of Ice-cream," "Esthétique du Mal" and "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" echo Dante's *The Divine Comedy*. Yet, while Dante's influence on Eliot is extensively studied, Stevens' poetry, as Brogan points out, is "discussed in relation to the Bible."²⁸⁶

Among the few critics who have discussed the connectedness of Stevens to Dante are Karl P. Wentersdorf and Jacqueline Vaught Brogan. In his article "Dante Alighieri, and the Emperor," Wentersdorf, relying on a limited number of poems, discusses "Stevens' allusions to one of the greatest of all repositories of religious metaphor – *The Commedia* of Dante Alighieri."²⁸⁷ In her discussion of the influence of Dante on Stevens, Brogan concentrates only on Stevens' "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" to suggest the possibility to read each section of Stevens' poem in concord with and in opposition to its corresponding book in Dante's trilogy. The section "Must be Abstract" opposes the concrete and historically bound Hell that Dante envisions in "Inferno" which refers to people who really existed and alludes to certain events that really took place. "Must change" is the reversal of the religious assumption so present in Dante's text. While Dante's purgatory purifies the sinful souls of those who have died penitent, Stevens' change aims at satisfying the modern secularized mind purifying the

285. Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, *The Violence Within / The Violence Without* (Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 2003), 46.

286. Ibid.

287. Karl P. Wentersdorf, "Wallace Stevens, Dante Alighieri, and the Emperor," *Twentieth Century Literature* 13, no. 4. (1968):197.

imagination from the metaphysical and theological assumptions. Moreover, poetry must also be a source of pleasure much as Dante's paradise was but with secular rather than sacred beatitude.²⁸⁸

One of the purposes of this chapter is to break away from this limited approach that concentrates on few of Stevens' poems to discuss his connectedness to Dante to adopt a more exhaustive approach that extends the study of Dante's influence to the whole of Stevens' poetry. The following discussion shows that Stevens' poetry represents a secular *Divine Comedy*, that is, poetry that functions in this world without recourse to God.

b- Stevens' Worldly Evil and Pain Versus Dante's "Inferno"

Owing to Stevens' secular attitudes, the meaning of evil and pain and his response to them changes. He rejects the metaphysical meanings that Dante and Eliot assign to evil and pain that looks at pain as a spiritual trial, or evidence of alienation from God, or a discipline through which one attains religious knowledge. Stevens thinks that pain and evil are part of the world where humans live and can become an element of the larger pleasure of a purely immanent existence.

Christianity as understood by Dante and Eliot presents an exaggerated picture of the world as evil which engenders an alienation of the humans from the world. Stevens' secular poetics attempts to convince people to consider the world as their only home despite its evil and pain. This is what Stevens means when he says that "the imperfect is our paradise" (WSCPP, 179). One of the questions that Stevens confronts in rejecting Christianity is the fate of its sense of evil: Should evil continue to be thought about in relation to religious paradigms, should it be denied, or should it be redefined?

In "Outside of Wedlock," Stevens reveals his desire to play down the religious significance of evil. The poem calls for the abandonment of the beliefs: "the voice of all our

288. Brogan, *Violence Within/Violence Without*, 49.

ancestors. / The père Benjamin, the mère B landenah, / Saying we have forgot them, they never lived" (WSCPP, 593). This abandonment raises questions about the meaning of evil in post-religious world. The following lines are a refutation of the sense of evil that belongs to a former religious imaginary world:

The poor piano forte
Whimpers when the moon above East Hartford
Wakes us to the emotion, grand fortissimo,
Of our sense of evil,
Of our sense that time has been
Like water running in a gutter
Through an alley to nowhere,
Without beginning or the concept of an end. (WSCPP, 593)

Stevens reverts the conventional symbolism of time and water. Evil is described here as the shapelessness of time, the sense of a world without a "plan," a world without a "beginning" or an "end." This description is also a repudiation of the religious framework that evil is something to rid with time. According to Eliot's Christian imagination, evil is overcome through the meaningful shape of time. In Eliot's "Four Quartets," the spiritual quest takes place in the natural time to reach the "timeless moment" or the time of redemption. Stevens also denies the religious symbol of water in purging the all evil from the world. In Christianity, water is the symbol of spiritual life and God is associated with water as a redeeming power. The following words from the bible suggest the redemptive function of the water: "Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:22). In Eliot's "The Wasteland," rain finally arrives and suggests the cleansing of sins, the washing

away of misdeeds, and the start of a new future. In Stevens' poem, the dirty water that runs in a gutter leads to nowhere.

The end of religion opens onto a modern and secular understanding of pain and evil that contrasts with Dante's and Eliot's. Dante and Eliot believe that their characters suffer insofar as they are away from God. Stevens' secular view of pain and evil is the main concern of his long poem, "Esthétique du Mal." James S. Hans views it "as one of few modern articulations of the nature of evil."²⁸⁹ These modern articulations, according to Ronald Sukenick, consist of the poet's endeavour "to discover an attitude in face of evils inherent in reality without the consolation of the supernatural belief."²⁹⁰ The key lines of the poem appear in the eighth canto: "The death of Satan was a tragedy / For the imagination" (WSCPP, 281). This implies that the post-religious setting requires a new secular understanding of evil and a new imaginative endeavour about it in a secular age. For Charles Altieri, this means that "once Satan dies the imagination is no longer free to attribute evil to the machinations of a metaphysical personage. The imagination must face the possibility that evil is not caused by an outward agency: evil is simply an aspect of the secular world that neither needs nor invites the poet's supplements."²⁹¹

Evil is alien to human experience, and humans must incorporate and neutralize rather than transcend it. From here, to inhabit the world carries the implication of tolerating its evil and pain as the opening lines of "Esthétique du Mal" suggest:

He was at Naples writing letters home
And, between letters, reading paragraphs

289. James S. Hans, *The Value (s) of Literature* (New York: State university of New York Press, 1990), 80.

290. Sukenick, *Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure*, 122.

291. Charles Charles Altieri, "Why Angel Surrounded by Paysans Concludes The Auroras of Autumn," *Wallace Stevens Journal* 32, no.2 (2008): 163.

On the sublime. Vesuvius had groaned
For a month. It was pleasant to be sitting there
While the sultriest fulgurations, flickering,
Cast corners in the glass. He could describe
The terror of the sound because the sound
Was ancient. He tried to remember the phrases: pain
Audible at noon, pain torturing itself,
Pain killing pain on the very point of pain (WSCPP, 277).

The personage in Naples uses a treaty on the sublime to describe the eruption of Vesuvius as a metaphor for pain. This description, however, is fanciful and falsified because there is incongruity between the true nature of the volcano as a symbol of pain and the person who finds it pleasant. This discrepancy results from his being spatially and temporally displaced. Spatially, he is in Naples and knows of the volcano from the descriptive phrases in the paragraphs. Temporally, the fear of the sound he describes does not belong to the present "because the sound was ancient." Thus, pain is real only as it is registered on people's experience. It is as much a part of the world as the comforts it offers them: "It was almost time for or lunch. Pain is human / There were roses in the cool café" (WSCPP, 277). Pain should not be confounded with the metaphor of the distant Vesuvius, but it is a human experience. It is part of the world as is a lunch or roses in cool café.

In fact, it is this immanence of evil and pain in this world that is conducive to human thirst for religious fulfillment. Ironically, this fulfillment contributes to distance further humans from their world:

The genius of misfortune
Is not a sentimentalist. He is
That evil, that evil in the self, from which

In desperate hallow, rugged gesture, fault
Falls out on everything: the genius of
The mind, which is our being, wrong and wrong,
The genius of the body, which is our world,
Spent in the false engagements of the mind. (WSCPP, 279)

Evil is the result of the separation between human "being" and the "world," and the human self is the source "from which...fault falls out on everything." This suggests that evil is a projection of the human frustrated "being." The self is also the origin of the conceptions of the sacred. Therefore, the conceptions of the sacred that people "hallow" are desperate modes of interpreting the very evil that people have produced merely by virtue of their experience of selfhood. Just as the sacred declines, so does evil or the sense of the "fault" of the world.

Despite the existence of evil and suffering in this world, Stevens believes in the importance of the world as it is experienced:

The fault lies with an over-human god,
Who by sympathy has made himself a man
And is not to be distinguished, when we cry
Because we suffer. . . .
If only he would not pity us so much,
Weaken our fate, relieve us of woe both great
And small, a constant fellow of destiny,
A too, too human god, self-pity's kin
And uncourageous genesis. . . . It seems
As if the health of the world might be enough. (WSCPP, 278)

Stevens considers that an "over-human god" s pity has weakened people preventing them from finding the satisfactions offered by the physical world. A "too, too human god" came to

speak to people, to hear their complaints with a listening ear, and to sympathize and empathize with their suffering. However, this pity would make it impossible for people to have a true appreciation of the physical world. What is required instead is a "faithful reality" without the sympathy of that "too human god." "If there must be a god in the house," writes Stevens, "let him be one / That will not hear us when we speak: a coolness, / A vermilioned nothingness" (WSCPP, 278). If there must be a god in this world, let him "dwell quietly" (WSCPP, 288), leaving the inhabitants of the world the freedom to face evil and pain as they are encountered.

Thus? the secular world or "terra infidel" which is free from the traditional concept of evil and pain is not necessarily "good." Stevens calls life "good," but the poem contains many statements that oppose the goodness of this world from numerous points as in "Life is bitter aspic" (WSCPP, 283) and in:

His firm stanzas hang like hives in hell
Or what hell was, since now both heaven and hell
Are one, and here, O terra infidel. (WSCPP, 278)

The earth, in addition to its physical feature, has absorbed the qualities that once characterized both heaven and hell. Once relieved from their metaphysical character, these two places are possible here and now without a reference to something that may take place after death.

...It seems
As if the health of the world might be enough.
It seems as if the honey of common summer
Might be enough, as if the golden combs
Were a part of a sustenance itself enough,
As if hell, so modified, had disappeared,
As if pain, no longer satanic mimicry,

Could be borne, as if we were sure to find our way. (WSCPP, 278-9)

Critics have noted that this canto which is written in Dante's terza rima implies a kind of secular challenge to the metaphysics of evil found in *The Divine Comedy*. Eleanor Cook says that "Stevens' tercet faintly evokes his [Dante's] Terza Rima in sound or sense."²⁹² This suggests that Stevens disputes Dante's doctrine. Michael O' Neill states that this passage "evokes and bids farewell to Dante's world view."²⁹³ Thus, the rejection of Christ, the "too human god," ends up demythologizing hell and heaven. People should be satisfied with the world and its honey, but they should also be able to bear pain, for it is part of this world rather than the product of Satan. The concluding phrase "as if we were sure to find our way" is crucial to understand the central meaning of the poem that humanity is in the woods of uncertainty in its attempt to uphold suffering in a secular world where heaven and hell disappeared and God is no longer present to relieve human pain. The use of "seems" and "as ifs" suggests the poet's awareness of the difficulty to accept the world as it is. In the midst of uncertainty, the poet's imagination should contribute to make the "honey" enough for people. This is what Stevens implies when he says, "In an age of disbelief, it is for the poet to supply the satisfactions of belief, in his measure and in his style" (WSCPP, 748).

Thus, the return to the sense of the world as a home is marked by "pain" as an aspect of human condition. But the independence from the supernatural and the recognizing of pain as something of this world leads to a kinship between humans and nature since the sky will be "friendlier"(WSCPP, 54) because it will become the element where man lives rather than the vacuity in which the mind beholds the world's inhospitality to its aspirations.

292. Eleanor Cook, *A Reader Guide to Wallace Stevens* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), 184.

293. Michael O' Neill, "The Death of Satan: Stevens's Esthetique du Mal, Evil and the Romantic Imagination," *Romanticism and Religion from William Cowper to Wallace Stevens*, eds. Gavin Hopps and Jane Stabler (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2006), 230.

In fact, the impossibility of leading a painless life provides further evidence that humanity is at the centre of the world and not at its margins. Stevens in "On the Adequacy of Landscape," reveals a desire to incorporate pain into an affirmative vision of human life. Pain is the state which forces people to believe, according to Stevens, that they not only belong to this world but they are at its center:

To avoid the hap-hallow-hallow-ho
Of central things,
Nor in their empty hearts to feel
The blood-redness of the sun,
To shrink to an insensible,
Small oblivion,
Beyond the keenest diamond day
Of people sensible to pain. (WSCPP, 221)

To be aware of the "diamond day" means to experience human being as something central, rather than marginal, to the life of the world. This may only occur if people are "sensible to pain." Again, pain is not a trial, a challenge to the spirit, or a sign of the fallen world. It is the mark of the world experienced in the intensity of its immanence. If it is a "sign" of anything, it is, as the title suggests, the adequacy of the physical world.

c- Dante's "Purgatorio" in Stevens' Poetry: A Struggle to Inhabit the World

Being conscious of the presence of evil, Stevens offers poetry, rather than religion, to confront it. "Poetry," Stevens writes in his "Adagia," "is a purging of the world's poverty and change and evil and death" (WSCPP, 906). To face evil in a secular sense, poetry should be purged from the religious ideas. This secular reaction to evil which displaces religion constitutes "the reversal of the dogmatic assumption underlying Dante's text."²⁹⁴

294. Brogan, *Violence Within / Violence Without*, 49.

Relevant here is a comparison of Stevens' view of change and Eliot's in their response to Dante's "Purgatorio." In "Ash-Wednesday," Eliot struggles to move from spiritual barrenness to the assertion of the possibility for human salvation. Yet his journey was only half-way because the quester is still tempted by such factors as nature and art. These two tempting factors that Eliot fears become the very things that Stevens claims in his poetry. Stevens' poetry is a struggle to return to the physical world without reference to the religious Christian metaphysical elements and to offer poetry as an alternative to Christianity. This considerable divergence from Eliot and Dante is due to his understanding of evil and pain. Dante's and Eliot's poetry declares that there is evil and pain in this world and the role of the poet is to purge it. For them, pain and evil is what prevents people from being in this world, and what makes them seek certain consolatory beliefs in the supernatural. But Stevens' poetry strives to transform the meaning of evil so that it can be accepted as part of the real world rather than a problem that needs to be purged.

In the opening lines of Stevens' "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman"²⁹⁵ the title character is directly addressed by an unidentified narrator, who proposes poetry as the "supreme fiction." The narrator informs her that if she devotes herself to Christianity by taking "the moral law" and practicing the Christian worship in "the nave" of the church, the heaven she will go is only a "haunted heaven":

POETRY is the supreme fiction, madame.

Take the moral law and make a nave of it

And from the nave build haunted heaven. (WSCPP, 47)

In fact, much of Stevens' poetry endeavours to find arguments to justify his desire to substitute poetry for religion as a means to reinvigorate people's sense of the world as their

295. "A High-Toned Old Christian Woman" is a poem in which the title character is directly addressed by an unidentified narrator, who argues against her adherence to a closed system of belief. The narrator proposes poetry as the "supreme fiction" rather than God.

home. The first argument has to do with obsolescence. Christianity is undesirable because it suffers stasis. As a symbol for belief, it has failed to resist the pressure of new reality and is consequently being doubted incredible. The obsolescence of Christianity is well described in the second section of "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction" entitled "It Must Change," in which images of budding sexuality, fecundity and fruition are juxtaposed with worn-out, withering and decaying images related to Christianity. "Italian girls" (WSCPP, 337) with "jonquils in their hair"(WSCPP, 337) are watched by an "old seraph" (WSCPP, 337), at once an angel symbol of the worn-out Christian religion and a fossil shell. The narrator speaks of "the distaste we feel for this withered scene"(WSCPP, 337). These images recur through this section to emphasize Stevens' belief in an essential renewal and his rejection of all that is obsolete. The necessity of the cycle of change is reaffirmed in the tenth canto:

The freshness of transformation is

The freshness of a world. It is our own,

It is ourselves, the freshness of ourselves,

And that necessity and that presentation

Are rubbings of a glass in which we peer. (WSCPP, 344)

It is indeed the poet's way of arguing for the necessity of a poetic change so as to be in accordance with the changing reality. Stevens believes that no faith is absolute; beliefs are tenable for particular periods. As such, the fiction is final for a moment in the sense that poetic truth is final since it brings about agreement with reality believed to be true for a time, that is, until a constant change of reality calls for a new imaginative adjustment. Stevens wrote in a period characterized by the waning beliefs in traditional religions, yet he is concerned with discovering beliefs that are congruent with the present. Thus the role of the modern poet, according to Stevens, is "to find, by means of his own thought and feeling, what seems to him to be the poetry of his time as differentiated from the poetry of the time of Sir

Walter Scott, or the poetry of any other time, and to state it in a manner that effectively discloses it to his readers" (WSCPP, 835).

In "Of Modern Poetry,"²⁹⁶ by comparing the mind to a theatre, Stevens emphasizes the importance of making new poetry that corresponds to modern life:

Then the theatre was changed
To something else. Its past was a souvenir
It has to be living, to learn the speech of the place
It has to face to face the man of the time and to meet
The woman of the time. (WSCPP, 218)

Modern poetry must be alive and changing. Poetry has to adapt so that it can meet people as they are in the present, in view of themselves and of their world. Poetry has to change with the times. It must evolve as culture evolves; otherwise, it would not belong to its contemporary culture or its people.

In addition to change and obsolescence, Stevens advances a second argument which concerns his understanding of poetry as the fusion of the creative imagination and objective reality. He stresses that "the imagination is not a free agent. It is not a faculty that functions spontaneously without reference" (LWS, 58). The reference is reality or the physical world. Unlike the world of Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, which functions in a supernatural world, including Christianity and ancient mythologies, poetry, for Stevens, must concern itself with what is real since it is a result of it.

In "In Evening without Angels,"²⁹⁷

296. "Modern poetry" deals with what the modern poetry must be to confront the contemporary world. In this poem, Stevens states that modern poetry must be a poem of the mind, alive and changing.

Air is air
Its vacancy glitters round us everywhere.
Its sounds are not angelic syllables
But our unfashioned spirits realized
More sharply in more furious selves. (WSCPP, 111)

"Air is air" suggests that there is no reality beyond it. The verb "glitters" means that though the air is empty, it is filled with light. The emptiness of the air is desirable when the music there is not angelic but human.

Stevens' "supreme fiction" begins in the field in which it works: reality. By reality, Stevens means "absolute fact" (WSCPP, 680) or the "things as they are" (WSCPP, 135). In this context, Stevens argues that "the more destitute it [reality] becomes the more it begins to be precious" (WSCPP, 681). Thus, reality beyond the imagination is the data with which the imagination works. Thus, the imagination has no source except from reality. "The Ordinary Woman"²⁹⁸ emphasizes that the imagination symbolized by "the guitars" springs from reality or, as Stevens calls it, "poverty":

Then from poverty they rose,
From dry catarrhs, and the guitars
They flitted
Through the palace wall. (WSCPP, 8)

Stevens affirms that the poet who creates the picture
of this world does not resort to unreal creatures such as angels hovering in the air paying their

297. "Evening without Angels" deals with Stevens belief that there is no reason for the poet to create a heavenly music with the supernatural additions.

54. "The Ordinary Women" is a poem where "ordinary women" rise from reality symbolized by catarrhs and flit to imagination suggested by the "dry guitar". The poem is remarkable for its satire of the *appeals* of the guitars since the guitar symbol of imagination denies the existence of reality.

Reality is thus the starting point for any activity of the mind. Stevens says, "The real is only the base. But it is the base" (WSCPP, 917). This is why "the imagination loses its vitality as its ceases to adhere to what is real" (WSCPP, 645).

The third argument is related to Stevens' view of the link between poetry, religion and style. Stevens considers both poetry and religion as figments of the imagination. Thus the poets who created gods "were in fact, as we see them now, the clear giants of a vivid time, who in the style of their beings made the style of their Gods and the Gods Themselves One" (WSCPP, 841). Accordingly, both poetry and religion stand for a certain style. The problem is that this style must become obsolete one day. It is the obsolescence of the style of the traditional myths and religion that makes them lose their divinity; and thus, no one cares to fear them anymore nowadays:

When we think of Jove, while we take him for granted as the symbol of omnipotence, the ruler of mankind, we do not fear him. He does have a superhuman size, but at least not so superhuman as to amaze and intimidate us. He has a large head and a beard and is a relic, a relic that makes a kindly impression on us and reminds us of stories that we have heard about him. All the noble images of all the gods have been profound and most of them have been forgotten (WSCPP, 841).

Poetry, to be worth reading, must have a style in constant change. As an important element of the poetic style, language itself must change. If it embodies the perception of the past in fossilized form, it can hinder rather than further the vital activity of the mind.

d- Stevens' Earthly Heaven as a Substitute for Dante's Heavenly Paradise

While developing an earthly poetics whose substance is everyday world, Stevens does not reject the idea of heaven as long as it is part of earth. This earthly paradise is a counterpart to Dante's paradise which reflects the Christian principle that denies sensual pleasure. For

example, in the eighteenth canto of "Paradiso," Dante, near the end of his stay on Mars, sees Beatrice smiling and her smile makes his love so strong that he almost forgets everything divine. She warns him not to make her physical beauty an idol: "for paradise is not only in [her] eyes."²⁹⁹ Beatrice reminds him that the passion of earthly love is valuable if it is no more than a token of divine love. On the contrary, Stevens chooses to inhabit and to find paradise in this world despite its flaws. He also sees that those who have formulated arguments for the metaphysical world to the detriment of the physical one have at once created a false sense of things and denied the value of life. Stevens states:

The greatest poverty is not to live
In a physical world, to feel that one's desire
Is, too difficult to tell from despair. Perhaps.
After death, the non-physical people, in paradise,
Itself non-physical I, may, by chance, observe
The green corn gleaming and experience
The minor of what we feel. (WSCPP, 226)

"Paradise," which represents a realm separated from the real existence, is unsatisfactory because it is not concrete. This is an evocation of the beauty and joy of the earth that the residents of Christian heaven are deprived of.

Many of Stevens' poems exhort people to accept the natural world as their only paradise. "Sunday Morning" develops in the form of an argument between two voices: that of the woman, whose enjoyment of the pleasures of this world is marred by the awareness of death, and that of the narrator seeking to reassure her that the world is enough to satisfy her. She is faced with a difficult choice between the secular comfort or "complacencies" offered by "peignoir", "coffee" and "oranges"(WSCPP, 53) which dispel the holiness and the

299. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 361.

"encroachment" (WSCPP, 53) of the religious sensibility and Christ's "ancient sacrifice" (WSCPP, 53). The narrator tries to convince the woman that the supernatural divinity so feared by the woman is only a metaphysical alien and an image that comes "in silent shadows and in dreams"(WSCPP, 53). "The beauty of the earth" (WSCPP, 53), such as the sun, fruit and beauty of this world provides enough compensation for the lost heaven. She should let herself be part of the nature that engendered her rather than separate herself from it by redefining herself in supernatural terms:

Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights;
All pleasures and all pains, remembering
The bough of summer and the winter branch.

These are the measures destined for her soul. (WSCPP, 53-54)

"Passion," "loneliness," "moods," "grievings" and "elations" are not signs of divinity but are reacting earthly settings and natural elements, such as rain, falling snow, loneliness, blooming forests, and wet roads on autumn nights.

Stevens' denial of the religious heavenly paradise and his desire to inhabit the world do not imply that his poetry is responsive to the social, economic, and political conditions of his time. In fact, Stevens was a great believer in the work of art as a viable means of resisting the pressure of reality. He acknowledges that a poet has no social or political obligations toward the "pressure of reality" (WSCPP, 665). The attempt to cover reality with the imagination or what he calls "single shawl"(WSCPP, 444) with the intention of making it bearable puts his poetry at odds with what happens around him. In this context, one may wonder what the poet's function is for Stevens. He answers, "Certainly it is not to lead people out of the

confusion in which they find themselves. Nor is it, I think, to comfort them while they follow their leaders to and fro. I think that the function is to make his imagination become the light in the minds of other. His role, in short, is to help people to live their lives" (WSCPP, 53-54).

Thus, far from inducing the poet to write from the social point of view, Stevens lays much emphasis on the role of his own imagination, meaning by this that the poet may have as his subject the community and other people by virtue of something internal to the poet. Stevens claims that his concept of the "first idea" in "Notes Toward a Supreme fiction" means simply the world stripped of "varnish and dirt." In this context, he says, "The genuine artist is never `true to life'. He sees what is real but not in the manner the common man perceives his world. We do not go storming through life like actors in a play. Art is never real life. The poet sees with a poignancy and penetration that is altogether unique. What matters is that the poet must be true to his art and not `true to life', whether his art is simple or complex, violent or subdued."³⁰⁰

Then the question is how Stevens' imagination can function as a spiritual guide in a secular world beset with evil and pain. Certainly, Stevens is not as lucky as "Dante [who] could imagine Beatrice vision. But the medieval world view has collapsed heaven, once pictured beyond fixed stars, has no locus in our bound cosmos."³⁰¹ Stevens' "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour" holds the answer. The key line of the poem is "The world imagined is the ultimate good" (WSCPP, 444), good because it offers protection in a world which is dark, cold and indifferent. Imagination as "Single shawl" (WSCPP, 444) and a "candle" brings solace to the speaker. "Single shawl "around himself protects him against the cold, and the candle light illuminates not only his room but also the whole dark world: "that highest candle

300. Wallace Stevens, quoted in William T. Stafford, *Twentieth Century American Writing* (New York: Odyssey Press, 1965), 287.

301. John Mahoney, *Seeing Into the Life of Things: Essays on Literature and Religious Experience* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1998), 296.

lights the dark" (WSCPP, 444). The poet, who at first suffers from alienation as he and the world "forget each other," feels now at home in the "dwelling" (WSCPP, 444).

Looking through the "fictive covering" (WSCPP, 342) of the imagination into the universe, reality assumes the appearance of an earthly paradise in which the imagination gives life to static objects. In "The Apostrophe to Vincentine," the static object is not only endowed with vitality but also emotion and the ability to speak. The poem begins with the poets imagining Vincentine as small, nude "nameless"(WSCPP, 42) creature. In the second stanza, through the speaker's imagination, the sculpture Vincentine becomes more life-like, progressively gains a name, warmth, and becomes a clean girl in a white green dress:

As warm, as clean
Your dress was green,
Was white green
Green Vincentine. (WSCPP, 42)

In the third stanza, she is allowed to walk and speak. She is also placed "in a group of human other"(WSCPP, 42) to whom she can express her feelings using her "voluble" (WSCPP, 42) voices. Thus, in Stevens' earthly paradise the poet's imagination which has transformed Vincentine from the lean "white animal"(WSCPP, 43) to "heavenly Vincentine" (WSCPP, 43) can also metamorphose the "monotonous earth"(WSCPP, 43) into spheres without limits.

The same pleasure of the "supreme fiction" in which the imagination gives life to static objects can also be found in "Study of Two Pears." The poem's first lines introduce the pears that "resemble nothing." The five passive sentences that follow describe the pears in terms of shape and primary colors. The pears have no action and nothing acts upon them:

They are yellow form
Composed of curves

Bulging toward the base
They are touched red.
They are not flat surfaces
Having curved outlines
They are round
Tapering toward the top. (WSCPP, 180)

The first change from this static description comes in a simple active verb "hangs" which forces the two pears to suddenly have an activity and therefore a life within them: "A hard dry leaf hangs / From the stem" (WSCPP, 181). Thus, there is a dramatic shift in "Study of Two Pears" when the leaf hangs from the stem. It is followed with those innate colors suddenly coming to life. "The yellow" is no longer the color of description, but it becomes the subject of a transitive verb:

The yellow glistens
Glistens with various yellows,
Citrons, oranges and greens
Flowering over the skin. (WSCPP, 181)

The flat affect of the painting has become alive through colors. Citrons and oranges, while colors, are also living fruits. This burst of life in colors is reinforced by the gerund phrase "flowering over the skin."

Stevens' earthly paradise is also a setting where the imagination orders the chaotic reality. Stevens says, "One writes poetry, then, in order to approach the good in what is harmonious and orderly."³⁰² "Anecdote of the Jar"³⁰³ is a poem in which Stevens uses the jar

302. Wallace Stevens, quoted in Leon Surette, *The Modern Dilemma*, 264.

303. "Anecdote of the Jar" suggests that the imagination reshapes reality. The jar symbol of human imagination placed in a wilderness dominates the landscape and alters its character.

as a symbol of the human mind ordering nature. Being placed on the top of a hill, the jar asserts its superiority over nature. Yet, the jar imposes its authority even more through the implied design of its own roundness on nature, which in itself lacks purpose or order:

I placed a jar in Tennessee,
And round it was, upon a hill.
It made the slovenly wilderness
Surround that hill (WSCPP, 60).

Accordingly, human circularity civilizes not only the wild, that is, chaos, nullity, and meaninglessness, by providing it with a structure:

The wilderness rose up to it,
And sprawled around, no longer wild.
The jar was round upon the ground
And tall and of a port in air.
It took dominion everywhere. (WSCPP, 61)

In "Anecdote of a Jar," stress is laid upon its artificiality to accentuate the crucial power of the human imagination. The human mind governs its antithesis, nature, since "it took dominion everywhere," especially in non-human place.

This chapter has discussed how both Eliot and Stevens are attracted to Dante's *The Divine Comedy* despite its support for the medieval Christian values which seem irrelevant in the modern secular world. It has also examined how the two modern poets react differently to Dante's work. This difference stems mainly from their different beliefs. Dante offers Eliot a Christian model to cure the moral and social illnesses from which the modern man suffers. Though, in his early poetry, Eliot's reaction to the Dantean model has ironic effects to show the difficulty of embracing the medieval ideals in a world where people have abandoned their religious values. As for Stevens, despite his atheism, much of his poetry comes as response

the Dantean model. In fact, Stevens' poetry is an attempt to forsake Dante's metaphysical world and an attempt to inhabit the physical world.

The next chapter shows that Eliot and Stevens are influenced by the Metaphysical School of John Donne. It discusses how both poets borrow from Donne a method of objectifying poetry through the use of allusions to literary tradition for the sake of avoiding the Romantic emotionalism and subjectivism. Though they draw their allusions from the same sources, each poet, owing to his religious sensibility and according to his individual talent, employs these allusions in his own way.

Chapter Four: Donne, Eliot, And Stevens: Allusion as a Defamiliarizing Technique

This chapter centers on the influence of John Donne on Eliot's and Stevens' poetry. It analyses the way the three poets use defamiliarized allusions to the literature of the past as a way to make their subject matters seem unfamiliar from the reader's every day perceptions. This defamiliarizing process has the great implications of estranging exhausted themes. The intention of this chapter, then, is to explore the ways in which Donne, Eliot and Stevens manipulate their allusions through the process of Shklovsky's theory of Defamiliarization.

Many critics have thoroughly discussed how the three poets have resorted to an oblique style as a means of objectifying experience. They have noted the similarities between Donne's conceits, Eliot's objective correlatives and Stevens' resemblances particularly to break with an established tradition. In fact, the use of such devices is an attempt to convert devices that become habitual. Donne uses his conceits to deviate from the Elizabethan norm of using conceits as a mere decorative device whereas Eliot and Stevens employ the same technical devices to maintain objectivity and to rid their poetry of the Romantic subjective mode of representation to convey their experiences of contemporary life.

Yet, these critics ignore that many of Donne's conceits are allusions to the past literature. The same can be said of Eliot's objective correlative and Stevens' resemblances. More importantly, these three poets draw their allusions from the same sources including most commonly mythical, Christian, Dantean, and seasonal allusions.

However, Stevens and Eliot, like Donne, have to resist the obsolescence of these allusions or what Shklovsky calls "automation or habituation" which may lead the reader to a state of inattentiveness. In fact, allusion may stale through overuse. All the three poets seek

mechanisms that might effectively counter habitual modes of perception and allow the reader to see their thematic concerns afresh.

This chapter of three parts attempts to study the different techniques used by the three poets to defamiliarize allusions as a powerful tool which brings the reader's attentions toward their subject matters. The first part addresses the way Donne defamiliarizes his subjects of faith and love. His defamiliarizing method consists of using erotic allusions to describe his faith and religious allusions to reveal his love conditions. The second part deals with the way Eliot's ironic allusions contribute to this process of defamiliarization in his early poetry. In the poetry he wrote after his conversion, defamiliarization is achieved by replacing his ironic method with allusions based on conventional meanings. The third part discusses how Stevens uses allusion with ironic effects as a tactic of defamiliarization to invite the reader to look afresh at his subject matters. But before dealing with the way Donne, Eliot, and Stevens use defamiliarized tradition to see their subject matter in a new light, it is worthwhile to define Metaphysical poetry and discuss Eliot's and Stevens' connectedness to it.

A- Donne, Eliot, and Stevens and the Impersonal Theory of Poetry

a- Definition of Metaphysical Poetry

The term "Metaphysical poets" designates a group of seventeenth-century writers that included as its principal figures John Donne, George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Andrew Marvell, and Henry Vaughan. The expression "Metaphysical Poet" was first coined by the critic Samuel Johnson who used it as a disparaging term. For him, "the Metaphysical Poets were men of learning, and to show their learning was their whole endeavour."³⁰⁴ Thus, their comparisons are "a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike. Of wit thus defined, they have

304. Samuel Johnson, *Selected Writings*, ed. Peter Martin (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2009), 397.

more than enough. The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together."³⁰⁵ Earlier, John Dryden had also been critical of the group of poets as too proud of their wit. Dryden faulted Donne for "affecting the Metaphysics . . . in his amorous verses, where nature only should reign; and perplexes the minds of the fair sex with nice speculations of philosophy, when he should engage their hearts."³⁰⁶

The best illustration of this statement is John Donne with his conceit which consists of an extended metaphor combining two different ideas into a single image. For example, in his love poem "The Flea," he compares the union of the two lovers to a flea that has already beaten them so that they and their blood are mingled inside the flea: "Me it suck'd first, and now sucks thee, / And in this flea, our two bloods mingled be" (SPJD, 81). The witty and intellectualized character of the Metaphysical conceit for which Johnson and Dryden faulted Donne was an attempt to convert the Elizabethan conceit which, like the stock comparison of eyes to the sun, which Shakespeare employs in his sonnet in his "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" became habitual. Comparing Shakespeare's conceit in Richard II when Richard likens his dungeon to a world of which his thoughts are the inhabitants and Donne's conceit of the compass, Jack Dalglish concludes that the Elizabethan conceit is "largely ornamental. It is a set piece to be adorned for its ingenuity"³⁰⁷ whereas the Metaphysical conceit is used as "a means of exploring the experiences he conveys; the development of the conceit is the development of thought."³⁰⁸ He adds that the Metaphysical conceit "often has by their unexpectedness the effect of jolting the reader into a new awareness of what the poet is trying to communicate."³⁰⁹

305. Ibid., 398

306. John Dryden, quoted in Dr. Anamika, *John Donne at Jaunpur* (New Delhi: Sunban Publisher, 2010), 98.

307. Jack Dalglish, *Eight Metaphysical Poets* (London: Heinemann, 1969), 5.

308. Ibid.

309. Ibid.

The Metaphysicals were also out of critical favor during the 18th and 19th centuries. The Romantic poets who valued spontaneity, feeling and simplicity found little in this heavily intellectualized poetry. Dr. Anamika explains the reasons why the Romantics rebelled against the Metaphysical school: "The Romantic criterion of good poetry is its capacity to please always and please all by its power of imagination or the poet intuitive and emotional response to his subject. Donne's intellectual jerks naturally displease them at times."³¹⁰

At the end of the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century, interest in this group picked up, and especially important was Sir Herbert Grierson's *Metaphysical Lyrics and Poems of the 17th Century*. It was, in fact, Grierson who discovers the treasure hidden in their poetry, and having compared them with all other masterpieces of literature, he concludes that

metaphysical poetry in contrast to the simpler imagery of Classical poetry, of medieval Italian poetry; the more intellectual, less verbal, character of their wit compared with the conceits of the Elizabethans; the finer psychology of which their conceits are often the expression; their learned imagery; the argumentative, subtle evolution of their lyrics; above all the peculiar blend of passion and thought[1], feeling and ratiocination which is their greatest achievement. . . . All these qualities are in the poetry of Donne, and Donne is the great master of English poetry in the seventeenth century³¹¹

Grierson also used the term Metaphysical to refer to the scholastic and philosophical aspects of the terminology. Nevertheless, this feature found quite positive connotations in his usage, as giving depth and richness to the language and strength of thought. T.S. Eliot, quite

310. Anamika, *John Donne at Jaunpur*, 145.

311. Sir Herbert Grierson, quoted in A. J. Smith, ed. *John Donne: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge, 1996), 421.

under the influence of Grierson, gave value to this kind of poetry for its ability to fulfill the unification of sensibility.

b- Eliot and the Metaphysical Poetry: The Unification of Sensibility

Historical forces urged both the Modernists and Metaphysicals to rebel against an established tradition and to find new ways to adequately express their meaning or experience. To quote Elisabeth Tomlinson? "Like . . . modern poets, they [Metaphysical poets] needed a new way of thinking and writing, and like them they turned to a poetic form already existent and made it over. They took the Elizabethan conceit, which was a bit outworn, and remodelled it into the 'metaphysical' conceit recognizing in it the natural qualities of succinctness, intellectual stimulation, emotional appeal, and pictorial suggestiveness, in which they wished to clothe their philosophy."³¹²

Eliot himself, quite impressed by Grierson's new interest and insight into Metaphysical poetry of the 17th century, examines Donne's poetry in a few of his articles, and in particular in "Metaphysical Poets," in order to attract attention to its potentialities. Examining the tremendous changes that occurred in both eras, Eliot draws a parallel between the age of Donne and the modern age. Like the adherents of Donne's school, the Modernists experienced an increasingly pervasive spirit of uncertainty, gloom, and frustration which engendered a need for new writing by the poets who would make their voice heard. Eliot says, "Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning."³¹³

312. Ibid.

313 . T. S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," *Selected Essays, 1917-1932* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1950), 248.

The Metaphysicals are difficult and the poet in the modern age is equally bound to be difficult. Hence, the modern poet also uses conceits and methods very much similar to those of the Metaphysicals who lived in complex and rapidly changing times. Amar Nath Dwivedi draws a close link between the Metaphysical poets and Eliot in terms of the revolutionary techniques that they adopted: "Eliot's rejection of the 19th century canons of poetry, his attitude to the material of poetry and the use of everyday speech and rhythm recall the metaphysical rejection of the elaborate poeticality of Spenser and the magniloquence of Milton."³¹⁴

John Donne appealed to the Modernist poets for the "unification of sensibility"³¹⁵ which implies a recreation of thought into feeling. Eliot blames the "dissociation of sensibility"³¹⁶ that Milton and Dryden had brought in the seventeenth century. Subsequent English poetry had lost that immediacy. By the time of Tennyson and Browning, Eliot's Victorian precursors, a sentimental age had set in, in which feeling had been given primacy over, rather than balance with, thought.

To cure poetry from "dissociation of sensibility," Eliot finds in the Metaphysical method a valuable way to adapt what Eliot calls an "impersonal theory of poetry" which objectifies emotion. Eliot wrote in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" that the "progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."³¹⁷ He crystallized his ideas about how to achieve this extinction of personality in another essay,

314. Amar Nath Dwivedi, T. S. *Eliot: A Critical Study* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishing and Distributing), 64.

315. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," 248.

316. Ibid., 248. Eliot uses the expression "the dissociation of sensibility" in his essay "The Metaphysical Poets," but he never clarifies it. Pelagia Goulimari, in *his Literary Criticism and Theory: From Plato to Postcolonialism* defines it as the "failure to connect the sensible and the intelligible." In *A Glossary of Literary Terms* M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Harpham, defines Eliot's "the dissociation of sensibility" as the failure to connect the sensible and the intelligible, experience and abstract conception, science and theology."

317. Eliot, *Sacred Wood*, 47.

"Hamlet and His Problems": "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events, which shall be the formula of that particular emotion."³¹⁸ The objective correlative, as a tangible thing that assumes the emotional significance in a work, of art is Eliot's technique to do away with the Romantic impalpable emotional ruminations.

c- Stevens and the Metaphysical Poetry: The Aesthetics of Resemblances

For his part, Stevens turns to Donne not only for the purpose of stripping poetry from Romantic subjectivity, as is the case with Eliot, but also for finding effective poetic forms to protect poetry from religious supernatural additions and the preconceptions of literary tradition. Stevens' attitude, indeed, ushers in a problem of language which involves the ways in which poets employ new figures and tropes of language different from traditional ones. This attitude might mean the end of poetry itself. To continue writing poetry, Stevens employs two strategies: tautology and resemblance.

Stevens employs tautology to limit his perception to the immediate physical world. For example, in the poem "Evening Without Angels," Stevens writes, "Air is air, / Its vacancy glitters around us everywhere" (WSCPP, 111). The tautology "air is air" suggests a picture of the world without the supernatural addition of the angels. To put it in other words, there is no reality beyond itself. The same technique of tautology to experience the world in its immanence is found in "The Sense of the Sleight of Hand Man":

One's grand flights, one's Sunday baths,
One's tootings at the weddings of the soul
Occur as they occur. So bluish clouds
Occurred above the empty house and the leaves
Of the rhododendrons rattled their gold. (WSCPP, 205)

318. Ibid., 92.

The poem thus reduces the ostensibly religious moments in the life of the "soul" to almost mechanical events. To say that they "occur as they occur" gives the reader no new information. We cannot say anything about them other than that they have come to pass. We cannot read them; they are beyond interpretation because they are not situated in a web of significance, metaphysical or other. The meaning of their "occurrence" cannot be distinguished from the appearance of natural phenomena, such as clouds or leaves.

Moreover, Stevens resorts to analogy which he defines as "the creation of resemblance by imagination"³¹⁹ while poetry is an "analogue composed of particulars of reality."³²⁰ Poetry through resemblance makes vivid the similarities between things of this world and in so doing "enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, and intensifies it" (WSCPP, 691) and enables the poet to avoid the interference of the supernatural materials that do not belong to this world. In addition, the use of resemblances or analogies allows the poet to avoid the subjectivity of Romantic poetry because Stevens' concrete objects summon both emotional and intellectual associations. Colin Falk explains that the poetic philosophy of Stevens "urges us toward immediacies of concrete experience,"³²¹

319. *Ibid.*, 72.

320. *Ibid.*, 130.

321. Colin Falck, *American and British Verse In the Twentieth Century: The Poetry that Matters* (Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2003), 72.

Stevens' insistence on the common use of concrete and immediately present objects to communicate experiences makes him close to the school of Donne though there is no evidence "that Stevens has been influenced by Donne and his successors."³²² These affinities have not escaped the critics' notice. Hi Simons considers that "Stevens' compositions are conceits quite of the Metaphysical order and Stevens is one of the originators of the Metaphysical trend in the poetry of our time."³²³ In his discussion of Stevens' use of imagery, Bart Eeckhout notes that "Stevens' use of the kind of geographical imagery so common also with John Donne in the era of great seafaring discoveries."³²⁴

B-Donne, Eliot, and Stevens: Defamiliarization of Allusion to Defamiliarize

Perception

One of the weaknesses of the studies that discuss the influence of Donne on Eliot and Stevens is the tendency to focus on only how the three poets use concrete objects to communicate experiences objectively. This tendency robbed the critics of the opportunity to see that their poetry is replete with allusions to the literature of the past. This study attempts to extend the discussion to the way Donne, Eliot and Stevens employ allusions and the obligation to defamiliarize them in their experiments with language. In "The Man with the Blue Guitar," the guitar is not a leafy instrument but a powder of imagination. The stanza at first sight seems to be the poetry of the moment, but a closer look reveals a richness of work which deploys a traditional syntax in figures of poetry. The language and shape of the poem is in the tradition of the Japanese haikai. However, the poet uses imagination to face obsolescence or what Schklovsky calls "automatism" with which

322. Hi Simons, quoted in William Van O'Connor, "The Influence of the Metaphysicals on Modern Poetry," *College English* 9, no. 4 (1948): 181.

323. *Ibid.*, 182

324. Bart Eeckhout, *Wallace Stevens and the Limits of Reading and Writing* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press 2002.), 225.

allusions may cope and has to employ many strategies to make them unfamiliar. This defamiliarizing process in turn defamiliarizes the way they convey their experiences. In what follows, I examine the way Donne uses natural, Christian, Dantean and mythical allusions unconventionally to present his themes of love and faith in a fresh way.

a- Allusions in Donne's Poetry

1- Natural Allusion: Defamiliarized Seasons to Defamiliarize Love Conditions

The cyclical nature of the seasons has been used as a natural metaphor for the process of life and death. The presence of both tranquility and tempestuousness in each season parallels the ever-changing quality of human life. Spring represents rebirth. Summer is often used to express the apex of happiness at which the poet looks back with nostalgia. Autumn indicates decline while winter is generally representative of death. In "The Archetypes of Literature," Northrop Frye examines how the seasons are used as a device to reflect life and death. He marks summer as the zenith of the seasonal cycle, claiming it to be representative of the "marriage or triumph phase"³²⁵ of human life. He views autumn as the "death phase."³²⁶ Frye views spring as a symbol of the myths "of the birth of the hero, of revival and resurrection, of creation."³²⁷ As for winter, he considers it as "the dissolution phase"³²⁸ often associated with the defeat of the hero.

The poetry of Donne is full of seasonal allusions used as a defamiliarizing device to help the readers see their familiar subjects in strange and unfamiliar ways in order to help them change or enhance their perceptions of these things. Donne transfers the meaning of seasons by applying them as a means to reflect love conditions. Moreover, Donne's poetry upholds defamiliarization because the seasons do not bear their traditional meaning.

325. Northrop Frye, "The Archetypes of Literature," *The Critical Tradition Classic Texts and Contemporary Trends*, ed. David H. Richter (Boston: Martin's, 2007), 698.

326. Ibid.

327. Ibid.

328. Ibid., 699.

In "Autumnal," Donne moves away from the traditional connotations of the seasons. Though autumn marks the beginning of old age, he asserts that autumnal love and beauty is the finest of them all because it is full of reverence and affection rather than of a naked desire of love for the other seasons. The first couplet of the poem asserts this unconventional love: "No Spring, nor Summer Beauty hath such grace, / As I have seen in one Autumnall face" (SPJD, 38). The youthful beauty of spring and summer attracts the lover by the force of its gorgeousness. Yet, the poet, weary with the beauty of spring and summer, has found fascination in an "Autumnall face" because the ripened love is "tried and ever new" (SPJD, 38) and that the physical changes in no way reduce the intensity of love.

In "Love's Growth," Donne, in the same the purpose of defamiliarizing love, describes winter, traditionally the season of death, as the season that strengthens love. In this poem, Donne uses the cyclical nature of the seasons to describe a love that is strong enough to "endure / vicissitude, and season, as the grass" (SPJD, 101). Like grass that grows luxuriantly in spring, love enlarges its dimensions and gains in strength in this season. Love is like the grass that seems to decay and die in winter, but it is not really affected by it. On the contrary, after winter is over, love as grass is ready to "bud out" (SPJD, 101). Spring adds zest and zeal to lovers and passes on "new heat" (SPJD, 102) just as kings impose new taxes in wartime which they do not take away in peace time. Love enriched by spring is not diminished by the onset of winter:

And though each spring do add to love new heat,
As princes do in times of action get
New taxes, and remit them not in peace,
No winter shall abate the spring's increase. (SPJD, 102)

In "Twickenham Garden," Donne interconnects the seasons of spring and winter in a surprising way to present the speaker's emotions and feelings of sadness of unfulfilled love.

The lover comes into the garden "to seek the spring" (SPJD, 163) in order to get rid of the feelings of sorrow and mood of rejection, but spring with all its charm and warmth fails to soothe his anguished heart since he has brought with him the thoughts of love. He would have welcomed winter which darkens the beauty and charm of the garden and the thick mist which covers the trees of this garden so that they do not mock his forlorn state to his very face:

T were wholsomer for me that winter did

Benight the glory of this place.

And that grave frost did forbid

These trees to laugh, and mock me to my face. (SPJD, 98)

2- Donne's Biblical Allusions: The Specific Use of the Rock, Christ, and Lazarus to Defamiliarize Christianity and Love

To effectively counter the habitual modes of perception of love and faith and to allow the reader see them afresh, Donne further uses many biblical allusions displaced from their habitual contexts; consequently, an important part of the poem's meaning is lost unless the reader sets up a mental correlation between them. Such Biblical material as the rock, Christ, and Lazarus provide good examples.

In *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye associates the rock with "the cycle from the wintry water of death to the reviving waters of life."³²⁹ This meaning of the rock is derived from the biblical story of "the bringing of water out of a rock by Moses"³³⁰ to refresh his thirsty people: "And the Lord said unto Moses, Go on before the people, and take with thee of the elders of Israel; and thy rod, wherewith thou smotest the river, take in thine hand, and go. Behold, I will stand before thee there upon the rock in Horeb; and thou shalt smite the rock, and there shall come water out of it that the people may drink" (Exodus 17:5-6).

329. Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1957), 199.

330. Ibid.

While the image of the rock may be used in Christianity in different ways, it mostly means refuge and salvation. The rock is, indeed, associated with Jesus the protector of people. Jesus says, "Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock" (Matthew 7:24). St Peter is also referred to as Rock. For Christians, the rock is associated with the origins of the church in Christ's delegation of spiritual authority to Peter. Peter's original name was Simon. Jesus gave him the name Peter, which means rock in Greek. Peter is sometimes called Simon Peter in the New Testament. In a passage from the New Testament, Jesus is portrayed as saying to Peter: "And I say unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:18-19).

In "A Valediction: of my Name, in the Window," Donne estranges his theme of love by associating it with the biblical image of the rock. In the poem, the image of the "The diamonds of either rock" (SPJD, 96), as a symbol of Jesus Christ, supports the theme of the permanence of love and the enduring union of the lovers despite the parting of a lover and his mistress. The poem shows a lover about to leave his mistress. Before doing so, he has scratched his name in the window of her room to serve as a reminder of him during his absence. In discoursing on the significance of this action, he comments upon the power, permanence, and meaning of the name, promises to return, and instructs the mistress in her duties during his absence:

As no one point, nor dash,
Which are but accessories to this name,
The showers and tempests can outwash.
So shall all times find mee the same. (SPJD, 96)

The reference to the rock completes the characterization of the lover as a Christ-figure as a way to establish the grounds upon which the permanence of this love union is postulated.

Donne also uses an uncanny image of Jesus which helps him defamiliarize his religious experiences. In "Batter my heart, three person'd God," he offers a strange image of rape that of the speaker by Christ as a means to intensify his plea to God to forgive him. Thus, without God ravishing him, he can never achieve purity: " Except you enthrall me, never shall be free / Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me (SPJD, 204). The same degree of defamiliarization is achieved in "What if this Present," by attributing feminine qualities to God while the speaker remains masculine. The speaker endows God with beauty and pity of the woman he has loved to make God more human than divine:

No, no; but as in my idolatrie
I said to all my profane mistresses,
Beauty, of pittie, foulnesse onely is
A signe of rigour: so I say to thee,
To wicked spirits are horrid shapes assign'd,
This beauteous forme assures a pitious minde. (SPJD, 204)

In *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions*, Donne uses the biblical figure of Lazarus to reveal his desire for resurrection. Yet, Lazarus, the man whom Christ raised from the dead, is an appropriate analogue for one who considers himself to be in a need of a miraculous resurrection. However, his presence in the book has defamiliarizing effects as what is needed is the renewal of the soul rather than the rise from dead body. This book is a series of devotional essays written by a man in various stages of a continuing sickness. The work traces the disease's course and treatment, beginning in the first devotion with the first signs of illness, moving through the patient's taken to bed and sending for physicians, their prescribing and carrying out various treatments, and a worsening of symptoms followed by the crisis

where, in "Devotion 17," the patient prepares himself for death. When he begins to recover, the physician purges him and raises him from bed. Donne explores the spiritual implications of each stage of his illness, using the experience of his body to provoke reflections on the health of the soul. For instance, in "Devotion 1," he asks why sin, unlike physical sickness, does not show early signs which might enable one to get treatment in time. Donne hopes to reposition himself within divine transformation and renewal. "Where Lazarus had been four days,"³³¹ Donne tells God, "I have been fifty years in this putrefaction; why dost thou not call me, as thou didst him, with a loud voice, since my soul is as dead as his body was?"³³² If Jesus's miracle brought Lazarus back to life after being dead and buried for four days, Donne asks God to bring his soul to new life after fifty years of sin.

The Book of Genesis refers to the serpent which is partly responsible for the Fall of Man. He tempts Eve to commit the sin of eating from the forbidden fruit. He told her that if she eats the fruit of the tree "then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:5). Eve ate the fruit and gave it to Adam who also ate which caused the fall of humans.

Because it fails to tempt the woman as it does with Eve in the garden, the allusion of the serpent has a defamiliarizing effect in Donne's "Twickenham Garden." In this poem, the speaker's anguish and hopelessness is due to unrequited love by a married woman. He comes to Twickenham garden so that the beautiful sights and sounds around him might ease his anguish. Yet the beauty of the garden does not relieve his sadness. The garden only serves as a reminder of the Garden of Eden where the serpent, jealous, like Satan, of the married couple, tries to tempt the woman into being untrue to herself and her husband. In "Twickenham Garden" the speaker fails to make her hate her husband and holds that what binds her to him is non-negotiable. Thus, the woman is perfect and unfallen because she is

331. John Donne, *Devotions upon Emergent Occasions* (New York: Cosimo Classics, 2010), 141.

332. *Ibid.*, 141.

true to her husband and does not give in to the poet's temptation: "Oh perverse sex, where none is true but she, / Who's therefore true, because her truth kills me" (SPJD, 98). By not betraying her husband, she is denying Donne the love that he longs for so desperately.

3- Donne's Dantean Allusions: The Unusual Use of the Stairs, Beatrice's Eye and the Circle to Defamiliarize Christianity and Love

Dante's *The Divine Comedy* further helps Donne defamiliarize his personal experiences. Despite their religious connotations, Donne associates Dante's images of the stairs, Beatrice's eye and the circle with his experience of carnal love and physical illness. But before dealing with the specific way Donne employs them, it is useful to define each of these Dantean allusions.

For Frye, Purgatory in Dante is an enormous mountain with a path ascending spirally around it, on top of which, as the pilgrim gradually recovers his lost innocence and casts off his original sin, is the Garden of Eden.³³³ In Dante's "Purgatorio," Dante has to climb up to purge his soul of all the sins which beset all humanity to arrive at the state of perfect grace necessary to enter Paradise. This huge mountain as Sister M. Cleophas explains "is divided into three parts which stem from the three errors of love: perverted love, defective love, and excessive love."³³⁴

In *Devotions*, Donne uses the image of the mountain that he should climb to reach his spiritual renewal. However, the context in which the stairs are included is rather surprising. In fact, as he retreats to his bed, Donne's desire for the spiritual journey for renewal is triggered by his physical disease rather than by his spiritual malaise. From his illness emerges a meditative structure, the fear of the final judgement by God, and the sense of anguish and of acceptance at the spiritual and physical death: "As thou hast laid me low in this valley of

333. Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, 199.

334. Sister M. Cleophas, "Ash Wednesday," 332.

sickness, so low as that I am made fit for that question asked in the field of bones, *Son of man, can these bones live?* so, in thy good time, carry me up to these mountains of which even in this valley thou affordest me a prospect, the mountain where thou dwellest, the holy hill, unto which none can ascend *but he that hath clean hands*, which none can have but by that one and that strong way of making them clean, in the blood of thy Son Christ Jesus. Amen."³³⁵ The climbing of the mountain reveals the poet progress in his search for faith, hope, and thus for God.

While Donne employs Dante's stairs to defamiliarize faith, Beatrice's eyes serve as a means to view love from an unusual perspective. In Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, Beatrice, as the one who leads Dante towards redemption, becomes the symbol of the reconciliation of spiritual and physical natures. The most powerful aspect of Beatrice is her eyes which "were brighter than the star."³³⁶ In paradise, for example, Beatrice warns Dante that her "eyes are not [his] only paradise."³³⁷ Thus, her eyes signify temporal desire transfigured as a divine love.

Unlike the eye of Beatrice that introduces Dante to divine love, the eye functions as a medium of sexual exchange in Donne's "Ecstasy." In this poem, the lovers look into one another's eyes and see themselves contained there, whole and perfect and present. The act of staring into each other's eyes leads to a profound union of souls into one "abler soul":

Our eye-beams twisted, and did thread
Our eyes, upon one double string;
So to' intergraft our hands, as yet
Was all the means to make us one. (SPJD, 114)

335. Donne, *Devotions*, 83.

336. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 10.

337. *Ibid.*, 361.

Yet the communion is transmitted to the bodies as well. What causes the lovers' gaze is not only spiritual union but sexual as well:

To' our bodies turn we then, that so
Weak men on love reveal'd may look;
Love's mysteries in souls do grow,
But yet the body is his book. (SPJD, 116)

As for the image of the circle, it suggests the eternity of a man and a woman's love in Donne's poetry. In Dante's *The Divine Comedy*, God is compared to a circle. At the end of "Paradiso," Dante sees the face of God in the form of "three orbs of triple hue"³³⁸ which are traditionally interpreted to be the holy trinity: the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost. "In "A Valediction: forbidding Mourning," Donne employs the circle not for a religious purpose; it rather represents the journey in which two lovers endure the trial of separation, as they support each other spiritually and eventually merge in perfect union. The speaker compares the perfection of his love to a circle drawn by the twin legs of a compass. The twin legs represent the lovers and the circle the lovers' sense of union during absence. The lover who stays behind is the fixed point, and the speaker is the other leg of the instrument. Without the "firmness" of the fixed point, he would be unable to complete the journey and make the circle precise:

If they be two, they are two so
As stiff twin compasses are two ;
Thy soul, the fix'd foot, makes no show
To move, but doth, if th' other do.
And though it in the centre sit,
Yet, when the other far doth roam,

338. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 425.

It leans, and hearkens after it,
And grows erect, as that comes home.
Such wilt thou be to me, who must,
Like th' other foot, obliquely run;
Thy firmness makes my circle just,
And makes me end where I begun. (SPJD, 204)

Though the circle permanently connects the two lovers despite the physical distance, the poem does not rule out the body. The words "erect" and "stiff" have definite sexual overtones.

4- Donne's Mythical Allusions: Unconventional Use of Jove, Cupid and Venus to Defamiliarize Love

With the same aim of defamiliarizing love, Donne does not hesitate to resort to mythological deities. Defamiliarization lies not only in the presence of these deities but also in the unexpected outcome of such presence. In "Love's Deity," Donne incorporates the Classical deities as Jove, Cupid and Venus to show how vicious and uncontrollable love is. He insists that the god of love uses his power to match people who are not right for each other without taking into account the feelings of those involved:

But when an even flame two hearts did touch,
His office was indulgently to fit
Actives to passives. Correspondency
Only his subject was; it cannot be
Love, till I love her, that loves me. (SPJD, 116)

The god of love has extended his sovereign rights to Jove, the god whose unfaithful amatory exploits were infamous. Such unfaithfulness has reduced love to lust:

But every modern god will now extend
His vast prerogative as far as Jove.

To rage, to lust, to write to, to commend,

All is the purlieu of the god of love. (SPJD, 116)

The speaker accepts his fate and has no intention of revolting against the god of love or turning into an atheist because the god of love is capable of inflecting a heavier punishment on him. Cupid may make her love him back though her feelings are not sincere, and this would be something false. This falsehood is worse than hatred, for the poet is sure that it is not possible for his lady to love him in return:

Rebel and atheist too, why murmur I,

As though I felt the worst that love could do ?

Love might make me leave loving, or might try

A deeper plague, to make her love me too,

Which since she loves before, I am loth to see;

Falsehood is worse than hates; and that must be,

If she whom I love, should love me. (SPJD, 117)

In "The Indifferent," John Donne evokes the goddess of love Venus to suggest constancy as a vice and promiscuity as the path of virtue:

I can love both fair and brown,

Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays,

Her who loves loneliness best, and her who masks and plays,

Her whom the country formed, and whom the town,

Her who believes, and her who tries,

Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,

And her who is dry cork, and never cries;

I can love her, and her, and you, and you,

I can love any, so she be not true. (SPJD, 86)

Ironically, those who think to establish a dangerous constancy of love are accused, not of virtue, but of searching out new vice. Upon hearing that there are women seeking to be faithful lovers, Venus swears "She heard not this till now" (SPJD, 86). Turning traditional concepts of fidelity upside down, the pagan goddess of love states that the true "heretics" (SPJD, 86) are the ones who desecrate her religion of free love and indiscriminate sex.

b- Allusions in Eliot's Poetry

Now that I have discussed how Donne uses allusions to defamiliarize his subjects of love and faith, let us now examine how Eliot draws on the same sources to express his experiences unconventionally. Eliot, indeed, employs defamiliarizing strategies other than Donne's to rid his poetry of the automatism of perception that may result from using allusions to tradition. In his early poetry, Eliot uses allusions mainly ironically. After his conversion, the ironic allusive strategies of his early poetry become the background or the automatized tradition to give way to new practices that defamiliarize them afresh. Thus, unlike his references to these religious texts in his early works which are clearly ironic, Eliot's allusions to the Bible and Dante's *The Divine Comedy* are sincere rather than ironic. Moreover, as he alludes primarily to religious texts, his references to Greek mythology narrow after his conversion.

1- Eliot's Use of Mythical Allusions: Anachronistic Presence of Philomel and Tiresias and the Failure of Redeeming the Modern World

Before his conversion, Eliot integrates many traditional mythical allusions to express the human concerns of modern man in an unfamiliar way. What suggests defamiliarization is not only the anachronistic presence of such mythic figures as Philomel and Tiresias but also their failure to add meaning to the life of the inhabitants of the modern city. This defamiliarizing method increases the reader's awareness that modern man fails to learn from a past which becomes incomprehensible to him.

The myth of the change of Philomel³³⁹ into a nightingale is part of the strategy used by Eliot to denounce the brutal animal-like sex affairs in the city. This myth begins particularly in the poem's second part "A Game of Chess" and continues through its third "The Fire Sermon." The second part "A Game of Chess" opens with the description of a room filled with artificiality and oppressive history. Above the mantel, a "sylvan" scene is carved: "The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king / So rudely forced" (CPTSE, 66).

Eliot's treatment of Philomel proves to be ironic when compared to the original text. While in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* Philomel is portrayed as a victim that is able to take revenge against her oppressor, Eliot's version focuses only on Philomel as a victim; it omits the second half of the story in which she takes disproportionate revenge. As a victim, she is raped, mutilated, and her tongue cut before being transformed into a nightingale. Being violated and silenced, she becomes the prototype of the victimized women, whether classical, literary, or contemporary. The poem traces a lineage of female characters including Lil, the typist, and the Thames daughters, who are either threatened by or suffer violently from sexual betrayal, rape, and abandonment. In fact, Philomel's situation is very similar to theirs.

Moreover, in Ovid's version, despite Tereus's attempt to silence Philomela by cutting her tongue, she "fill[s] the desert" (CPTSE, 66) with her song breaking the silence to protest her terrible mistreatment. Thus, "still she crie[s]" (CPTSE, 66), her voice is "inviolable" (CPTSE, 66) and her songs cannot be put an end to. Yet, her song has become incoherent babble that fails to add meaning to "antique mantel"(CPTSE, 66) with their wall decorations. The debasing perception of her song as a merely sexual decorative "jug jug" (CPTSE, 66) transforms the wall to stumps of the past without meaning for the present. The failure of

339. In *Metamorphoses* the lustful King Tereus lures his wife Procne's beautiful sister, Philomela, into coming to his kingdom, Thrace. Once she arrives, he rapes her, and after she threatens to tell of his treachery he cuts her tongue out. Philomela is eventually set free by her sister, and the sisters kill Tereus' child Itys and serve the boy to his father for a feast. When he realizes his deed, the enraged king chases the women and all three are transformed into birds; the king becomes a hoopoe and the women become nightingales bills sing at night. (Ovid VI.430-721)..

modern memory to recapture the meaning of the events of the past raises the spectre of death in life: "Are you alive or not? Is there nothing in your head?" (CPTSE, 67)

Likewise, the presence of Tiresias³⁴⁰ is unfamiliar as he becomes incomprehensible to modern man. In fact, Eliot introduces the Greek mythic seer in an attempt to achieve a sense of unity and coherence in the poem. In his "Notes on the Wasteland," Eliot affirms his adoption of Tiresias as a "spectator" (CPTSE, 82) who has remarkable perspective ability. Eliot writes in his notes that Tiresias is the "most important personage in the poem" (CPTSE, 82). He adds that what he "sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (CPTSE, 82). By "throbbing between two lives" (CPTSE, 71), he transcends the differences between present and past and is able to make shift back in time which illuminates the present.

However, Tiresias fails to transcend history because he does not succeed in uniting the present and the past. In speaking in the present moment, from the past, about the present moment, he may contribute to make the reader aware of the poet's technique of taking elements from the most diverse times of the past to reveal their conformity to the present. However, this endeavour proves ironic to the inhabitants of the "wasteland" who are able to find meaning neither in their present life nor from history. The new opposite meaning Eliot gives to elements from the past becomes antithetical to their original meaning. Thus, April, which in Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*, is the beginning of the sweet season of spring when the pilgrims start their journey for spiritual renewal to Canterbury, becomes the cruelest month. The Thames River which is the setting of a wedding procession that Edmund Spenser's "Prothalamium" celebrates becomes a place of the sexual encounters that take place in summer which proves unfruitful since the women are abandoned by the city directors

340. Tiresias appears in Greek mythology as a blind Theban seer who has the gift of prophecy. He lived for seven or nine generations. Tiresias once separated two snakes that were having sex, and was then turned into a woman for eight years. Then he saw these snakes again and so was changed back into a man. Since he had been both sexes, he was called on to settle a debate between the gods Juno and Jupiter about which sex has more pleasure during intercourse. Tiresias said women did, and was blinded by an angry Juno. Jupiter lessened his punishment by granting him the gift of prophecy.

without leaving any address. The myth of Philomel which tells the story of a raped woman taking her revenge is reduced to an immoral prostitute and her song into a merely sexual decorative "jug jug" (CPTSE, 71).

2- Eliot's Natural Allusions: From the Difficulty of Redemption in the Cruellest April to the Spiritual Salvation in the Zero Summer

While mythical allusions are frequent only in Eliot's early poetry, the seasonal allusions are found throughout his poetic career. However, his uses of the seasons are unhabitual because they are repeated differently to express different ideas. In "The Wasteland," he removes their traditional connotations while in "The Quartets" he subverts the meaning of the seasons against their expected significance in "The Wasteland."

In "The Wasteland," Eliot uses the symbolic representation of each season to portray his difficult journey in search for redemption. The poem begins in April, and its opening line "APRIL is the cruellest month" (CPTSE, 63) recalls Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*. Eliot's reference to Chaucer's poem, though suggesting the possibility of resurrection, inverts the traditional use of seasons. For Chaucer's pilgrims, April is an occasion of hopeful possibility, a pilgrimage to Canterbury for healing and consolation. Instead, Eliot sees April as "the cruellest month." It is cruel because it reminds them of their need to start a quest for regeneration since rebirth implies some spiritual effort on themselves but which is hateful. The journey proves critical to them since they have to go through the wastes of the contemporary world.

Ironically, they prefer winter or spiritual death. In winter, the Earth is covered with snow and there is no stirring of life, so the need for action is forgotten: "Winter kept us warm, covering / Earth in forgetful snow" (CPTSE, 63). The snow accumulates and causes the mind to forget reality, deadening the world. The narrator relates a subtle desire within him to resist

the life-giving spring and to remain undisturbed under cover of a snowy memory of how things have always been.

Autumn in "The Wasteland," is associated with desolation and desertion. There is no sign of life, even "empty bottles, sandwich papers / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (CPTSE, 70) disappear. These waste types used to be "testimony of summer nights" (CPTSE, 70) when the "nymphs" (CPTSE, 70), after the sexual encounter, are now abandoned by their friends, "the loitering heirs of City directors" (CPTSE, 70), without leaving any addresses.

In "Four Quartets," Eliot's seasons bear the traditional meaning which is compatible with Frye's discussion, but Eliot achieves defamiliarization by incorporating an imaginary season that he calls the "Zero summer" (CPTSE, 214). Autumn, winter, spring and summer are the seasons of the temporality whereas the "Zero summer" is the season of eternity. Each quartet is devoted to a season. "Burnt Norton," with its sunlight and rustling leaves and rose gardens, bespeaks the summer. "East Coker," with its hint of late-night harvest rituals and talk of late November, represents autumn. The stormy sea that measures time in "The Dry Salvages" recalls New England's wintry weather. "Little Gidding" signals the movement from winter into spring and then evokes May, the month that marks the heart of the spring in both England and New England.

However, this natural movement of the seasons contrasts with the fixity of the still point which is the "abstention from movement" (CPTSE, 193) without which there is no movement:

there the dance is,

But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,

Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement from nor towards,

Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point. (CPTSE, 191)

There is neither fixity because so much is moving around the still point nor movement because the point itself has stability and stillness despite the movement around it.

Though the seasonal references mirror the quester's experience on his journey to his still point, the timeless moment of the still point cannot be contained in the cyclical seasons. The still point can happen only in a miraculous season that Eliot calls the "Zero summer":

Now the hedgerow
Is blanched. . . .with transitory blossom
Of snow, a bloom more sudden
Than that of summer. . . .
Not in the scheme of generation.
Where is the summer, the unimaginable
Zero summer? (CPTSE, 214)

Being unimaginable and "not in the scheme of generation" points out that the "zero summer" is nearly miraculous: although all the journeys take place within natural time, the season or time of day is not key to experiencing the still point at the end of the road:

It would be the same at the end of the journey,
If you came at night...,
If you came by day...,
It would be the same. (CPTSE, 214-215)

The eternal transcends seasonality and time itself; a human being is clearly within time and within specific instances and at specific places on earth when one is approaching the "intersection of the timeless moment" (CPTSE, 214). But at the "still point" itself, the human moves from time temporarily to the eternal; therefore, a particular season or time of day does not matter when approaching a place where the timeless intersects with time. From that

vantage point, the human experiencing the "timeless moment" can see time and the dance performed within it.

3- Eliot's Christian Allusions: The Rock, Christ, Lazarus, and the Cross: From an Ironic Use for the Loss of Faith to a Sincere Use for Redemption

In a like manner, Eliot employs Christian allusions to refresh his vision of reality. In his early poetry, they are used for ironic effects while they maintain their traditional meaning in poems he wrote after his conversion. In "The Wasteland," Eliot employs many images of the rock. Ironically, the rock fails to protect the modern man from the absence and loss of faith. The last stanzas of "What the Thunder Said" are reminiscent of the story of Moses who waves his staff over the rock for water to flow from it. Yet, in modern day the rock gives no water:

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above among the mountains

Which are mountains of rock without water. (CPTSE, 76)

Hence the presence of the sterile rock serves to deny the possibility of resurrection and salvation in modern society.

Eliot employs an extended use of the figure of Christ to show how incompatible his traits are in modern time. In "Gerontion," Eliot uses the figure of Jesus Christ to show that the resplendent past and the dismal present are incomparable. The poem contrasts the secular history of Europe epitomized by the life of Gerontion with unregarded promise of salvation through Christ. Gerontion is tormented with the realization that he has not used the opportunities in life that have come to him; as a result, the return of Christ will not bring any new life to him. First Gerontion does not "see a sign" (CPTSE, 39) and is unable to "speak a word" (CPTSE, 39). This is an allusion to St. Matthew's report that Christ refused to give the Pharisees a sign, demanding that they accept him by faith alone. Since Gerontion does not

"see a sign" and is unable to "speak a word," Christ returns not as a sacrificial lamb that sends peace but as a Tiger of destruction.

The figure of Christ appears in the last section of the poem which deals with the journey to Emmaus.³⁴¹ Within the context of "The Wasteland," the allusion to the journey to Emmaus signifies that the dying god has been reborn and that his apparent absence, which is the cause of the barrenness of "The Wasteland," is not the god's actual absence but mankind's inability to recognize him even when he is present:

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
When I count, there are only you and I together
But when I look ahead up the white road
There is always another one walking beside you
Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
I do not know whether a man or a woman
But who is that on the other side of you? (CPTSE, 77)

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Lazarus appears divested of his biblical attributes. The poem is about Prufrock's paralysis and his failure even to ask a special lady "an overwhelming question" (CPTSE, 16). Even if Prufrock talks like Lazarus, he would be totally misunderstood because these modern desiccated people would not be impressed by the new testaments:

To say: "I am Lazarus, come from the dead,
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all"—
If one, settling a pillow by her head,

341. On his journey to Emmaus, the risen Christ anonymously joined with several of his disciples, seeking to know, as if he were a stranger in these parts, why they were so low in spirit. They shared with him as best they could the horror and tragedy of the Crucifixion that had just transpired. It was only later, as he shared with them a repast of fish, that, in the breaking of the bread, he revealed himself to them as Christ.

Should say: "That is not what I meant at all,

That is not it, at all". (CPTSE, 16)

Yet the biblical allusions are less ironic in the "Four Quartets." For example, the cross is used to symbolize the meeting of the time and timelessness which is at the basis of the Christian idea of sacrifice. Eliot views the coming of Christ as the most important event in history. The temporal and the eternal, the human and the divine, time and timelessness intersect in Christ's death which provides new meaning to temporal happenings in history. The cross is described by the meeting of its eternal nature with human time: "the point of intersection of the timeless / With time" (CPTSE, 194). Another allusion to the cross is represented by the axle-tree in "Burnt Norton" which clearly refers to the cross to suggest the "still point of the turning world" (CPTSE, 191) when the mortal man intersects with Christ.

4- Eliot's Dantean Allusions: The Eye, the Stairs, and the Circle: From an Ironic Use for the Loss of Faith to a Sincere Use for Redemption

Like his Christian allusions, Eliot's Dantean allusions are employed for ironic effects in his early poetry while they bear their traditional meaning in his post-conversion poetry. In "Prufrock," the eyes of "the women [that] come and go / Talking of Michelangelo" (CPTSE, 14) do not give a glimpse of spiritual regeneration. They rather function as an agent of terror for Prufrock. Though he dismisses the faces around him, he cannot evade the eyes that peer through their masks. It is through the women's eye that he sees the violent image of his reduction into an insect:

And I have known the eyes already, known them all -

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phase,

And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,

When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall. (CPTSE, 15)

In "The Wasteland," the eyes of the marching Londoners do not see any rupturing light that might lead to the divine love. Focusing on their feet in the midst of the crowd, they remain trapped within themselves and are unable to understand the pain of others:

And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (CPTSE, 65)

The failure of the eye to play the same redeeming role as those of Beatrice is reinforced by their indifference to the church and their interest in the time that church clock indicates.

In a world afflicted by spiritual emptiness, the speaker of the hyacinth garden alone offers a glimpse of something potentially enlightening or rewarding. But he fails to fully grasp his experience as it overwhelms him into insensibility:

I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing. (CPTSE, 64)

The speaker is paralyzed because he is "neither living nor dead," and he is incapable of resolving the moment's significance. The hyacinth garden's speaker remains locked, like his fellow inhabitants, in an emotionally and spiritually sterile landscape where love betrays if it exists at all. The failure to act on his intimation of the timeless leaves him emotionally and spiritually impotent. Like the poem's other voices, this speaker is more inclined to experience life-in-death than to break the tendency towards inertia.

"The Hollow Men," a poem written after Eliot's conversion, marks an important shift in Eliot's use of the eye of Beatrice. It suggests the possibility of redemption and movement out of the waste land. The poem initially seems to develop further "The Wasteland"'s sense of futility and barrenness as its spiritually paralyzed speaker refuses to act on his desire for

redemption. Locked in a "cactus land" (CPTSE, 90), the speaker, like Prufrock and the personae in the "The Wasteland," exists as a "Paralysed force, gesture without motion" (CPTSE, 89). Despite the emphasis on the hollow men's paralysis, the poem leaves open the possibility of change: the eyes may reappear if the speaker approaches purgatory. Though the hollow men fail to act, the poem ends with the possibility of salvation. If the eyes are "the hope only / of empty men," they are their only hope. He alludes to Beatrice's eyes to represent the hollow men's hope for redemption. The eyes that the hollow men avoid meeting become symbolic of spiritual vision, but the hollow men are not ready for purgation:

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men. (CPTSE, 91)

The speaker of "The Hollow Men" appears to realize that avoiding the eyes, which might lead him toward the final cause, will leave him "Sightless." He also acknowledges that he should have courage to confront the eyes in order for them to reappear.

In "Ash-Wednesday," which deals with the renunciation of earthly things, spiritual hope replaces the earthly hope. In the poem, the speaker asks a lady to bring him the same help as Dante receives from Beatrice: guidance to salvation. The woman's "bright cloud of tears" echoes Beatrice's "bright beaming eyes tearful."³⁴² After hearing of her tears, Dante commits himself to the otherworldly expedition and finally to salvation. Like Beatrice, the Lady's tears might help to "Redeem / The unread vision in the higher dream" (CPTSE, 100).

342. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 12.

In addition, images of the stair, reminiscent of Dante's mountainous stairs in "Purgatorio," are used by Eliot to suggest a similar endless journey from hell towards paradise. However, in his earlier poems, the stairs seem ironic and imply the failed spiritual journey though their presence suggests an unquestionably mystical twist. Prufrock seems hesitant to descend the stairs. He only thinks that "there will be time / To wonder, "Do I dare?" and, "Do I dare?" / Time to turn back and descend the stair." The stairs in "The Wasteland" are unlit for the clerk leaving his lover. From here, the stairs are stripped of the redeeming role they play in Dante's "Purgatorio."

After his conversion, Eliot's use of the stairs is less ironic. In the third part of "Ash Wednesday," the stairs evoke the poet's journey towards paradise. The speaker has to ascend the stairs to reach his spiritual renewal. "At the first turning of the second stair" (CPTSE, 99), the speaker is torn between his present hope to turn to God and his memory of his past worldly attachments full of temptations of self-deceit, despair, and lust. This hesitancy is characterized as the "devil of the stairs" (CPTSE, 99) with his "deceitful face of hope and of despair" (CPTSE, 99). "The second stair" (CPTSE, 99) that he has to mount is dark ugly and fearful. It is "like an old man's mouth drivelling, beyond repair, / Or the toothed gullet of an aged shark" (CPTSE, 99). According to Nasreen Ayaz, "these images symbolize the evil and malaise within the soul of the poet of which he becomes sensuous through a process of self introspection."³⁴³ "At the first turning of the third stair" (CPTSE, 99), he looks upon the temptations "of a pasture scene"(CPTSE, 99) and "music of the flute" (CPTSE, 99). Symbolically, these three steps mean that the poet is doing his best to work out his spiritual salvation as Dante does. Yet despite his effort, the speaker of "Ash-Wednesday" has not lost his ability to be stirred by the sensuous vitality of the natural world.

343. Nasreen Ayaz, *Anti-T.S. Eliot Stance in Recent Criticism: An Examination* (New Delhi: Sarup, 2004), 28.

In "The Wasteland," Dante's circle of hell uncovers his black vision of the modern world. The "crowds of people, walking round and round in a ring" (CPTSE, 64) suggest Dante's damned souls in the circle of Hell. However, the arrangement of sins in Eliot's poem does not perfectly match the order of Dante's circles. In the modern waste land, there is no progression of the severity of sin, and the sinners do not even recognize their sins. It is a psychological hell in which the characters, because of their betrayal of values, find themselves quite alone. All the sinners are trapped in the same circle to suggest their common responsiveness to the momentary needs.

Eliot in his latest poems uses the image of the circle and the point to God much like Dante does in "Paradiso." It is "the still point of the turning world" (CPTSE, 99), the intersection of eternity and temporality, or the spiritual and the physical:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. (CPTSE, 191)

Eliot compares God to a circle and a point. Spatially, it is the unmoving center around which the universe turns. Temporally, it is the point where all times converge. These spatial and temporal qualities lead to Incarnation or "the impossible union of spheres" (CPTSE, 213) whether spiritual or physical "reconciled, and reconciled" (CPTSE, 213).

c- Allusions in Stevens' Poetry

Unlike Eliot's allusions which serve to juxtapose the past and the present to show man's failure to learn from his cultural heritage, Stevens' references to the literature of the past are hardly nostalgic. Indeed, his Christian, mythological, Dantean and natural allusions are unusual as he gives them new meanings unrelated to their traditional usage. This allusive method invites the reader to look afresh and at Stevens' themes of the irrelevance of

traditional religion, the relationship between reality and the imagination, the irrelevance of the past to the present.

1- Stevens' Biblical Allusions: The Ironic Use of the Rock, Christ, Lazarus and the Serpent as a Fresh Method to Reject Christianity and to Embrace Humanism

The rock, a current symbol of the church, is used for secular purposes. When repeated, it never conveys the same meaning; otherwise, it becomes obsolete and loses its literalness. The rock in the following lines is without its religious characteristics suggested by the notable absence of "chorister" and the "priest":

There was neither voice nor crested image
No chorister, nor priest. There was
Only the great height of rock. (WSCPP, 103)

Though the rock is without its religious attributes as is suggested by the absence of an association between ritual or clergy, its promise is still a secret and with no apparent secular alternative to the absence of religion.

The repetition of the image of the rock in "Credences of the Summer" illustrates well how Stevens changes meanings. In the following lines the rock represents reality as it:

cannot be broken. It is the truth.
It rises from land and sea and covers them.
It is a mountain half way green and then. (WSCPP, 324)

The rock represents the actual "green" world or the physical reality. Outside the imagination, the rock is the only tangible form of assurance; it is the actual world from where poetry can spring. However, poetry is more than the representation of reality as it is. Stevens believes that "the reality is the beginning not the end" (WSCPP, 400), and that poetry intermingles reality and the imagination. For Stevens, poetry is involved in the very instant of the poet's contact with reality and serves as the agent of a new reality born of the fusion of the

imagination and the physical world. In the following lines, the image of the rock is associated with the power of the imagination which transmutes bare facts into limitless prospects:

In this plenty, the poem makes meanings of rock,
Of such mixed motion and such imagery
That its barrenness becomes a thousand things
And so exists no more. (WSCPP, 446)

Stevens' allusions to Christ are unconventional and ironic. Stevens eliminates Christ's consecrated features which are related to the miracles of Christianity, such as the Resurrection and Christ's divinity. This allusive method makes Stevens' topics of rejecting Christianity and embracing humanism appear new to the reader. In "The Death of a Soldier," he repudiates the celebration of Christ's Resurrection. The soldiers are usual man figures who negate any transcendence. "Death," for the soldier, "is absolute and without memorial." The contrast of soldiers' realistic death with that of the deified Christ shows up the fanciful nature of the Resurrection:

Life contracts and death is expected,
As in a season of autumn.
The soldier falls.
He does not become a three-days' personage,
Imposing his separation,
Calling for pomp.
Death is absolute and without memorial,
As in a season of autumn. (WSCPP, 81)

Stevens denies any Christian consolation and maintains that death, like the "season of autumn," is part of a natural rhythm of all life and thus belongs to a pattern of renewal. After death, the soldiers do not ascend; there is no separation from earth. "The three days

personage" that "he does not become," as Gerorge S. Lensing explains, "contains the idea both of three persons of the trinity and the three days that Jesus was in the tomb."³⁴⁴

The same denial of any future recreation of that myth of resurrection is also found in "Sunday Morning" which is Stevens' attempt to return to the earth as an immanent world that should not be disrupted by the existence of any other metaphysical world, such as heaven and hell. By dissolving the Incarnation and Resurrection, Christ is reduced to a non divine man who is dead once and for all, and his tomb is just a place of burial and contains no spirit:

She hears, upon that water without sound,
A voice that cries, "The tomb in Palestine
Is not the porch of spirits lingering.
It is the grave of Jesus, where he lay. (WSCPP, 56)

The empty tomb from which Jesus arose from death into eternal life is not the portal to paradise of those who believe; it is nothing but the eternal grave of a dead man which offers nothing to the living. For the living, paradise exists in the here and now of the physical world, "unsponsored" and "free" from supernatural additions.

In "The Good Man Has No Shape," he ironically turns Lazarus into a traitor who betrays the good man, the symbol of humanity, while in the Bible his rising leads many who are present to believe in Jesus. In Stevens' version, Lazarus betrays the good man; the anti-humanist believers will contrive to destroy him on the cynical grounds that the good man has no human shape or does not even exist:

At last the good life came, good sleep, bright fruit,
And Lazarus betrayed him to the rest,

344. George S. Lensing, *Wallace Stevens and the Seasons* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University, 2004), 44.

Who killed him, sticking feathers in his flesh

To mock him. (WSCPP, 316)

In "The Aurora of Autumn," Stevens changes the serpent's habituated feature as the embodiment of the evil, partly responsible for the fall of man, into a naturally tranquil creature looking for a quiet moment of warm tranquility. By bringing the serpent down from the cosmological to the physical, Stevens manages to emphasize the adherence of poetry to the physical world and the importance of its changeability. Thus, the snake is "Relentlessly in possession of happiness" (WSCPP, 355). The word "relentless" indicates that the serpent ceaselessly seeks happiness and therefore its constant renewal. In the context of the poem, due to the relentlessness of change, every stable foundation, even the serpent, eventually crumbles. At the beginning of canto I, Stevens establishes a creation myth that will offer new foundations. The serpent encompasses the entirety of the cosmos: "This is where the serpent lives, the bodiless. / His head is air. Beneath his tip at night / Eyes open and fix on us in every sky" (WSCPP, 355). However, Stevens acknowledges the need even for metaphors of creation to change in accordance with the natural, non-metaphysical nature of reality where the serpent lives: "This is his nest, / These fields, these hills, these tinted distances, / And the pines above and along and beside the sea" (WSCPP, 355).

2- Stevens' Dantean Allusions: The Ironic Use of the Stairs, Beatrice's Eyes and the Circle as a Fresh way to Reject Christianity and to Embrace Humanism

If Donne and Eliot use Dante's stairs to suggest a movement from the relinquishing of worldly things to spiritual renewal, Stevens' stairs ironically imply a struggle to inhabit the world physically and abandon the metaphysical illusions. Stevens' "Aside on the Oboe" contains an image of the stairs that brings to the mind Dante's imaginary stairs though the poem's main propositions are antithetical to Dante's. Stevens in this poem declares that "the

final belief / must be in fiction" (WSCPP, 226) because the old beliefs are dead; the poet, as the maker of fiction, must understand everything in human rather than in religious terms:

He is the transporence of the place in which
He is and in his poems we find peace.
He sets this peddler's pies and cries in summer,
The glass man, cold and numbered dewily cries,
"Thou art not August unless I make thee so.
"Clandestine steps upon imagined stairs
Climb through the night, because his cuckoos call. (WSCPP, 227)

The three images with which the maker of fiction is associated suggest his freshness in opposition to other obsolete superstitious and religious fictions. "Still walks in dew" means he is in the morning of his career. "Mutters milky lines" (WSCPP, 226) stresses his sweetness and freshness. "Immaculate imagery" (WSCPP, 226) conveys the idea of an inviolate conception of life. The "sea-side" (WSCPP, 226) is not a mere setting but a metaphor of life which reinforces the idea of man's life. Although he has no divine attributes, he shares the same creative power as characterizes God. Stevens says:

If you say on hautboy man is not enough
Can never stand as god, is ever wrong
In the end, however naked, tall, there is still
The impossible possible philosophers' man. (WSCPP, 227)

Hautboy is another spelling for oboe which is a musical instrument by means of which Stevens likens poetry and the imagination to music. The use of "naked" suggests that man is without superficial and supernatural falsities, while "tall" stresses his loftiness.

In Stevens' the "Esthetique du Mal," the stairs are used ironically to deny the existence of the metaphysical world of purgatory with the poem promising no other life after death. The

recurring images of the wound from which the soldier suffers represent, as Frank Kermode thinks, "the emblem of human suffering and death."¹³ As he grows "deathless in great size," the soldier of time becomes everyman, and his wound extends to be the emblem of human suffering that repeats itself again and again in all men. The following lines locate the soldier in this physical world rather than in the metaphysical world of the dead souls as it is in Dante's *The Divine Comedy*:

A mountain in which no ease is ever found,
Unless indifference to deeper death
Is ease, stands in the dark, a shadows' hill,
And there the soldier of time has deathless rest.
Concentric circles of shadows, motionless
Of their own part, yet moving on the wind,
Form mystical convolutions in the sleep
Of time's red soldier deathless on his bed. (WSCPP, 281)

These lines evoke Dante's vision of the mountain of Purgatory on which the souls find no ease from suffering till they are able to enter "paradiso." However, since "No part of him, [the soldiers] was ever part of death" (WSCPP, 281), this soldier has "deathless rest" on a Purgatory-like mountain "in which no ease is ever found, / Unless indifference to deeper death / Is eas . . ." (WSCPP, 281). Lacking traditional forms of spiritual salvation as the soldiers of time go eventually neither to heaven nor hell. His death is of this world as a summer sleep in the "high night" (WSCPP, 281).

For Stevens, the eye as "a thing" (WSCPP, 397) implies that it is part of the world. Its "plain version" (WSCPP, 397) suggests that it is not the metaphysical mirror as that held between Beatrice and Dante in *The Divine Comedy*. In the first section of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction" entitled "It Must Be Abstract," the speaker exhorts the ephebe, a student of

poetry, to become ignorant and to see the world in "an ignorant eye / And see it clearly in the idea of it" (WSCPP, 329). Yet, the role of the poet is not to reflect bare reality as it is perceived by the ignorant eye but to transform it. The mind captures, translates and explicates the real world on the eye and also imposes a new meaning to reality. The "Ordinary Evening," a poem that struggles to unite the real with the imagination, opens with the lines: "The eye's plain version is a thing apart / The vulgate of experience" (WSCPP, 397).

The same function of the eye as the origin of perception that dictates the content of the mind is found in "Crude Foyer." To be meaningful, the imagination should intermingle with reality. Thus, there is no pure reality of the mind that is not also a physical landscape rooted in the act of the eye's perception:

we know that we use
Only the eye as faculty, that the mind
Is the eye, and that this landscape of the mind
Is a landscape only of the eye. (WSCPP, 270)

The eye as an instrument of perception stands between the real world and the imagination. What the eye perceives becomes the driving force of the imaginative mind.

The image of the circle is used to suggest the eternal aspect of the imagination through change. In "Esthétique du Mal," the celebrants in the ceremony of the funeral surround the dead soldier forming a circle:

The shadows of his fellows ring him round
In the high night, the summer breathes for them
Its fragrance, a heavy somnolence, and for him,
For the soldier of time, it breathes a summer sleep. (WSCPP, 281)

"His fellows ring him round" is an image "derived from the traditional imagery of circles and rings associated with the idea of self-containment and eternity.

In another passage, Stevens evokes the image of the circle to suggest that the imagination, in order to be eternal, must also correspond to this cycle of change:

And in his mind the world revolves
The revolution through day and night,
Through wild spaces of other suns and moons
Round summer an angular winter and winds,
Are marched by other revolutions
In which the world goes round and round
In the crystal atmospheres of the mind,
Light's comedies, dark's tragedies,
Like things produced by a climate, the world
Goes round in the climates of the mind
And bears it floraisons of imagery. (WSCPP, 465)

The eternal aspect of the mind is here suggested again by the repetition of words conveying the idea of circularity, such as "revolve", "revolution" and "round." However, the maintenance of the eternity of the human imagination is conditioned by its change. This is conveyed by setting up a similarity between the change of the human imagination and the cycling seasons.

3- Stevens' Mythical Allusions: An Anachronic Use of Triton, Penelope and River Stygian as a Fresh Way to embrace the Imagination Based on Reality

While Classical myths are convenient symbols of their qualities, many of Stevens' allusions to them are without the expected reverence. Their use serves to highlight the poet's painful quest for a modern mythology. This is the case with Stevens' reference to Triton in "Comedian as Letter C." In this poem, though the allusion to Triton³⁴⁵ serves to highlight

345. Triton was a sea god in the Greek mythology. He was son of the sea god Poseidon and his wife, Amphitrite, at the bottom of the sea. Triton often blew his conch shell at the command of Poseidon horn to stir

Crispin's changing conception of reality, Stevens does not treat this Classical divinity reverently.

Triton is an important figure in the story of the flood that Deucalion and Pyrrha experience explaining how the old world is purified of its sins and new race of pious humans is given birth. Being closely associated with this myth, Triton represents the variability and a purging power of the sea. The perilous sea journey that Crispin experiences serves to purify him from his Romantic pride as the master of the world to the extent that he can reverse completely the note with which he began his voyage that "man is the intelligence of his soil" (WSCPP, 12) into "Note. His soil is man's intelligence / That's better" (WSCPP, 29). From here, Crispin has learned that poetry begins and ends in the affluence of the earth and not in the poetry of man's spirits.

However, Triton is not "dissolved in shifting" (WSCPP, 23) and suffers now from belatedness. In fact, there is "nothing left of him" (WSCPP, 23) that made him such a meaningful deity once in the modern world. Stevens may not be satisfied with his hero Crispin's resemblance to the ancient Triton. Crispin must have won mythology by way of rejecting other traditional myth. The "ancient Crispin was Dissolved" (WSCPP, 23) in the sea just as Triton was dissolved with the change of time.

In "The World as Meditation," another defamiliarized myth of the faithful Penelope provides Stevens with a frame for a new view of the relation between the imagination and reality. In the poem, he rewrites the myth and suggests an alternative to Penelope's trick of weaving, and undoing her funeral garment until her husband's return. This alternative is the power of the mind which enables Penelope to create an imagined Odysseus who offers her happiness while the actual Odysseus remains physically absent:

But was it Ulysses? Or was it only the warmth of the sun

up or calm the seas and rivers. In the Greek myth of Deucalion and Pyrrha, it is Triton who stopped the flood by blowing his echoing shell and giving the rivers and streams the signal to return.

On her pillow? The thought kept beating in her like her heart.

The two kept beating together. It was only day.

It was Ulysses and it was not. Yet they had met,

Friend and dear friend and a planet's encouragement.

The barbarous strength within her would never fail. (WSCPP, 26)

The pressure of reality outside suggested by "savage presence" has aroused her to the violent, ugly pressure of those outward suitors. But her "barbarous strength," symbol of the power of human imagination, enables her to constantly meditate her reunion with the man she constantly creates in her mind. This conception is found in *The Necessary Angel* where Stevens mentions a certain nobility of the mind that constitutes "violence within that protects us from violence without. It is the imagination pressing against the pressure of reality" (WSCPP, 665). It is the "violence without" or the chaotic twentieth century reality which exercises pressure on people. In a similar way, the pressure exercised by Penelope's suitors on her triggers the "violence within" or the imagination to protect her from the pressure of reality.

In "The River of Rivers in Connecticut," Stevens appropriates the Classical myth of the ferryman and his River Stygian. This appropriation enables the poet to express in a defamiliarized way his refutation of the myth and his emphasis on the importance of the real and not the mythical in the making of poetry. In this poem, Stevens asserts that the making of poetry requires that the imaginative and the real negotiate on roughly equal terms. It also requires freeing from the remnants of the past.

The reference to "this side of Stygia" (WSCPP, 451) suggests that the river in Connecticut can also be mythic yet with a difference. The Stygia has no substance from the real world, and it is occupied by such fanciful characters as Charon the "ferryman" (WSCPP, 451). The river in Connecticut is the opposite of the imaginative Stygia. It is not made of

fanciful objects, but of real objects, such as "the Steeple at Farmington" (WSCPP, 451), and "the town of Haddam" (WSCPP, 451). The aim of Stevens' reference to the Stygia is to show how it is fanciful and unacceptable. Stevens concludes that "There is no ferryman" (WSCPP, 451), and "No shadows walk on its banks" (WSCPP, 451). Therefore, the Stygia myth is unoccupied because it is bound to the past.

4-Stevens' Natural Allusions: The Seasons as a Way of Seeing the Life of the Imagination Afresh:

Though Stevens' use of natural allusions is less ironic than the Christian Dantean or mythical allusions, the defamiliarization of many of his poems further emanates from the combination of the seasons with the life of the imagination. This closely corresponds to Shklovsky's view that poets should make objects unfamiliar so as to change the reader's perception of reality. In Stevens' poetic world, each season involves a particular link between the imagination and reality. Kermode also observes that the seasons in Stevens' poetry are not only "natural analogue to the phases of human life but also as figuring the cyclical nature of the creative imagination."³⁴⁶

Thus, each season has its own significance. Winter is the time of impoverishment since reality is seen as it is and destitute of any imaginative aspect. Yet the bare world of winter is necessary for the imagination because it is the starting point for any activity of the mind. Stevens says that "the imagination loses its vitality as it ceases to adhere to what is real"(WSCPP, 645), and that "the more destitute it [reality] becomes the more it begins to be precious" (WSCPP, 681). It is this world that Stevens describes in his "The Snow Man." Stevens considers this poem as "an example of the necessity of identifying oneself with reality in order to understand it and enjoy it" (LWS 464). In this poem, reality is represented as the harshness of winter. Identification with this reality is represented through the dense

346. Kermode, *Wallace Stevens*, 28.

descriptions of the wintry scenery. Through imagining a blank mind as a "mind of winter" (WSCPP, 8), the poet seeks to behold reality without any innate ideas. Through identification with reality, the prevailing imaginative faculty in its operation discovers an outline inherent in reality rather than in the imagination. What the imagination "beholds" is the bare reality stripped of any imaginative interpretations. Thus,

the listener who listens in the snow
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is. (WSCPP, 8)

If winter is the season of the absolute reality, spring is the time of year associated with the beginning of the new cycle of the creative imagination to clothe the nude reality:

In the same way, you were happy in spring,
With the half colors of quarter things,
The slightly brighter sky, the melting clouds. (WSCPP, 8)

The need for a new marriage between the imagination and reality in the season of spring is more direct in Stevens' "Not Ideas About the Thing but the Thing Itself":

At the earliest ending of winter,
In March, a scrawny cry from outside
Seemed like a sound in his mind.
He knew that he heard it,
A bird's cry, at daylight or before,
In the early March wind.
.....
It was part of the colossal sun,
Surrounded by its choral rings,
Still far away. It was like

A new knowledge of reality. (WSCPP, 451-452)

The poet's imagination returns after its lengthy hibernation that longs until "the earliest ending of winter." March heralds a new period where new imaginative activities are ready to embrace reality as "a new knowledge of reality." It is the season when "a scrawny cry" that comes from reality is reshaped by the imagination to become part of "a sound in his mind."

In "Credences of Summer," summer is not only the season of the physical paradise, but also of the full human satisfaction when the imagination accounts for reality and makes it more bearable to human beings:

It is the rock of summer, the extreme,
A mountain luminous half way in bloom
And then half way in the extremest light
Of sapphires flashing from the central sky. (WSCPP, 325)

It is the season when the marriage of the imagination and reality is attained. Reality, not accessible to man as it is in itself, is now constructed by the imagination:

It is the natural tower of all the world,
The point of survey, green's green apogee,
But a tower more precious than the view beyond,
A point of survey squatting like a throne,
Axis of everything, green's apogee
And happiest fold-land, mostly marriage-hymns. (WSCPP, 323)

The interplay between the imagination and reality achieves now a complete harmony creating a flourishing image of "green's green apogee." Thus, the summer is the blissful moment when ugly reality is embellished by the imagination.

A new imagination to cope with the new changing reality requires the death of the old one. The season of autumn is employed when the poetic imagination becomes obsolete and

loses its credibility. The imagination in autumn fades and needs to purge itself by returning to the bare reality. In "Motive for Metaphor," the shrinking of human life is like autumn because it passes from ripeness to infertility. His death is as final as the death of the year in autumn:

You like it under the trees in autumn
Because everything is half-dead
The wind moves like a cripple among the leaves
And repeats words without meaning. (WSCPP, 25)

In many instances, Stevens uses the season of autumn to refer to the death of Christianity as an imagination that belongs to the past and which is no longer credible in modern life. In "The Death of the Soldiers," autumn has two connotations. First, it suggests the death of the soldier. Second, it demystifies the Christian belief in heavenly paradise after death as a dead formula in modern life. Thus, "As in a season of autumn / The soldier falls / He does not become a three-days personage" (WSCPP, 81). This world of autumn represents a negation of the Christian myth and its supernatural event like the Resurrection; the soldiers are subject to "absolute" (WSCPP, 81) and final death. Yet, Stevens recognizes that life still continues since "The clouds go, nevertheless, / In their direction" (WSCPP, 81).

It is important to note that though the seasons are very frequent in Stevens' poetry, they often convey different meanings when repeated. "A Discovery of Thought," which is about Stevens' imaginative failure to create new poetry owing to his old age, serves as a good example. This poem which uses the seasons as a metaphor for the cyclical nature of the human imagination begins, in the first stanza, with "dark winter" (WSCPP, 459), makes reference, in the third stanza, to "The Cricket of Summer," and, in the seventh stanza, introduces autumn in the phrase "autumn's prodigal returned" (WSCPP, 459). In fact, the word "spring" which represents a time of the rebirth of the imagination is omitted. In the course of the poem, Stevens compares the old poet to "a child again" (WSCPP, 459) and

invites him to see innocently "the houses of New England [that] catch the first sun" (WSCPP, 459). Yet the child does not arrive at the innocence of the new earth. Consequently, he fails to give the imagination a "first word" (WSCPP, 459), a "new life" (WSCPP, 459), and "the effort to be born" (WSCPP, 459).

Though they write innovative poetry to break with an established tradition, Donne, Eliot and Stevens draw upon their own vast range of reading for allusions to objectively express their meaning or experience. Though they borrow many of their allusions from the same sources, the three poets adopt different defamiliarizing methods. Each method reveals the poet's specific individual talent which enables him to create his unique poetry. In addition, these defamiliarizing methods contribute not only to give new life to the borrowed materials but also to make the reader look at their subjects afresh.

Having dealt with the influence of mythology, Dante and Donne, that represent three different traditions of the past, on Eliot and Stevens, the next chapter is devoted to the way these two poets respond to their contemporaries, namely French Symbolism, Imagism and Cubism. Through this examination, I hope to show that Eliot and Stevens are not only influenced by the literature of the past, but also by the innovative movements currently taking place around them. However, far from being slavish followers of these movements, Eliot and Stevens borrow tenets of French symbolism, Imagism and Cubism and adapt them to their own poetic forms.

Chapter Five: Symbolism, Cubism, and Imagism in Eliot's and Stevens' Poetry: Urbanization and Objectification of Poetry

The purpose of this chapter is to reveal the intertextual relation between Eliot's and Stevens' poetry and the various avant-garde movements in both literature and the visual arts. The intertextual theory is applied to investigate how Eliot and Stevens manipulate and transform the tenets of French Symbolism, Imagism and Cubism to protect their poetry against sentimentality, solipsism, and escapism of Romanticism.

The French Symbolists like Baudelaire incorporate the sordid aspects of the modern metropolis into their works. They present nature as a setting that epitomizes the consequences of urbanization rather than a symbol of beauty and harmony. Against the Romantic subjectivity, the Imagists use clear images with concision, objectivity, and repression of personal emotions. The Cubist techniques of collage and perspectives, which enable multiple ways of viewing the world, challenge the Romantic subjective view of reality.

Both poets turn to these movements to discard Romantic subjective aesthetics upholding excessive effusion of emotions together with the idealization and idolization of nature. However, they do not blindly follow the rules of these movements. They rather adopt and negotiate with their aesthetics which furthers each poet's concerns.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part shows how Eliot and Stevens, inspired by the Symbolists, revolt against the Romantic idealization of nature. In their poetry, nature, like the city, is used as an instrument to concern themselves with the conditions of their time. However, they do not share Baudelaire's pessimism. While Eliot suggests Christianity as a cure against alienation of the city, Stevens offers the poet's imagination as a means to transcend the suffering of urban life.

The second part shows that Stevens' and Eliot's poetry which is replete with visual images is marked by the influence of the Imagist movement. However, they do not use images to present perception, but to continually search for meaning behind perception. Thus, their images are more complex as they combine visual images with verbs of movements, or abstract words. Rather than focusing only on visual images as the Imagists do, they use images that appeal to multiple senses

The third part explores two realms of Eliot's and Stevens' interaction with Cubism: perspectivism and collage. These two Cubist techniques enable them to replace the Romantic subjectivism with a plural view of the world. This part also shows that the two poets use the Cubist perspectivism and collage which stress the absence of the center for different purposes. For Eliot, the absence of the center which he equates with the death of God is the reason that causes the loss of meaning in modern life. In contrast, Stevens uses the absence of the center to show possibilities of harmony and change that can be offered by the imagination.

A- Baudelaire, Eliot, and Stevens: Urbanization of Poetry

a- Baudelaire's Poetry: The Aesthetics of the City

1- Nature as Evil in Baudelaire's *The Flowers of Evil*

While writing at a time when the Romantic view that nature was the norm and the ideal of beauty still dominated the artistic and literary context, Baudelaire's theory of beauty took imperfection and ugliness into consideration. Reacting against the Romantics' falsification of reality, he urged the modern artists to incorporate chaos, ugliness, imperfection, and fragmentation. He even saw evil in nature. In an essay, "The Painter of Modern Life," Baudelaire wrote:

Nature teaches us nothing, or practically nothing. I admit that she compels man to sleep, to eat, to drink, and to arm himself as well as he may against the inclemencies of the weather, it is she too who incites man to murder his

brother, to eat him, to lock him up and torture him, for no sooner do we take leave of the domain of needs and necessities to enter that of pleasures and luxuries than we see nature can counsel nothing but crime. It is this infallible Mother Nature who has created patricide and cannibalism, and thousand other abominations that both shame and modesty prevent us from naming.³⁴⁷

Considering that nature is the vessel of evil, Baudelaire revolts against it. Nature, which is the main concern of the Romantic poetry, is almost absent in Baudelaire's poetry. If it appears, it is only as a reflection of the poet's mood of depression and despair. Nature is often associated with the corruption of the urban life. Many of his poems present nature as an enemy that seeks no empathy with man. The brutal side of nature can be seen in the way Baudelaire incorporates elements of nature in his *The Flowers of Evil*. "Evening Harmony" is about the poet's despair for pity caused by the absence of an unspecified "you." He sees himself in "a gloomy world" (FECB, 99) where his heart is imprisoned in the "the depths of the dark pit" (FECB, 99) where "glacial sun" (FECB, 100) provides no warmth. In "The Flawed Bell," the poet compares his difficulty to find a poetic voice to that of a dying soldiers who struggle to escape but is entrapped "beneath a heap of dead" (FECB, 228) on the bank of a "lake of blood" (FECB, 228), where the soldiers "dies without moving" (FECB, 228). In the "Man and the Sea," he presents the sea as his mirror. It is a bitter abyss suggesting that the poet's soul is full of sadness very similar to the bitter of the salted sea:

Free man, you will always cherish the sea!

The sea is your mirror; you contemplate your soul

347. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painters of Modern Life and Other Essays*, trans. Jonatha Mayne (London: Phaidon, 1964), 31-32.

In the infinite unrolling of its billows;

Your mind is an abyss that is no less bitter. (FECB, 49)

2- Baudelaire and the City: The Search for Beauty in Urban Ugliness

Unsurprisingly, Baudelaire opposes Romantic descriptions of the city.³⁴⁸ He suggests poetry in search of beauty in the strange and the uncanny: "Beauty is always bizarre. I do not mean to say that it is voluntarily, coldly bizarre. . . . I mean that it always contains a bit of strangeness, naive strangeness, not intentional but unconscious, and it is this strangeness that causes it to be particularly Beauty. That is its matriculation, its characteristic. Reverse the proposition, and try to conceive of a commonplace beauty."³⁴⁹

It is in the city of Paris that Baudelaire finds beauty in the strange and the abnormal. With its ugliness, sordidness and fragmentation, Paris becomes the focal point of Baudelaire's poetry. The theme of *The Flowers of Evil* is the life in Paris and the effect of the city life on the poet. To give but two examples: "Evening Twilight" and "The Swan."

"Evening Twilight" is one of the eighteen poems in the second section of *The Flowers of Evil* entitled "Parisian Scenes." The focus in this section is on the suffering of modern Parisian life which Baudelaire finds ugly but attractive. He sees the large ugly Paris made of poverty and decay and inhabited by such creatures as prostitutes, beggars, cripples, and criminals, a source of beauty.

348. Wordsworth's city is part of the natural world It coexists harmoniously with the other components of nature. The following passage from "Composed upon Westminster Bridge" is without any scenes of the city's frightening and mysterious social and tumult.

This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare [...]
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill.

349. Charles Baudelaire, quoted in Louis Aguetant, *Lecture de Baudelaire : Vie, Psychologie, Poétique : l'Invitation au voyage, Spleen, Tabealux parisiens, La mort* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2001), 63.

The poem begins by a romantic-like description of the nightfall as "delightful" because it brings relief to the tired labourers whose "arms can tell" (FECB, 359) and who think "Today [they]'ve laboured well." Yet by associating the night with "criminal," "wolf" and "accomplice," Paris becomes a threatening city of danger and death where no one is safe. In fact, the night reveals many disturbing aspects of the city such as "insalubrious demons," "Prostitution," "thieves," "cardsharps," and "burglars" who come out to perform their evil deeds and their crimes. The dangerousness of the city is reinforced by such words as "attack," "steal" and "accomplices" while, "ant-hill," "worm" and "dens" emphasize its animality:

Prostitution catches alight in the streets;
Like an ant-hill she lets her workers out;
Everywhere she blazes a secret path,
Like an enemy who plans a surprise attack;
She moves in the heart of the city of mire
Like a worm that steals from Man what he eats.
.....
The gambling dens, where games of chance delight,
Fill up with whores and cardsharps, their accomplices;
The burglars, who know neither respite nor mercy. (FECB, 359)

The poem ends with an image of the hospital to evoke disease and death. Night is the very moment "when men's sick pains increase"(FECB, 360), and "Death grips them by the throat" (FECB, 360). The worst part of the suffering of the patients in the hospital is that most of them have never experienced family love, "Joys of the hearth" (FECB, 360), and thus have never really lived.

The second poem, "The Swan," is about the poet's feeling of loss and displacement following the modernization of Paris. In the 1850's, the Baron Haussmann, indeed, started a

project of renovating Paris. This architectural urban project was called "Haussmannisation, after the Prefect broadly responsible for sweeping away the higgledy-piggledy old city, with its maze of narrow, winding streets, and replacing them with the pattern of broad boulevards, large open squares and long vistas we associate with Paris today."³⁵⁰

In "The Swan," the poet "wanders through the new Place du Carrousel, in front of the Louvre, conscious of the rabbit-warren of houses and streets that had to be demolished to make way for the new order of things."³⁵¹ The poet notices that all that is left from the old Paris is "jumbled "bric- a-brac."³⁵² In this new Paris, he feels an exile in his own city. This sense of exile is exemplified by an equally lost swan. The swan, away from its natural environment, does not feel at ease at the urban environment of Paris which is a place of exile. In Paris with its "dry pavement" (FECB, 333), "uneven ground" (FECB, 333), and "dry gutter" (FECB, 333), the swan only "bathed his wings in the dust" (FECB, 333). The swan feels "homesick for his fair native lake" (FECB, 333).

Like the swan, the two main other characters of the poem, Andromaque and the Native African woman, suffer from the sadness and mourning caused by the memory of what they have lost. Andromaque laments the death of her husband, Hector, before the Simois, a river near Troy. The river, "swollen by [her] tears" (FECB, 333), reflects her grief rather than her beauty. The poet laments her debased state as she has fallen from her "great husband's arms, to be /A beast of freight for Pyrrhus" (FECB, 335), the son of Achilles. The black woman also suffers from exile as she seeks "with haggard eye / The palms of Africa" (FECB, 335). Now, she is forgotten in a foreign land, and she is almost invisible behind "great black wall of foggy

350. Ross Chambers, "Baudelaire's Paris," *The Cambridge Companion to Baudelaire*, eds. Rosemary Lloyd (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 103.

351. *Ibid.*, 43.

352. *Ibid.*, 109.

sky" (FECB, 335). In fact, the swan and Andromaque together with the Native African woman reinforce the poet's discomfort about the tremendous changes that transform Paris:

Paris has changed, but in my grief no change.

New palaces and scaffoldings and blocks,

To me, are allegories, nothing strange.

My memories are heavier than rocks.

Passing the Louvre, one image makes me sad:

That swan, like other exiles that we knew,

Grandly absurd, with gestures of the mad,

Gnawed by one craving! (FECB, 335)

The new Paris does not erase the poet's "memories" of the Old Paris which, on the contrary, plunges his mind into sadness and melancholy. Now, like the swan, the poet hardly feels any harmony with the new Paris.

What arises from the poet's alienation from his urban environment is the most typical of modern vices, boredom. In "To the Reader," Baudelaire argues that boredom is more insidious than any other vice. The poem presents "the filthy menagerie of . . . vices"³⁵³ which can be summed up into three sorts. While "folly, error, sin, and avarice" (FECB, 3) which imply weakness make up the first, "rape, poison, daggers, arson" (FECB, 3) related to violence constitute the second. The third is "ennui" or boredom which is the most destructive evil:

There is one more ugly, more wicked, more filthy!

.....

He is Ennui ! – His eye watery as though with tears,

He dreams of scaffolds as he smokes his hookah pipe.

You know him reader, that refined monster,

353. Pericles Lewis, "Trials of Modernity," *The Cambridge Introduction to Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 46.

– Hypocrite reader, – my fellow, – my brother! (FECB, 4)

As a refined monster that dreams of scaffolds, ennui is also a violent vice. Yet it is the most dangerous because, unlike other vices, "it stems less from its directly harmful effects than from its hypocrisy and self- deception."³⁵⁴

While Baudelaire believes that the poet should face the evil of the city and search for its redemption, this redemption cannot be provided by religion which is compromised by contemporary society. Baudelaire works out an anti-Christian paradigm in which religious blasphemy, wine and death become arguments for personal freedom and act as relief from the urban condition.

Baudelaire turns to Satan because of God's inability or unwillingness to relieve the suffering of humankind. In "The Denial of St. Peter," God is presented as a Tyrant "gorged with food and wine" (FECB, 468) and enchanted with "The sobs of martyrs and of tortured criminals" (FECB, 468). God even laughs while Christ is crucified. As Jesus fails to rule for eternity, Baudelaire thinks that St. Peter is right to deny Jesus: "Saint Peter denied Jesus – he did well" (FECB, 469). "Litany to Satan" uses a liturgical language, a kind of language reserved for God to transfer Godly attributes to Satan. The poem ends with a prayer addressed not to God but to Satan:

Glory and praise to you, O Satan, in the heights
Of Heaven where you reigned and in the depths
Of Hell where vanquished you dream in silence!
Grant that my soul may someday repose near to you
Under the Tree of Knowledge, when, over your brow,
Its branches will spread like a new Temple! (FECB, 478)

354. Liz Constable, Dennis Denisoff, and Matthew Potolsky, *Perennial Decay: On the Aesthetics and Politics of Decadance* (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 17

In the attempt, to escape from the discomfort of the city Baudelaire seeks relief through wine. In the section, "Wine," wine is personified as a giver of consolation from pain from which those who live on the margins of society suffer. In "The Soul of Wine," wine provides workers with "boundless joy" (FECB, 394), when it flow[s] / Down the throat of a man worn out by his labor" (FECB, 394). In "The Wine of the Solitary Man," Wine can inculcate "hope, and youth, and life – / And pride" (FECB, 405) that make the sufferers "triumphant and equal to the gods" (FECB, 405). In "The Wine of Lovers" wine enables lovers to imagine their flight "without ever stopping / To the paradise of . . . dreams" (FECB, 407).

When blasphemy and wine cannot bring enough hope, the poet turns to death as the last means to escape from the sordid life of the city. The final section of *The Flowers of Evil*, "Death," deals with the poet's search for peace in death. Death serves as a means of refuge from the disappointments and boredom of life. It is the opening up of an unknown future that may be better than life. It is a kind of quest "Beyond the known world to seek out the New" (FECB, 505). In "The Death of the Poor," death is a source of consolation for the poor. "It is the goal of life, and "it is the only hope" (FECB, 486). In "The Death of Artists," death is compared to a "new sun"(FECB, 488) that "will bring to bloom the flowers of their [the artists] brains" (FECB, 488). In "The Death of Lovers," death brings together the lovers. Now they are no longer partners but doubles that reflect one another:

Our two hearts will be two immense torches
Which will reflect their double light
In our two souls, those twin mirrors. (FECB, 483)

From the above discussion, it can be seen that one of the contributions of Baudelaire to modern art is his departure from the Romantic aesthetics which upholds the idea that the aim of art is to manifest beauty reflected on its relation with nature. In fact, much of Baudelaire's poetry obtains its beauty from the ugly industrialized urban environment. It is this

manifestation of the ugly that makes his poetry attractive to such modernist poets as Eliot and Stevens.

b- Baudelaire's Presence in Eliot's Poetry

1- Eliot and the Symbolists: The Search for Urbanized Poetry

T. S. Eliot was introduced to the French Symbolists in December of 1908 when he came across Arthur Symons's *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*.³⁵⁵ The effect of Symons's book was immense, and Eliot recognized it: "I myself owe Mr. Symons a great debt: but for having read his book, I should not, in the year 1908, have heard of LaForgue or Rimbaud; I should probably not have begun to read Verlaine; and but for reading Verlaine, I should not have heard of Corbiere."³⁵⁶ Eliot always spoke of the influence of the French Symbolists on him. The following passage is one of the best recognitions:

I think that from Baudelaire I learned first, a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet writing in my own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantas-magoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic. From him, as from Laforgue, I learned that the sort of material I had, the sort of experience an adolescent had had, in an industrial city in America, could be the material for poetry; and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded hitherto as the impossible, the sterile, the intractably unpoetic.³⁵⁷

Eliot wrote three essays on Baudelaire. In 1921, Eliot published his first essay "The Lesson of Baudelaire" in which he discusses how Baudelaire's "first-rate poetry is occupied

355. John J. Soldo, "T. S. Eliot and Jules LaForgue," *American Literature* 55, no. 2 (1983): 137.

356. T.S. Eliot, quoted in Soldo, "T. S. Eliot and Jules LaForgue," 137.

357. T.S. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic*, 126.

with morality."³⁵⁸ In the second essay "Poet and Saint," which appeared in 1927, Eliot defends Baudelaire's "preoccupation with religious values"³⁵⁹ and calls him a "Saint." Eliot's third essay is the introduction to Christopher Isherwood's translation of Baudelaire's *Intimate Journals* published in 1930. In this essay, he defends Baudelaire's theological innocence and argues that Baudelaire did not "practise Christianity, but—what was much more important for his time—to assert its necessity."³⁶⁰ Baudelaire appears importantly in four other essays by Eliot: "A review of Peter Quennell's Baudelaire and the Symbolists," "From Poe to Valery," "Introduction to Chiari's Contemporary French Poetry," and "Symbolism from Poe to Valery."

Symbolist poetry became the best example to illustrate his theoretical views on poetry. For example, Eliot uses Paul Valéry's "Le Serpent" to explain his theory of impersonality. Indeed, Eliot distinguishes between "the first order impersonality forged out of intense personal emotion and passion"³⁶¹ and impersonality of inferior order which is "the impersonality of a mere craftsman."³⁶² Eliot argues, "Like all of Valéry's poetry, it is impersonal in the sense that personal emotion, personal experience is extended in something impersonal - not in the sense of something divorced from our feelings, but the pattern we make of our feelings is the center of value."³⁶³

Eliot's admiration for and his interest in the Symbolists did not go unnoticed. There is much published criticism on the nature of the Symbolists' influence on Eliot. Ronald

358. T.S. Eliot, "The Lesson of Baudelaire," *Tyrol* (1921): 4.

359. T.S. Eliot, *For Lancelot Andrewes* (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928.), 90.

360. T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays* (Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986), 421-422.

361. Mohammad Hanief, *The Dynamics of Criticism in T.S. Eliot* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 2000), 73.

362. *Ibid.*

363. T.S. Eliot, quoted in Ronald Schuchard, "First-Rate Blasphemy: Baudelaire and the Revised Christian Idiom of T. S. Eliot's Moral Criticism," *ELH* 42, no. 2 (1975): 283.

Schuchard focuses on Eliot's moral and spiritual interest in Baudelaire. He shows how Eliot was attracted to the "blasphemy" of Baudelaire which is "the manifestation of a morbid spiritual condition that he saw as characteristic of the most profound religious quests in modern literature."³⁶⁴ Schuchard concludes that Baudelaire's blasphemous moral imaginations in search of God enabled Eliot "to accommodate his moral criticism to the difficulty of belief in an increasingly fragmented world."³⁶⁵

In "T. S. Eliot and the Impact of Baudelaire," R. Galand argues that Baudelaire's influence on Eliot lies not only in their "identical themes and in the similarity of poetical methods,"³⁶⁶ but also in Eliot's interest in Baudelaire's personality. Galand explains that both poets share the same view that poetry has "no other end than art."³⁶⁷ Both of them further agree that "the true aim of art is to create beauty, not to advocate moral, religious, social or political ideas: this does not mean that the poet must exclude them, but that he should subordinate them to his artistic purpose."³⁶⁸ Both poets recognize that beauty exists in "the most transitory aspects of contemporary life,"³⁶⁹ such as "beds with curtains, shelves with flowers, lamps which go out and coal fires."³⁷⁰ In addition, Galand argues that both poets reject naked passions or emotions and that the poet should have the ability to "transmute ideas and feelings into sensation."³⁷¹ Add to that, Eliot "was immensely attracted to Baudelaire the

364. Ronald Schuchard, "First-Rate Blasphemy," 276.

365. Ibid.

366. R. Galand, "T. S. Eliot and the Impact of Baudelaire," *Yale French Studies* 6, (1950): 27.

367. Ibid., 29.

368. Ibid., 30.

369. Ibid.

370. Ibid.

371. Ibid., 31.

man"³⁷² who, by his Satanism and his blasphemy, attempted "to get into Christianity through the back door."³⁷³

Likewise, Wallace Fowlie discussed the many points of similarity between Baudelaire and Eliot. Both poets believe that "there is poetry and beauty in the most trivial aspects of modern life."³⁷⁴ Eliot also shares the same Baudelaire's desire to objectify poetry. The prolonged metaphor of Baudelaire and Eliot "objective correlative" functions as an "image capable of translating his intimate emotions, his personal anguish, into a strange and impersonal work."³⁷⁵ Both poets also share the same belief in the importance of the historical sense which can be seen in the way they "underscore the parallelism between the contemporary event and the myths of Antiquity."³⁷⁶

2- Nature as Evil in Eliot's Poetry

Eliot's representation of nature further confirms his departure from the Romantic poetry that relies on the beauty of the natural world to convey emotions. Nature, in Eliot's poetry as in Baudelaire's, fails to provide an escape from an unsatisfying life into a better world. Such elements of nature as the sea, the river, the sun, and the bird, which are strongly present in Romantic poetry as symbols of beauty, are used to embody the sterility of modern civilization.

In "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," the sea is depicted as a temptress to which modern man has succumbed. Now he becomes the weak prisoner of the false pleasure that the voices of siren of the sea offer:

372. Ibid.

373. Ibid., 33.

374. Wallace Fowlie, "Baudelaire and Eliot: Interpreters of their Age," *The Sewanee Review* 74, no. 1, (1966): 300.

375. Ibid., 309.

376. Ibid., 33.

We have lingered in the chambers of the sea
By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown
Till human voices wake us, and we drown. (CPTSE, 17)

The negative image of the sea returns again in the burial of the dead of "The Wasteland" in the passage that portrays a couple of lovers whose passion for each other was earlier associated with an exchange of Hyacinths, though their love ends up with failure. This failure comes through in the last line of stanza two, in German, from the opera *Tristan und Isolde*. The last line "Od' und leer das Meer" (CPTSE, 64) that "can be translated as "Wide and empty the sea" are the last words uttered by Tristan as he waits looking for the ship that would bring Isolde to him. The emptiness of the sea symbolizes the failure of their love.

Like the sea, the Thames River, in the third section of "The Wasteland" entitled "The Fire Sermon," seems to be polluted by people's waste: "empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (CPTSE, 70). Now the bank of the Thames becomes the place of illicit encounter. The imaginary river nymphs of Greek mythology are now gone while other river creatures, like the rat, "crept softly through the vegetation / Dragging its slimy belly on the bank" (CPTSE, 70). This debased description of the Thames River illustrates the alienating quality of modern urban life. In the Third stanza of "Preludes," even the beauty of the sun and the bird is relegated to the level of the city gutters reflecting the filthy urban areas that the poem describes: "And the light crept up between the shutters, / And you heard the sparrows in the gutters" (CPTSE, 24). The light of the sun is not illuminating; it creeps and is obstructed. The birdsong comes not from a traditional songbird, but from the sparrows in the gutters of the street.

3- Eliot's Search for Redeeming the Unreal City

The influence of Baudelaire on Eliot is not only apparent in his view of nature as evil, but also in Eliot's choice of the ugly modern metropolis as the necessary stage of poetry

which harmonized with his urban temperament growing and developing from his long exposure to urban landscape and its people. Eliot was born at the end of the nineteenth century, a period marked by a swift industrial growth. When Eliot was born, St. Louis, his birthplace, was turning into an industrial town. Ellyn Sanna describes the industrial and the polluted St. Louis as "not a particularly beautiful place: its sewers were inadequate for factories' waste products and the air was filled with sulfur fumes."³⁷⁷ Eliot saw the smoke that blew out from the chimneys of factories and industries across the Mississippi river. It became a source of inspiration for his poetry.

In June 1906, Eliot arrived at Boston and entered Harvard University to complete his bachelor's degree. In 1910, Eliot travelled to Paris to study French poetry. His experiences in Boston and Paris played an important role in the development of his urban temperament. Sanna explains, "Just as he had in Boston, he began to hunt out the darker, seamier neighbourhoods in Paris. He explored the streets at night, when the prostitutes and drunks walked the alleys, and he took a perverse pleasure in contemplating human beings who lived without morals and dignity."³⁷⁸

Another city which contributed to the development of Eliot's urban temperament was London. It was the city onto which he projected his personal crisis: "London provided a credible screen for such a projection as the effects of industrialization, suburbanization and social mixing . . . produced a new kind of city"³⁷⁹ which "fail[ed] to cohere."³⁸⁰

377. Ellyn Sanna, "Biography of T.S. Eliot" *T.S. Eliot*, ed. Harold Bloom (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 6.

378. *Ibid.*, 16.

379. Malcom Miles, "Cities of the Avant-Garde" *The Cambridge Companion to the City in Literature*, ed. Kevin R. McNamara (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 159.

380. *Ibid.*

Eliot's exposure to the city was, however, a key to Eliot's response to the urban network. Indeed, T. S. Eliot found some of his most powerful inspiration for the urban landscape in his poetry. Writing to Conrad Aiken in 1914 from London, Eliot expresses both the attraction and repulsion he feels toward city life. Tired of Oxford, he felt more alive in London though the city seemed threatening:

In Oxford, I have the feeling that I am not quite alive—that my body is walking about with a bit of my brain inside it, and nothing else.... Oxford is very pretty, but I don't like to be dead. I don't think I should stay there another year...but I should not mind being in London.... How much more self-conscious one is in a big city!...Just at present this is an inconvenience, for I have been going through one of those nervous sexual attacks which I suffer from when alone in a city . . . this is the worst since Paris. ³⁸¹

The content of the letter serves as an index to Eliot's response to both nature and the city. Throughout his poetry, Eliot expresses his rejection of the Romantic belief in the goodness of nature and reveals his obsession with the urban space. This response is one of the main reasons that aroused his interest in the Symbolists' poetry.

Eliot, like Baudelaire, uses the urban environment to reinforce a feeling of alienation of the modern city. Distancing himself from the harmony between urban and rural as found in Wordsworth's "Composed upon Westminster Bridge," he, in "Preludes," explores the concept of a monotonous existence and the alienation of individuals in the urban environment. This is shown through the use of sordid and dirty images describing the city and the feeling of isolation and depression it entails. This poem depicts the meaningless society of the urban space both at night and in the morning. Section one depicts a winter evening in a house in the

381. T.S Eliot, *Letters of T. S. Eliot, 1898-1922*, ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Mariner Books, 1990), 74.

back of the street, with the smoky character of the evening presenting a sad and unhealthy mood:

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days,
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The shower beats
On broken blinds and chimney-pots. (CPTSE, 23)

"Withered leaves," "vacant lots," "broken blinds," and "chimney-pots" pile up to emphasize the dirtiness and ugliness of the city life. Then the morning comes and brings smells of beers from the streets covered with "sawdust" and trodden by "muddy feet" of the crowd.

The mechanical movement from home to work through beer kiosk which is part of their daily routine testifies their daily monotonous existence in city living that Eliot calls a masquerade:

The morning comes to consciousness
Of faint stale smells of beer
From the sawdust-trampled street
With all its muddy feet that press
To early coffee-stands.
With the other masquerades
That time resumes. (CPTSE, 23)

"Masquerades" suggest that city-dwellers' routines mask the general gloom and hopelessness of their lives. One of them is an unknown "you" included in a scene in a private room that Eliot details in the third section of the poem:

You lay upon your back, and waited;
You dozed, and watched the night revealing
The thousand sordid images
Of which your soul was constituted. (CPTSE, 24)

The described character experiences a restless night haunted by tormenting memories of the "thousand sordid images." In the morning, he comes to his senses but has lost his taste in life. He exists without any passion or hope performing mechanical acts without significance. He has been waiting for nothing, except for the time to pass.

The same sense of insignificance of human life in the modern city of London is demonstrated in "The Wasteland." In the last stanza of the first section, "The Burial of the Dead," the speaker calls the city of London "Unreal City" (CPTSE, 65) which is an allusion to Baudelaire to intensify the absurdity of human interaction in modern society. Baudelaire's poem "The Seven Old Men" speaks of a "city full of dreams, / Where ghosts by daylight tug the passer's sleeve" (FECB, 339). Eliot's description of London is marked by the same phantasmagorical dimension which characterizes Baudelaire's Paris.

Eliot uses many strategies to reinforce the Baudelairean sense of the "unreal" in the city of London. In his description of London, he refers to specific and realistic locations in London, such as London Bridge, King William Street and, Saint Mary Woolnoth church. Yet, the familiar setting of London becomes strange due to the emotionless and mechanical people that inhabit the city. The crowd of people that "flowed over London Bridge" (CPTSE, 65) consists of people "undone" (CPTSE, 65) by death. What "undoes" these people is not biological death but the mechanical, meaningless death-in-life of their daily routine. These

Londoners remind us of the dead stuck in Dante's "Inferno" in which "sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled, and each man fixed his eyes before his feet" (CPTSE, 65). By alluding to Dante and Baudelaire, Eliot invokes a modern form of damnation.

Even Jesus whose presence in the poem suggests the possibility of resurrection is amalgamated with the fertility gods as Adonis, Osiris, Orpheus and other Upanishad gods. Another strategy consists of associating the city of London with other foreign exotic cities. The final section of "The Wasteland," "What the Thunder Said," mentions several cities specifically: "Jerusalem Athens Alexandria / Vienna London"(CPTSE, 77) and calls them all "unreal" (CPTSE, 77). The aim of such grouping is to make the city of London, which is supposed to be familiar to Eliot's reader, unfamiliar, remote and strange as the other cities.

The city of London is further estranged by its inhabitants who belong to different ethnological groups including the Russian, the Lithuanian, the German, the Turkish Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant, the Phoenician sailor, the displaced lovers in the Hyacinth garden, the Theben prophet, Ferdinand of Naples, mingling with the British war veterans, Albert and Stetson fresh from the front. Their lack of genuine traditions and moral values in London conjure up the population that inhabits Baudelaire's Paris.

It is worth noting that despite Baudelaire's influence on Eliot, the latter does not share his pessimism that redemption is not attainable in this world. In Eliot's poetry the salvation of modern city, despite its industrialism, materialism and alienation, becomes possible through Christian rituals: "We need therefore what I have called 'the Community of Christians', by which I mean, not local groups, and not the Church in any one of its senses, unless we call it 'the Church within the Church'. These will be the consciously and thoughtfully practising Christians, especially those of intellectual and spiritual superiority."³⁸²

382. T.S. Eliot, *The Idea of a Christian Society* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1949), 34.

Unlike his early poetry which focuses on the chaotic side of the city, the alienation of its dwellers, and the failure to find redemption, the poetry Eliot wrote after his conversion embraces the principle of redemption through the recovery of Christian faith. "Four Quartets" is set in the present city as the following lines suggest:

There are other places
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws,
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city--
But this is the nearest, in place and time,
Now and in England. (CPTSE, 222)

The poem also makes numerous references to everyday activities, such as taking "an underground train, in the tube" (CPTSE, 200), or the bombardment of the city when "dust inbreathed was a house" (CPTSE, 216). Yet, "Four Quartets" offer the possibility of redemption. In fact, Eliot asserts that Christianity forces one to engage with the present and for such a task one should be equipped with an understanding of the proper relation of time to eternity. Thus redemption is attainable through Christian faith and by accepting to face the world whether sea, dark lake, desert or city: "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere" (CPTSE, 215). Thus, the experience of these timeless moments, in which their temporal existence merges with the eternal ("nowhere"), is made available to them even in the modern chaotic world.

c- Baudelaire's Presence in Stevens' Poetry

1- Stevens and the Symbolists: The Search for Urbanized Poetry

If the Symbolist poetics is clearly discernible in Eliot's poetry, their influence upon Stevens has been a matter of dispute. In fact, the trouble with discussing Stevens' relationship with his French Symbolists is due to two reasons. The first is Stevens' refusal to contemplate the idea of poetic influence of any kind and in particular of the French Symbolists. Stevens

wrote in a 1953 letter, "It is a queer thing that so few reviewers seem to realize that one writes poetry because one must. Most of them seem to think that one writes poetry to imitate Mallarmé, or in order to be a member of this or that school. It is quite possible to have a feeling about the world which creates a need that nothing satisfies except poetry and this has nothing to do with other poets or with anything else."³² He also wrote earlier, specifically about Symbolist poets, that "if I have picked up anything from [Mallarmé, Verlaine, Lafargue, Valéry and Baudelaire] it has been unconsciously" (LWS, 96).

Secondly, Stevens' deep love of the natural world distinguishes him from the French Symbolists whose main concern is the ennui of the urban environment. Hence, many critics discuss Stevens as a Romantic poet whose main interest is to express a man's ecstatic relation to nature. Randall Jarrell notes that in *Harmonium* Stevens "loves America best when he can think of it as wilderness, naturalness, and pure potentiality."³⁸³ Samuel French observes that Stevens "was caught between the glib sophistication of friends who espoused the cause of modernism indiscriminately and without real understanding and his own unabashed fondness for nature as a romantic retreat."³⁸⁴ Fredric Jameson claims that "Stevens' only content, from the earliest masterpieces of *Harmonium* all the way to the posthumous *Rock*, is landscape."³⁸⁵ For Jameson Stevens' landscapes are "laundered of their cultural and social semantics"³⁸⁶

383. Randall Jarrell, quoted in Jane Anna Gordon, and Lewis Gordon, eds., *A Companion to African-American Studies*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 137.

384 Samuel French Morse, *Wallace Stevens: Poetry as Life* (Cambridge: Pegasus, 1970), 112.

385 Fredric Jameson, *The Modernist Papers* (New York: Verso, 2007), 209.

386. *Ibid.*, 210.

hand whenever poetic speech needs some kind of objective content for its own production."³⁸⁷

Jameson goes on to say that Stevens lacks "the visionary sense of many of the great nature poets, for whom the momentary epiphanies of place and object world are rare events, to be preserved over against the encroaching destruction of nature as well as the alienating features of city or man-made environment."³⁸⁸ But his comparison of Stevens with the great visionary nature poets who use nature to criticize civilization leads him to state that Stevens' poetry designates nothing beyond itself.

From here, the influence of French symbolism upon Stevens has been a matter of dispute. Many critics deny any French Symbolist presence in Stevens' poetry while many others have noted that Stevens nourishes his inspiration with the poetic riches of Mallarmé, Verlaine, Lafargue, Valéry and Baudelaire.

Frank Kermode points out that Stevens' use of Symbolist and other French-connected techniques was not unusual: "There is nothing out of the way in this preoccupation with French poetry; indeed it was practically - inescapable. The avant-garde interests of the period, in America as well as in England, were to a great extent absorbed by French culture: painting, dancing, music and poetry. A symbolist aesthetic...dominated all the arts."³⁸⁹ Kermode also and his poetry designates nothing beyond itself: "In Stevens, nature is, however, nothing but, a notes significantly that Stevens assimilated French poetry rather than imitating and that "we given, a ready-made occasion for speech—birds, wind, mountains, the sun, always ready to³⁹⁰ should not expect it [Stevens' poetry] to show much evidence of unassimilated influence."³⁹⁰ Frederick J. Hoffman considers that Stevens is "sporadically influenced by the symbolists"³⁹¹

387. Ibid., 209.

388. Ibid.

389. Kermode, *Wallace Stevens*, 11.

390. Ibid., 29.

391. Frederick J. Hoffman, "Symbolisme and Modern Poetry in the United States" *Comparative Literature Studies* 4, no. 1/2, (1967): 197.

and that "he acknowledges them occasionally."³⁹² Hoffman adds that since "Stevens is a man of his own growth and maturity," their influence on him was not in the sense of their descending upon him with a Pentacostal urgency."³⁹³ Helen Vender does not deny that Stevens was affected by reading French poets, but she feels that he learned from them early on and then went on to develop his own approach which slowly "evolved through his sense of himself and through a search for his own style."³⁹⁴

On the other hand, many critics, like René Taupin and Michel Benamou, have recognized the Symbolist influence on Stevens. Taupin sees a more particular and detailed influence on Stevens, outlining a series of specific parallels in technique and content with the Symbolist that can be summed up in the following quotation: "He is symbolist by his art of evocation, his search for correspondences, words that create image, and words that have echo."³⁹⁵ Benamou discusses how Stevens may have been influenced by Mallarmé's search for an absolute poetry, a search that is associated with "Stevens' use of words which he may have learned from the French master: Knowledge, nakedness, beyond."³⁹⁶

2- Stevens' Search for Redeeming the Unreal City

In fact, like Eliot, Stevens nevertheless learned from the Symbolists how to explore a gloomy urban environment and to translate its experience into poetry. In many of Stevens' poems, the circumstances of daily life in urban settings are the central subject. For example, the poem "The Man with the Blue Guitar" brings the poet in front of the reality of the city where the images of the Romantics are useless in the present chaos of the urban life:

392. Ibid.

393. Ibid.

394. Helen Vender, *On Extended Wings: Wallace Stevens' Longer Poems* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 3.

395. René Taupin, quoted in Robert Greer Cohn, "Stevens and Mallarmé," *Comparative Literature Studies* 16, no. 4 (1979): 345.

396. Michel Benamou, "Wallace Stevens and the Symbolist Imagination," *ELH* 31, no.1 (1964): 35.

There is no place,
Here, for the lark fixed in the mind,
In the museum of the sky. The cock
Will claw sleep. Morning is not sun,
It is this posture of the nerves. (WSCPP, 150)

According to Elean Cook, the lark is a reference to Shelley's "Ode to skylark" in which Shelley seeks the aesthetic enjoyment of nature. However, in the urban environment there is no place for an absolute and idyllic conception of nature. It is an environment which rejects the presence of the morning sun because "morning is a posture of the nerves in which a poet blunted by business civilization desperately grasps the nuances of poetry."³⁹⁷ This romantic natural world which is "detached from the thing-in-itself relegated to the museum of the past"³⁹⁸ will no longer serve in the present chaos.

What he sees is an arid flat urban industrial land which is very reminiscent of Baudelaire's Paris or Eliot's waste land. Stevens now has to face an earth "which is not earth, but a stone" (WSCPP, 142) and no longer a "mother but an oppressor" (WSCPP, 142). To put it in Stevens' words: "It has been easy to say in recent times that everything tends to become real, or, rather, that everything moves in the direction of reality, that is to say, in the direction of fact. We leave fact and come back to it, come back to what we wanted fact to be, not to what it was, not to what it has too often remained. The poetry of a work of the imagination constantly illustrates the fundamental and endless struggle with fact "(WSCPP, 251).

The quotation above paraphrases Stevens' famous motto: "violence within that protects us from violence without. It is the imagination pressing against the pressure of reality"

397. Sukenick, *Wallace Stevens: Musing the Obscure*, 101.

398. Daniel Tompsett, *Wallace Stevens and Pre-Socratic Philosophy: Metaphysics and the Play of Violence* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 59.

(WSCPP, 665). This idea that the poet is at war against the urban environment is evoked in the following passage from "The Man with the Blue Guitar":

To create is "to live at war,
To chop the sullen psaltery,
To improve the sewers in Jerusalem,
To electrify the nimbuses". (WSCPP, 142)

The passage implies two main ideas. First, the world the poet has to face is no longer the green world, but the urban industrial waste land of "sewers" and "electrif[ied] nimbuses." Secondly, given this environment, urbanization (the sewers) intrudes upon the spirituality of "Jerusalem" so that no consolations offered by traditional religion are possible.

However, Stevens, unlike Eliot, does not condemn the loss of spirituality in modern life. He similarly opposes Baudelaire's effort to find relief from the discomfort of the city in alcohol, blasphemy or death. The decline of spirituality would allow to free the poet's imagination from the ancient religious hindrances and to represent the urban world transformed by the imagination yet still recognizable as part of the here and now.

In "The Man with the Blue Guitar," Stevens wants to concentrate on a world "without [the] shadows" (WSCPP, 144) of the metaphysical additions of traditional religion. This world, which is also very different from the idealized nature found in Romantic poetry, is made of such every day common elements as "The flesh, the bone, the dirt, and the stone" (WSCPP, 144). Stevens calls this world "Oxidia" (WSCPP, 149). It is a suburban environment whose banal values are expressed in monetary terms and whose communication has been reduced to electronic messages transmitted over telephone poles:

From this I shall evolve a man.
This is his essence: the old fantoche
Hanging his shawl upon the wind,

Like something on the stage, puffed out,
His strutting studied through centuries.
At last, in spite of his manner, his eye
A-cock at the cross piece on a pole
Supporting heavy cables, slung
Through Oxidia, banal suburb,
One-half of all its installments paid. (WSCPP, 149)

Despite the ugly nature of Oxidia, the poet is ready to accept it and to live beyond it. In other words, he relies on his imagination to transform mundane objects, such as the "heavy cables" that sails over the suburb into the subject of poetry. Thus, the imagination sanctifies everyday reality and lifts it to the level the myth of Olympia:

Ecce, Oxidia is the seed
Dropped out of this amber-ember pod,
Oxidia is the soot of fire,
Oxidia is Olympia. (WSCPP, 149)

B- Imagism in Eliot's and Stevens' Poetry: Imagery and Modern Urban Precision and Economy

a- Imagism and its Tenets

In search of images to discard the excessive effusion of emotions and indulgence in beauty of Romantic poetry, Eliot and Stevens further sought inspiration from the Imagists³⁹⁹ who, like the Symbolists, chose to distance themselves from the over-subjective Romantic poetry and argued for a renewed emphasis on the object-like nature of the art-work. Pound put in place a program for "Imagism," a movement which would have several tenets. The major

399. The term "Imagist" was conjured by Ezra Pound to characterize the style of recent work by his friends and collaborators, the American Hilda Doolittle (H. D.) and the Englishman Richard Aldington.

tenets include "direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether subjective or objective,"⁴⁰⁰ and "rigorous economy in use of words, and composition."⁴⁰¹ As for the image, Pound insisted on the image "which presents an intellectual or emotional complex in an instant of time."⁴⁰²

With these rules in place, Pound began writing a radically different kind of poetry which was at once more visual and more concise than the Romantic poetry. This can easily be seen in Pound's most famous Imagist poem, "In a Station of the Metro": "The apparition of these faces in the crowd; / Petals on a wet, black bough."⁴⁰³ The entire poem deals with images alone. The two images that stand out are "apparition" and "Petal." The poet is able to link the natural world of petals and boughs with the modern urban environment of the metro station.

Despite the fact the Imagists and the Symbolists share the same desire for objectivity, the precision of image makes them different. The Symbolists' image tends to the transcendental while the Imagists' tend to the concrete and the particular. Don Geiger explains this difference:

In their interest in the clearly delineated object, some of the [Imagists'] verse seemed to be sealed in a hard varnish. Many of their poems tended to be pictorial and non-dramatic in character, a kind of imaginative reporting of objects, so that for a time it appeared that they had made a compact to split the world of poetic possibilities with another famous school, the Symbolist poets - with Imagists caring little about how they or anyone else might feel about a

400. Demetres P. Tryphonopoulos and Stephen Adams, *The Ezra Pound Encyclopedia* (New York: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 227.

401. Ibid.

402. Ibid.

403. Ibid., 277.

carefully described outer world and the Symbolists caring little about describing an outer world which they felt so intensely.⁴⁰⁴

b- Eliot's Image and the Imagists' Image: From Visual Imagery to Synaesthesia in Search of Meaning beyond Perception

Many critics have discussed Eliot's close relation with the Imagist movement. Amar Nath Dwivedi has noted that Eliot's and other Modernist poets's anti-traditional characteristics were harmonized with the idea of Imagism. Dwivedi wrote that "Imagism became a convenient point of references for those poets who were anti traditional- Eliot, Pound, even D.H Lawrence."⁴⁰⁵ Surabhi A. Bhopal has studied how Eliot learned from the Imagist school a method to rebel "against the uncontrolled expression of Romantic emotion in stale or clichéd language."⁴⁰⁶ He assumes that though "Eliot was not strictly a member of the Imagist group he shared most of their aims and enshrined them in 'The Wasteland.'"⁴⁰⁷ Haruo Shirane likens Eliot's objective correlative to the Imagist use of "a single, usually visual image"⁴⁰⁸ or "a succession of related images"⁴⁰⁹ in order to "communicate emotion without articulating it "⁴¹⁰ or "without the poet stating it."⁴¹¹ T. S. Eliot himself recognizes that

404. Don Geiger, quoted in Warren Ramsey, "Uses of the Visible: American Imagism, French Symbolism," *Comparative Literature Studies* 4, no. 1/2 (1967): 178.

405. Dwivedi, *T. S. Eliot: A Critical Study*, 26.

406. Surabhi A. Bhopal, "The Wasteland- A social Critic," *Critical Perspectives On T.S. Eliot's Poetry*, eds. Jaydipsinh Dodiya and Nidhi Tiwari (New Delhi: Sarup, 2005), 107.

407. Ibid.

408. Haruo Shirane, *Traces of Dreams: Landscape, Cultural Memory, and the Poetry of Bashō* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 42.

409 Ibid.

410 Ibid.

411 Ibid.

Imagism was "the point de repère, usually and conveniently taken as the starting-point of modern poetry."⁴¹²

Though there is an evident influence of Imagism on Eliot, Eliot's poetry shows other qualities quite distinct from this movement. The most important one is that in the Imagist poetry the use of accurate image to describe perception is the main goal whereas Eliot's images aim at meaning beyond perception. Therefore, Eliot's images are more complex, more sophisticated and more experimented than those found in the Imagists' poetry.

Thus, the major difference between Eliot and the Imagist is that Eliot's images are not used merely as word pictures to describe the external world but as bearers of a great weight of meaning of a single mind, a society, a culture or a religion. To better illustrate this point, I shall examine some images in Eliot's poetry. In the opening lines of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Eliot uses images to represent the state of mind of the individuals:

LET us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;
Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
The muttering retreats
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
Streets that follow like a tedious argument
Of insidious intent
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it ?'
Let us go and make our visit. (CPTSE, 13)

412. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic*, 58.

This passage can be read as an Imagist poem for the richness of the visual images it contains to describe the sterility and the deathly atmosphere of the modern city. Yet these images are not mere records of acts of perceptions as in Imagist poetry. The sterile and deathly images of the city, such as "half-deserted streets," "cheap hotels" and "sawdust restaurants" show the unpleasant modern world where "Prufrock" lives. Even the evening is described through concrete visual images; it is "Like a patient etherized upon a table" helpless and unconscious. The streets that follow like a tedious argument bridge the distinction between the physical and the mental. The combination of the images expresses the ambivalence of the speaker: his desire to start a visit and the need to withdraw into private reverie.

If Eliot's images in "Prufrock" represent the state of mind of the individuals, they express in "Gerontion" and "the Wasteland" cultural and social awareness. "Gerontion" is about the futile existence of modern man who has lost the spiritual understanding that history offers. Eliot employs visual images to show how the past is irredeemable to Gerontion:

History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,
Guides us by vanities. (CPTSE, 40)

History is a labyrinth that ingeniously contrives to confuse and finally to corrupt the human race by leading them to the sin of vanity.

Eliot's "The Wasteland" is also rich with images that support his view of the sordid reality of the twentieth century caused by the sterility of love and the loss of spiritual values. For example, in "The Fire Sermon," Eliot uses mechanical imagery as an index to the debased sexual encounters between "the young man carbuncular" (CPTSE, 64) and the typist: "Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits / Like a taxi throbbing waiting (CPTSE, 71). The modern man is no longer a natural creature but a mechanical being like a taxi. The

encounter with the woman is devoid of any spiritual element. It resembles a predator "assault[ing] at once the prey and whose" exploring hands encounter no defence" (CPTSE, 72). The man just leaves after satisfying his urgent desire as the "moment is now propitious"(CPTSE, 72) while the woman is indifferent, "bored and tired" (CPTSE, 72).

In the late poems, Eliot's images support ideas which are religious in nature. They offer a religious understanding of reality. The most important images are those of fire and rose. In "The Quartets," "The moment of the rose" symbolizes divine love that Eliot calls the moment of "intersection of the timeless / With time" (CPTSE, 212); it is the meeting of the actual and the spiritual (CPTSE, 222). Fire in the poem has a dual meaning. It is both a force of destruction and of spiritual cleansing:

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare
The one discharge from sin and error.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre of pyre-
To be redeemed from fire by fire. (CPTSE, 221)

The poem ends with the image of fire and rose forming a knot that both destroys and redeems: "the fire and the rose are one." Divine Fire is changed from a fire of trial and purgation to a rose of Eternal Peace. In Nidhi Tiwari's words, "the tormenting fire of Hell and the redemption is the Purgatorial fire finally turns the fire into the divine light of God where the human beings flower like the multifoliate rose of Dante."⁴¹³

Eliot moves away from the Imagists' reliance on visual imagery to convey meaning. He rather combines images that appeal to multiple senses to express his idea more strongly. For

413. Nidhi Tiwari, *Imagery and Symbolism in T. S. Eliot's Poetry* (New Delhi: Atlantic Publication and Distributors, 2001), 166.

example, in "Rhapsody," Eliot appeals to the senses of smell and hearing. The lightening moon and street lamp, which are supposed to appeal to the speaker's sense of sight, rather trigger his memory to "throw up"(CPTSE, 26) vivid auditory and olfactory images that suggest sterility, decay, isolation, and despair in an urban environment. The sound of "drum" combined with the visual image of the street lamp suggests the mechanical nature of the speaker's walk and his memory: "Every street lamp that I pass / Beats like a fatalistic drum" (CPTSE, 26).

In the same poem, Eliot presents many smell images to suggest how urban life has lost its natural sense. The "female smells in shuttered rooms" (CPTSE, 28), that include the artificial "smells of dust and eau de Cologne"(CPTSE, 28), evoke the artificiality of urban life because the woman "is alone / With all the old nocturnal smells" (CPTSE, 28). The same "pestilential atmosphere of these female spaces"⁴¹⁴ is evoked in Eliot's "The Wasteland" through smell imagery: "lurked her strange synthetic perfumes / Unguent, powdered, or liquid— troubled, confused" (CPTSE, 66). In both poems, perfumes as a "product of some malicious alchemy" do not inspire love and devotion but rather befuddlement and engulfment.⁴¹⁵

c- Stevens' Image and the Imagists' Image: From Visual Imagery to Synaesthesia in Search for Abstraction beyond the Concrete

The richness of Stevens' poetic imagery would appeal to Imagism; however, his prose contains many contradictory remarks about Imagism. In an essay on William Carlos Williams, "Rubbings of Reality," Stevens supported the Imagist claims: "Imagism . . . is not something superficial. It obeys an instinct. Moreover Imagism is an ancient phase of poetry. It

414. Laura Catherine Frost, *The Problem with Pleasure: Modernism and Its Discontents* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2013), 42.

415. *Ibid*

is something permanent."⁴¹⁶ However, in his *Opus Posthumous*, Stevens confirms the shortcomings in the Imagist approach: "Not all objects are equal. The vice of Imagism was that it did not recognize this."⁴¹⁷

Owing to Stevens' contradictory attitudes on Imagism, the influence of the Imagist school on Stevens is a matter of dispute among critics. Julian Symons assumes that "A great many of [Stevens'] the poems are written in the Imagist manner, with the sharpness and sensitiveness characteristic of the Imagist poets."⁴¹⁸ William W. Bevis remarks that Stevens "was raised on those experiments, on how to see" ⁴¹⁹ that characterise the Imagist poetry, and that Stevens was "hardly surprised at Pound's Imagist phenomenology, his attempt to present the precise instant."⁴²⁰

In contrast to Symons and Bevis, many other critics have emphasized that Stevens differs from the Imagists whose main goal was the recreation of things of the world in words which limit the poet's imaginative powers. According to them, while Stevens was clearly interested in relating the self to the natural or physical world, he was more concerned, as Riddel suggests, with the question of "how far the imagination could or should remake the world."⁴²¹ Piers Gray, in his discussion of Stevens' awareness of the Imagist limitation of the resources of language, concludes that in the Imagist poetry "the image was there to present, but not to explain, to offer the reader the transient perception but not to suggest the place of

416. Wallace Stevens, quoted in Jacob Korg "Imagism," *A Companion to Twentieth-Century Poetry*, ed. Neil Roberts (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2001), 135.

417. Wallace Stevens, quoted in Jacqueline Vaught Brogan, *Stevens and Simile: A Theory of Language* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2014), 42.

418. Julian Symons, quoted in Charles Doyle, *Wallace Stevens* (New York: Routledge, 1985), 187.

419. William W. Bevis, *Mind of Winter: Wallace Stevens, Meditation, and Literature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1989), 71.

420. Ibid.

421. Joseph N. Riddel, quoted in Christopher Beach, *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, 54.

that recognition of the world in the broadest, most emotionally significant framework of human experience. So above all, the Imagists went in fear of abstractions.⁴²²

It is this very idea of abstractions that Stevens struggles to discover in his poetry through the interplay between reality and the imagination. In fact, Stevens believes that reality is the starting point for any activity of the mind. However, unlike the Imagists who make no distinction between the image in words and the image in world, Stevens believes that, in the process of making poetry, reality undergoes a change when perceived by the senses:

Our sense of these things changes as they change,

Not as in metaphor, but in our sense

Of them. So sense exceeds all metaphors.

It exceeds the heavy changes of the light. (WSCPP, 370)

Since Stevens' goals in poetry are not the same as the Imagists', his poems showed qualities quite distinct from theirs. In other words, though Stevens is attracted to the Imagist concrete objectivity which avoids sentimentality through the use of visual images, his poetry challenges, in its far greater tendency to abstraction and philosophical arguments, the Imagist tenets. To understand better how Stevens adheres to Imagism and how he distances himself from it, it is relevant to examine: "Domination of Black," and a passage from "Sunday Morning."

In "Domination of Black," visual images like "the fire" (WSCPP, 7), "the bushes" (WSCPP, 7), "fallen leaves" (WSCPP, 7), and "peacocks" (WSCPP, 7) are predominant. However, this poem departs from Imagism in many ways. As there are no descriptive terms given to these concrete objects, the poem is less interested in the objects of the poem than in their movement:

Was it a cry against the twilight

422. Piers Gray, *Stalin on Linguistics and Other Essays* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 26.

Or against the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind, Turning as the flames
Turned in the fire,
Turning as the tails of the peacocks
Turned in the loud fire,
Loud as the hemlocks
Full of the cry of the peacocks. (WSCPP, 7)

The movement of the things implies Stevens' "rejection of permanent (or static) ideal as in 'Sunday Morning' and with this embracing of the world of time and change."⁴²³

Moreover, these visual series or images are not enough to understand the importance of change. The poem further evokes such acoustic images as "the cry of the peacocks," a cry against the hemlock trees. The shift from vision to sound in the final stanzas is itself an example of Stevens' own movement away from the Imagist representation toward more abstract modes of poetic thinking and writing. Thus, the hemlock trees as poisonous trees serve as a reminder of death. Yet Stevens assures that even planets which might be imagined stationary move and change like the fire, the leaves and peacocks:

Out of the window,
I saw how the planets gathered
Like the leaves themselves
Turning in the wind. (WSCPP, 7)

The second example of Stevens' relation to Imagist practice can be found in the following passage from "Sunday Morning":

Why should she give her bounty to the dead?
What is divinity if it can come

423. Brogan, *Stevens and Simile*, 20.

Only in silent shadows and in dreams?
Shall she not find in comforts of the sun,
In pungent fruit and bright green wings, or else
In any balm or beauty of the earth,
Things to be cherished like the thought of heaven?
Divinity must live within herself:
Passions of rain, or moods in falling snow;
Grievings in loneliness, or unsubdued
Elations when the forest blooms; gusty
Emotions on wet roads on autumn nights. (WSCPP, 53)

Though Stevens presents a rich array of visual images to describe the woman's dilemma, this passage departs from the Imagist practice in three ways. First, Stevens' images go beyond a strict Imagist perception of the scene. They function as a means to support a philosophical argument between the nostalgia for religious belief and the acceptance of a secular world. Second, the images are not presented in direct visual aids as the Imagist does. Instead, Stevens adopts a technique of combining abstract words with concrete images as "*comforts* of the sun," "*pungent* fruit," "*bright green* wings," "*beauty* of the earth," "*Passions* of rain," "*moods* in falling snow," "*Elations* when the forest blooms," and "*Emotions* on wet roads." The italicized words are used as abstract modifiers of the visual images and the meaning depends on the denotations and connotations of the two words. These combinations show that the spiritual fulfilment is to be found in "the comfort of the sun" and "the beauty of the earth." However, this secular setting cannot completely dispel the "holy hush"(WSCPP, 53) of Christ's sacrifice and his crucifixion. What Stevens suggests, instead, is a "secular religion based on transitory things, a religion that offers "the emotion of religion without the theology,

and in the poem the negation of religion produces a freeing and proliferation of feeling of all kinds: passions, moods, grievings, elations, emotions."⁴²⁴

Third, as her religious thoughts begin to supplant her secular awareness of the scene, the visual images used to describe the scene of the woman taking her breakfast are replaced by aural images presented in the negation: "without sound" and "silent Palestine." The tension between energetic visual images of the world of the senses and the silent auditory images of religious devotions supports the argument the poem will make: Christianity is no longer credible in the modern world, and the humans should content with their natural surroundings.

C-Stevens, Eliot and Cubism: Collage and Perspectivism

In addition to their response to Imagism and Cubism, Eliot's and Stevens' poetry embodies textual evidence that both poets draw upon the principles of Cubism, particularly collage and perspectivism. It is important to note that the incorporation of these Cubist techniques did not emerge first with Eliot and Stevens. In fact, many Modernist authors borrowed the Cubist technique of the multiple perspectives by adopting a more fragmented plurality of perspectives instead of unified narrators to reject the absolute. This technique also reflects the Modernists' preference for a literature with no authorial intrusion. It is important to note that the use of the multiple perspective started with the novel⁴²⁵ which is, according to Mikhail Bakhtin, a multi-voiced or "heteroglot"⁴²⁶ genre. Later, Eliot and Stevens assumed the more difficult task of incorporating this Cubist technique in poetry, a genre which is often claimed to be a single-voiced or "monologic"⁴²⁷ genre. In doing so, Stevens and Eliot

424. J. Hillis "Miller on the Eloquence of the Poem's Mental," *Wallace Stevens*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003), 33.

425. James Joyce, the famous modernist Irish novelist asserts that "The artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails."

426. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Discourse in the Novel," *The novel: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory, 1900-2000*, ed. Dorothy J. Hale (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.), 494.

427. *Ibid.*, 489.

challenged the Romantic view that the poet "must assume a complete single-personed hegemony over his own language, [that] he must assume equal responsibility for each one of its aspects and subordinate them to his own, and only his own, intentions."⁴²⁸ Yet, before dealing with the similar and different ways in which Eliot and Stevens use Cubism, it is worth taking the time to discuss the intellectual context in which this movement emerged and to define its techniques of multiple perspectives and collage.

a- Cubism as a Modern Art:

1- Cubism and its Context

Cubism emerged during an era of dissatisfaction with positivism and its claims to absolute truth which was attacked by Friedrich Nietzsche, William James, and Albert Einstein. In *Genealogy of Morals*, Friedrich Nietzsche rejects the possibility of an absolute objective truth and underlies that "there is only a perspectival seeing, only a perspectival 'knowing'; the more affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the more eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'."⁴²⁹ James denies any knowledge that is absolute in character. He claims that the interpretations of facts have perspectival dimensions: "there is no possible point of view from which the world can appear as absolutely single fact."⁴³⁰ Breaking up with classical physics which assumed that all observers anywhere in the universe would obtain identical measurements of space and time intervals Albert Einstein relativity

428. Ibid., 506-507.

429. Friedrich Nietzsche, *Genealogy of Morals*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 87.

430. William James, *The Will to Believe and Other Essays in Popular Philosophy, and Human Immortality* (New York: Dover Publications, 1956.), ix.

asserts that "measurements change when considered by observers in various states of motion."⁴³¹

2- Analytical Cubism and Multiple Perspectives

In Visual arts similar anti-positivist attitudes that denied the existence of absolute truth were adopted by the avant-garde movement called Cubism. Cubism, which developed from collaboration between two painters, the Spanish Pablo Picasso and the French Georges Braque, in Paris lasted only from 1907 to 1914. Picasso and Braque rejected the traditional linear perspective based on the idea of a single viewpoint from one fixed point in space, and at a fixed point in time because "it cannot capture objects completely."⁴³² For instance, linear perspective fails to show the side or rear view of the object or the object at different times of the day. Picasso and Braque's solution was Analytical Cubism in which the subject is depicted from a multitude of viewpoints to represent it in a greater context. This technique enables the viewer to see several angles of the same subject. Later Picasso and Braque invented another form of Cubism known as Synthetic Cubism.

3- Synthetic Cubism and Collage

Instead of breaking down an object into fragments and then re-assembling them in Analytical Cubism, in Synthetic Cubism the image is built from new elements and shapes. The main technique the artist uses is collage. He composes paintings with integrated pieces of bedspread, oilcloths, and rope as in *Still Life with Chair Caning*. The rope makes up the frame of the picture while the chair caning is pasted onto the lower left hand corner of the canvas.

In what follows, my discussion will focus on Eliot's and Stevens' relationship to Cubism. It claims that both poets used the Cubist techniques of multiple perspectives and

431. Jo, Storm, *Approaching the Possible: The World of Stargate* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2007), 194.

432. Arthur I. Miller, *Insights of Genius: Imagery and Creativity in Science and Art* (New York: Springer New York, 1996), 419.

collage as a means to move away from the Romantic solipsistic and escapist approach of reality into a perspectival and an abstract one. However, Eliot's and Stevens' poetic and religious sensibility affects the way they use these Cubist techniques.

b- Eliot and Cubism:

1- Eliot's Perspectivism: Multiple Voices for One Single Voice of Alienation

In "The Wasteland," there is no central figure upon which to focus or to guide the reader through, but multitudinous narrative perspectives analogous to the Cubist technique of multiple perspectives. This enables Eliot to get rid of the solipsist quality of the Romantic poetry that assumes that the world is always experienced from an individual perspective, and to include, instead, a wide variety of viewpoints and contexts in order to reinforce how prevalent and serious the problems pervading the "wasteland" really are. The poem is full of voices which seem to have no actual connection with one another, and each voice alone is incomplete, but in the context of the poem they form a completion larger than themselves. Marie is the poet's first speaker. She is from the upper-class, a cousin to the archduke. A woman involved in a romantic story: "You gave me hyacinths first a year ago; / They called me the hyacinth girl" (CPTSE, 64). The speech of the hyacinth girl reveals "the promise of frustrated love, or perhaps more accurately a request for an impossible love."⁴³³ "The Wasteland" offers a diversity of views regarding male -female relations. The upper-class woman, whose "nerves are bad to-night" (CPTSE, 67), is a wife with her aloof and indifferent companion. Their relation suggests a complete breakdown between the sexes. The woman pleads, "stay with me. / Speak to me. Why do you never speak? Speak" (CPTSE, 67), but the husband rejects her request. The conversation of some working-class women in the pub

433. Irene Ramalho Santos, and António Sousa, eds., *Translocal Modernisms: International Perspectives* (New York: Peter Lang, 2008), 47.

revolves around the story of Albert and Lil. The cockney dialect of the conversation distinguishes them linguistically and socially from the upper-class couple at the beginning of "A Game of Chess." Albert's and Lil's relation represents another kind of marriage with another form of aggression. Lil, despondent over her loss of sexual attractiveness caused by the abortion drugs, is now preoccupied with maintaining her husband's sexual interest. She is now desperate from poverty and childbirth and is no longer capable of serving this function.

Eliot also gives voice to seers, such as the Cumaean Sibyl, Madame Sosostris, and to express their failure to give useful knowledge that may help to solve the problem of the waste land. The Sibyl's words "I want to die" (CPTSE, 61) suggest that she is no longer able to tell the future. Madame Sosostris is a clairvoyant tarot card reader, a fortune teller. She warns "fear death by water" (CPTSE, 64) while water is the restorative principle that is missing in the poem. Tiresias, after depicting the scene of degraded sexuality between the clerk and the typist, abandons his function as a seer of the future and returns to his personal experience of the past: "And I have foresuffered all / Enacted on this same divan or bed" (CPTSE, 72).

Eliot also uses the non-human voices of the nightingale, the cock, and the thunder. The nightingale, the transformed Philomela after her rape, cries "Jug Jug" (CPTSE, 71). However, the modern man with his dirty ear does not hear her cry; as a result, he fails to learn from her story. The cock's sound "Co Co rico" (CPTSE, 78) promising the coming of "a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust / Bringing rain" (CPTSE, 78). Yet, this prophecy is unlikely to be fulfilled as "the black clouds gathered far distant" (CPTSE, 78). In "What the Thunder Said," the voice of Thunder, which is the traditional voice of God, is heard. The voice does not herald the coming of rain but utters in the Upanishad the three imperatives to "Give" (CPTSE, 79), "Sympathize" (CPTSE, 79) and "Control" (CPTSE, 79) that modern man should accept to redeem his life.

Though these voices suggest no connectedness, their contents revolve around the quest for spiritual rebirth in the modern waste land. Marie's nostalgic voice laments the loss of romantic love of the past. Voices from the upper-class woman and working-class women complain about lust, impotence and the indifference of sexual love that have replaced the romantic love of the past. As for the voices of the Sibyl of Cumae, the cock, and the thunder, they suggest the possibility and the difficulty of redemption in modern time.

2- Collage in Eliot's "The Wasteland" Fragmentation and Reintegration of Experiences

With the same aim of suggesting the possibility and the difficulty of redemption, Eliot further uses the Cubist technique of collage which consists of fragmentation and reintegration in a new shape. In "The Wasteland," this technique can be seen in the way Eliot uses literary and cultural allusions. Many of the fragments are references to the literature of the past and Western cultures: from the German opera of the nineteenth century to Dante's poetry from the Italian Middle Ages, from drama of the English Renaissance to the Bible, Latin, memoirs, Greek and Roman mythology, and from French poets, Shakespeare, and St. Augustine of the fifth century to the English and Russian novels of the nineteenth century.

The use of collage in "The Wasteland" prevents the poet from adopting an escapist attitude toward reality by turning to nature. This illuminates the central problem of "The Wasteland." The fragments of literature of the past are put together with the real to illuminate the predicaments of modern man. In other words, the technique of collage allows Eliot to demonstrate the possibility of giving meaning to the present out of cultural fragmentation. To exemplify the use of collage and its effects, it is profitable to look closely at two passages from "The Wasteland."

The first passage is taken from the second section of "The Wasteland" entitled "A Game of Chess" in which the poet depicts the picture of Philomela raped by Tereus which is derived

from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Eliot changes the tense of the verb from past to present in "pursues" (CPTSE, 66) and makes the whole passage a kind of an assembled piece of literature that depicts the twentieth century characters:

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. (CPTSE , 66)

The Cubist technique of fragmentation and reintegration in a new shape enables the reader to see the poem from many angles which are then intercut without transitions. The fragments are put together in a new conceptual unity in a complicated system of parallels and allusions. The two women in "A Game of Chess" have no actual connection with each other. The first woman is upper class whereas the second, a named Lil, is lower class. Their stories, as they stand, are incomplete fragments, yet in the context of the poem and in relation to other fragments from other stories from other literary texts, such as Antony and Cleopatra, Aeneas and Dido, and Tereus and Philomela, they do dramatize the themes of loss and love in the poem as a whole. All the three women alluded to in the poem fall victim to their love: Cleopatra commits suicide after the death of Antony, Dido the Queen of Carthage sets herself on fire after the departure of Aeneas in order to establish the new city of Rome, and Philomela is raped and then has her tongue cut out. Indeed, they represent all modern women in the poem who are in the clutches of the selfish men's preoccupation with sex as a mere physical performance in which the female counterpart is often victimized, bored, or indifferent. This comparison suggests something essentially disappointing about the rich woman who is unable

to communicate her interior self to the world. The woman and her surroundings, though aesthetically pleasing, are ultimately sterile and meaningless as suggested by the nonsense song that she sings. In the case of Lil, sex is basely extorted. The outcome is abortion and the fear of death.

The same Cubist technique can be noticed in the second passage from the third section, "The Fire Sermon." This section made of a variety of random-seeming collages of different fragmentary materials builds up a veritable labyrinth of meanings:

A rat crept softly through the vegetation
Dragging its slimy belly on the bank
While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
And on her daughter
They wash their feet in soda water
Et, O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!
Twit twit twit
So rudely forc'd.

Tereu. (CPTSE, 70-71)

At first glance, the above lines seem to be "a heap of broken images" (CPTSE, 66), and each image conveys its particular yet incomplete meaning. To absorb its meaning or significance, the reader has to reassemble these fragments into one new single piece of poetry.

Thematically, the passage is about the poet's discomfort with the loss of spirituality, moral emptiness and sexual desire and his hope for an end to this lust that may allow renewal and spiritual rebirth. It is about Sweeney, a character who represents sexual vulgarity, who pays a visit to a brothel-keeper Mrs. Porter and her daughter. The funeral setting at the burial of "white bodies" suggests the immorality of these characters and the difficulty of renewal. Indeed, the rattle of bones, the rat, the canal, and the gashouse evoke an unpleasant scene of the funeral. The sordid life of Sweeney, Mrs. Porter and her daughter is reinforced by Eliot's use of an indirect allusion to Andrew Marvell's poem "To His Coy Mistress." Marvell's poem is essentially a seduction poem which attempts to convince his "coy mistress" to have sex with him. His main argument is that life is short and time is running out.

However, this passage is an attempt to find some kind of spiritual rebirth through the quenching of desire. This is supported by the poet's use of the word "moon" which stands for Diana, the goddess of chastity and purity. It is also supported by many references to purifying water. The first reference is about the man fishing in the river. In doing so, he recalls "the king my brother's wreck" in the water. This line is an allusion to Shakespeare's play *The Tempest* and suggests the possibility of drowning. Metaphorically, drowning means "death by water" (CPTSE, 75) which might suggest a certain kind of spiritual renewal. Further references to the possibility of rebirth are the washing of the feet as an act of purification suggested by the "feet in soda water" and the presence of the Fisher King in the quotation from Verlaine which refers to a Wagnerian opera about the search for the Grail. With these various scenes, Eliot suggests the possibility of modern salvation in the modern era.

c- Stevens and Cubism

1- Stevens' Perspectivism: Secular Multiple Perceptions of Reality

Stevens is attracted to Cubism partly for the same reasons as Eliot, that is, to move beyond the Romantic personal and single view of the real and to represent the object from many angles simultaneously. However, Stevens' aim of using Cubism is secular. Unlike Eliot's use of multiple perspectives to suggest the possibility of salvation in the modern era, Stevens employs these two techniques to uphold a secular understanding of reality.

In "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," he embraces the Cubist technique of multiple perspectives. Like a Cubist painting, the poem is divided into thirteen individual separate stanzas where the only constantly present image is the blackbird in order to suggest a variety of possible viewpoints. The first stanza introduces a contrast between the moving eye of the blackbird and the fixed landscape of "twenty snowy mountains":

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird. (WSCPP, 74)

The blackbird with its presence and movement becomes a center of focus around which a scene is described briefly. He does this to make each stanza an explanation of a new perspective from which he perceives this blackbird. The following passage

A man and a woman
Are one.
A man and a woman and a blackbird
Are one.(WSCPP, 75)

is related to the following passage only through the existence of the blackbird

I do not know which to prefer,
The beauty of inflections

Or the beauty of innuendoes,

The blackbird whistling

Or just after. (WSCPP, 75)

The eye of the blackbird approaches reality with the multiplicity of seeing. This perception of reality is the same as the technique of perspectives. The ninth stanza of the poem includes directly this technique of perspectivism:

When the blackbird flew out of sight,

It marked the edge

Of one of many circles. (WSCPP, 76)

This is another way of saying that the world contains not one sense but many. Each sense of the blackbird defines an intelligible circle, the "meaning" of which exists only as far as the blackbird crosses its horizon. In this view, the poem illustrates the Cubist idea that "there is nothing real outside ourselves; there is nothing real except the coincidence of a sensation and an individual mental tendency. . . . An object has not one absolute form: it has many: it has as many as are planes in the region of perception."⁴³⁴ "Thirteen Ways" is built on the idea that each sense of the world is a new way of seeing, confined to its own unique perspective, and each with its origin in the perceiver. This idea has its parallel in the following quotation from Judith Rinde Sheridan: "Once it is understood that at best an artistic replication of nature is not the thing itself but a sign, an image accepted by the viewer as the object, then the sign can assume many forms to embody the dynamism of man's perceptions of objects."⁴³⁵

434. Herschel Browning Chipp and Peter Selz, *Theories of Modern Art: A Source Book by Artists and Critics* (London: University of California Press, 1968), 295.

435. Judith Rinde Sheridan, "The Picasso Connection: Wallace Stevens' The Man With the Blue Guitar," *Arizona Quarterly* 3(1979):79.

2- Stevens' Collage: Decreation and Reimagining Reality

Stevens' attempt to solve the problem of the Romantic "incapabl[ity] of abstraction" resulting from the imagination's usurpation of reality brought him closer to Cubism. In fact, the Romantic use of the imagination tends to result in its divorce from reality. Or to put it another way, the Romantics, in their attempt to attain reconciliation between reality and the imagination, fall into an illusory state in the sense that they created imaginative worlds completely isolated from reality. This illusory state raises the problem of solipsism. Instead of the solipsistic imagination without the concrete reality, Stevens suggests an abstract approach of reality that emerges from the interplay of the imagination and reality through the Cubist technique of collage. To better illustrate this idea, it is helpful to examine Stevens' poem "The Man with the Blue Guitar."

Though the title of the poem brings in mind the famous Picasso painting "The Old Guitarist," Stevens denied that he had any particular Picasso's painting in mind when he wrote the poem. In a letter to Renato Poggioli, Stevens wrote, "I had no particular painting of Picasso's in mind and even though it might help sell the book to have one of his paintings on the cover, I don't think we ought to reproduce anything of Picasso's" (LWS, 295). Yet the poem shows some kinship with Cubism, for it was Picasso who first dealt with the perceptions of reality and the imagination: "Picasso and his fellow Cubist theoreticians probed the difficult problem of the character of reality and the way in which art captures that reality. . . . The work of art becomes a reality apart from its source of inspiration."⁴³⁶ In "The Irrational Element in Poetry," Stevens identifies Picasso as an example of the modern "obsession of freedom" (WSCPP, 789) with his refusal to allow things as they are to dictate experience. A similar idea is evoked in the opening lines of the poem:

436. Sheridan, *Picasso Connection*, 77-78.

The man bent over his guitar,
A shearsman of sorts. The day was green.
They said, "You have a blue guitar,
You do not play things as they are.'
The man replied, 'Things as they are
Are changed upon the blue guitar.'
And they said then, 'But play, you must
A tune beyond us, yet ourselves,
A tune upon the blue guitar
Of things exactly as they are". (WSCPP, 135)

Reality which is not modified by the imagination is not enough. The green day that is reality must be played by the blue guitar. Thus the blue guitar is the symbol of the poet's imaginative power that enables him to transform the bare reality into imaginative reality.

Now Stevens is facing the problem of finding a new method of expression to support his idea. The Cubist technique of collage offers a good solution. Stevens acknowledges borrowing this technique from Picasso:

Now, an image of our society?
Is this picture of Picasso's, this hoard
Of destruction, a picture of ourselves. (WSCPP, 141)

The phrase "hoard of destruction" is taken from an English translation of a remark Picasso made to the art critic Christian Zervos. Picasso's expression "somme de destructions" or "horde of destructions," which is different words for collage, implies that the newly produced reality is made of many fragments and each which in itself creates a new reality, and it becomes the initially conceived form. In this context, Picasso once remarked that before "a painting was the sum of additions. For me, a painting is the sum of destructions. I do a

painting and then I destroy it. But in the end, it is not lost."⁴³⁷ Picasso's idea of destruction and recreations of reality manifests itself in Stevens' prose and poetry. In *The Necessary Angel*, Stevens paraphrases Picasso's "sum of destructions" as the change "from created to uncreated or from created to nothingness" (WSCPP, 750). Stevens then defines modern reality as "a reality of decreation" (WSCPP, 750):

Poetry is the subject of the poem,
From this the poem issues and
To this returns. Between the two,
Between issue and return, there is
An absence in reality,
Things are as they are. Or so we say.
But are these separate? Is it
An absence for the poem, which acquires
It is true appearances there sun's green
Cloud's red, earth feeling, sky that thinks? (WSCPP, 144)

One of the effects of the use of collage in painting is that it allows seeing the interest and pleasure deriving chiefly from the juxtaposition of objects that are quite dissimilar. Jane Canaday notes in his *Mainstreams of Modern Art* that "one value of the collage is that it opens our eyes to colors and textures we have ignored because they are common place."⁴³⁸ In a like manner, Stevens uses different objects to achieve a good awareness of the natural objects to accentuate the fact that poetry belongs to the physical world rather than the imaginative worlds of the Romantic poetry that is completely isolated from reality as

the fruit and wine,
The book and bread, things as they are.

437. Pablo Picasso, quoted in Brogan, *Violence Within / Violence Without*, 85.

438. John Canaday, *Mainstreams of Modern Art* (New York: a Holt-Dryden Book, 1959), 477.

At a table on which the food is cold?

Is my thought a memory, not alive? (WSCPP, 142)

These dissimilar objects are put by the poet's imagination together to make a complete entity. This gathering activity resembles the Cubist collage that welds fragments into a new conceptual unity:

...are these separate? (...)

A few final solutions, like a duet (...)

The grunted breath serene and final,

The imagined and the real, thought

And the truth, Dichtung and Wahrheit, all

Confusion solved, as in a refrain. (WSCPP, 145)

Stevens goes beyond the Romantic failure to achieve reconciliation between reality and the imagination. In fact, the interplay between reality and the imagination solves the confusions of the fragmentary world.

d- Eliot's Cubism for Recreation Versus Stevens' Cubism for Decreation

Though Eliot and Stevens adopt the same Cubist techniques to break from the emotionalism of Romantic subjectivism, they reacted differently to Cubist centerlessness. This quest for the center has long been understood to be a religious pursuit. For Christianity, that centre is imaged in God. For example, Dante in "Paradiso" compares God to a wheel as the fixed center that makes the universe move:

like Wheel

In even motion by the Love impell'd,

That moves the sun in Heaven and all the stars.⁴³⁹

439. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, 426.

The multiple voices Eliot employs enable him to present modern alienation as an illness of the community more than that of the individual. Yet, Eliot's poem "lack[s] that loving logos that moved the constellations of Dante"⁴⁴⁰ which may add meaning to modern life beyond the multiplicity of viewpoints. Even the Sanskrit words "Give, sympathise, control" do not unify the disparate perspectives. The poem ends with "the fragments" (CPTSE, 79) the poet has "shored against [his] ruins" (CPTSE, 79). It is after abandoning these Cubist tenets in the poetry that he wrote after his conversion that Eliot reaches the center which he describes in "Four Quartets" as "this intersection time / of meeting nowhere, no before no after" (CPTSE, 215). Thanks to this presence of the center, the individuals "become renewed, transfigured in another pattern" (CPTSE, 219).

Stevens' Cubism is a struggle to find a way of inhabiting this ever-changing, imperfect, contingent, centerless world without resorting to doctrines that attempt to still the motion. Leaving his Christian heritage behind, claiming its irrelevance to the modern world, Stevens is interested not in fixing a centre point, but in living with the desire for an impossible centre. The desire for an elusive middle point and the yearning for a place in which to dwell perpetually is often a subject for his poems:

It would be enough
If we were ever, just once, at the middle, fixed
In This Beautiful World of Ours and not as now,
Helplessly at the edge, enough to be
Complete, because at the middle, if only in sense,
And in that enormous sense, merely enjoy. (WSCPP, 370)

Throughout this chapter, I have discussed Eliot's and Stevens' connectedness with Symbolism, Imagism and Cubism, a connectedness that cannot be denied. Eliot and Stevens

440. Gregory S. Jay, "Discovering the Corpus," *Bloom's Modern Critical Interpretations: T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land,"* ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Chelsea House, 2007), 93.

experienced the same alienation, fragmentation and moral disintegration as the adherents of these movements and shared with them the desire to free art from the Romantic solipsism and escapism. It is not surprising to notice that Eliot and Stevens have many common characteristics which were fit for the ideas of these movements. However, Stevens and Eliot were no slavish followers of these movements and could create, thanks to their individual talent, poems with qualities quite different from their contemporaries. Moreover, it is important to note that Eliot's and Stevens' religious attitudes affected their response to and manipulation of the tenets of these movements. While Eliot employed elements of these movements to champion religious orthodoxy, Stevens incorporated them to support his secular ideologies.

After dealing with the influence of different movements on Stevens and Eliot, the aim of the next chapter is to discuss how these poets become models for younger poets. In fact, Eliot's and Stevens' poetry which mixes the American and European cultures and combines tradition and the individual talents influenced not only English speaking poets, but also poets who write in languages other than English.

Chapter Six: Eliot and Stevens as New World Masters with New Traditions

Stevens and Eliot whose poetry comes in response to European and American precursors and contemporaries have become the precursors and influences whom young poets from different countries and writing in different languages look for as a model. Eliot's achievements are incorporated and transformed in the works of W. H. Auden, Robert Lowell and Arab poets like Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab and Muzaffar Al-Nawab while Stevens' in those of John Ashbery, Charles Tomlinson, and José Ángel Valente. Their interests in Stevens and Eliot bear some meaningful relation to the questions they are asking about the world, the aesthetic problems they are trying to solve for themselves on the way to making an individual voice.

This chapter is divided into three parts. The first part defines Eliot's and Stevens' poetry as the product mainly of American and European cultures. This poetic hybridity that combines American experiences and European traditions enables their poetry to become a major source of influence on contemporary poets from different cultures writing in different languages.

The second part deals with the way Eliot influences young poets from different nationalities: Auden from England, Robert Lowell from The United States, and Al-Sayyab and Al-Nawab from Iraq. First, it examines how Auden turned to Eliot to develop a viable modern Christian poetics and to overcome the difficulty in defining his role as a Christian poet in a secular world and finding the proper place for religion in their work. Then, it shows that Lowell's confessional poetry which is a departure from Modernism still bears the marks of Eliot's influence. Last, it shows how Al Sayyab and Al-Nawab, despite their Islamic and Arab background, incorporate Eliot's Christian narratives and cultural myths and adopt his

techniques of allusion and objective correlative to confront the new challenges emerging in the Arab world like the Palestinian tragedy in 1948 and the rise of tyrannical regimes.

The third part explores the influence of Stevens on the American Ashbery, the English Tomlinson, and the Spanish Valente. It argues that despite their different experiences, their poetry incorporates many of Stevens' poetic concerns. Such themes as "the first idea" or decreation as a means to free poetry from the dead formulae of the past that obscure it, art as a necessary replacement for religion, and the role of the poet's imagination in combating the effects of the pressure of reality, which are common in Stevens, are also appropriated in their poetry.

It is important to note that throughout this chapter I shall employ Harold Bloom's critical framework in *The Anxiety of Influence* to show how the poems of these young poets contain both a dialogue with and a departure from their precursors. They appropriate and turn the influences of their predecessors through a process of their own advantage to create their own voice.

A-Stevens' and Eliot's Hybrid Poetry: New Tradition both European and American

Stevens' poetry represents a serious attempt to forge distinctively American poetry for the twentieth century without relying on the Eurocentric literary past. However, his poetry is not only nativist that stems from American grain, but it was written in response to European tradition. As such, it is full of allusions to Classical mythology, Metaphysical poetry, French Symbolism and other literary and artistic movements. In addition, Stevens' poetry is replete with references to European places: "it takes us on a trip through a range of European countries: England and France, clearly, but also Ireland, Switzerland, Holland, Germany, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Italy, Spain, Poland and Bulgaria."⁴⁴¹ Any reader ignorant of Stevens' biography might suppose him to be one of those "Modernist émigrés who spent

441. Bart Eeckhout, and Edward Ragg, *Wallace Stevens Across the Atlantic* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 3.

considerable time in Paris and elsewhere on the European continent, like Henry James, Edith Wharton, Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, T. S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Gertrude Stein or Hart Crane."⁴⁴²

Many critics view Eliot as English. Helene Vendler, for example, devoted the first twenty-two pages of *The Harvard Book of Contemporary American Poetry* to Stevens, and she included no poem by Eliot.⁴⁴³ Among the reasons that may explain the denial of Eliot's Americanness by these critics, in addition to the British citizenship he took in 1927, is his attempt to find ancestors in Dante, Baudelaire, Donne rather than in Whitman and Emerson. Yet, the main reason is that his American experience is not an obvious component of his poetry. In fact, Eliot tried to resist the infiltration of his American past into his poetry. He even omitted many passages related to the American culture from his draft. For example, he omitted the passage "Next Boat for Natchez, Cairo, and St. Louis" from the original draft of *Ash-Wednesday*.⁴⁴⁴

However, in his poetry there is much trace of his American accent and experience which makes his poetry stand out from the rest of English poetry. David Perkins argues that "Eliot's poetry has always seemed -alien- Franco American to many English readers."⁴⁴⁵ Similarly, Anthony David Moody notices that "Eliot's is an English and European poetry that only an American could have written, and it is the American component that makes the difference."⁴⁴⁶ This difference can be seen in Eliot's use of American English diction. For

442. Ibid.

443. Lee Oser, *T.S. Eliot and American Poetry* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1998), 126.

444. Eric Sigg, "Eliot as a Product of America," *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 28.

445. David Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry: Modernism and After* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987), 4.

446. Kenneth Kramer, *Redeeming Time: T.S. Eliot's "Four Quartets"* (Lanham: Cowley Publications, 2007), 239.

example, " shades, in 'One thinks of all the hands / That are raising dingy shades / In a thousand furnished rooms' (II), is used in the American way. In England, those shades would be called blinds (shades would be lampshades)." ⁴⁴⁷

Eliot also incorporated the American music genre ragtime to his poetry. Eliot's "that Shakespeherian Rag" is borrowed from a title of a rag song "That Shakespearian Rag" (CPTSE, 67), written by Gene Buck, Herman Ruby, and Dave Stamper for the 1912 Ziegfeld Follies.⁴⁴⁸ Hence, Eliot probably heard its lyric, "That Shakespearian rag, most intelligent, very elegant," in a Boston vaudeville house.⁴⁴⁹ Eliot's aim is to contrast the dynamism of the song to the strained, baleful couple of "A Game of Chess" living meaningless lives composed of dull routines.

The image of the drowned corpses is another example that illustrates how his personal experience in America permeates his work. In 1930, Eliot wrote, "the big river"⁴⁵⁰ made "a deep impression on me; and it was a great treat to be taken down to the Eads Bridge in flood time."⁴⁵¹ In fact, "Eliot heard about, or may even have witnessed"⁴⁵² of the Missouri river that flooded several times during his childhood causing death to many people. Historically, many slaves were sold down the river to be transported to the sugar-cane plantations on the lower Mississippi where work was hard. Some of them even drowned: "the river with its cargo of dead negroes, cows and chicken coops."⁴⁵³

447. A.D. Moody, " T. S. Eliot: The American Strain," *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: T.S Eliot, ed. Harold Bloom* (New York: Infobase Publishing, 2011), 51.

448. Sigg, "Eliot as a Product of America," 21.

449. Ibid.

450. Eliot, quoted in Sigg, "Eliot as a Product of America," 24.

451. Ibid.

452. Sigg, "Eliot as a Product of America," 24.

453. Ibid.

B- Reception of Stevens' and Eliot's Poetry: Becoming Masters

Though Stevens is "now probably more secure in his literary status than any other American poet of this century,"⁴⁵⁴ he was not regarded as a major poet during his lifetime. His first book *Harmonium*, which the critic Robert Von Hallberg regarded as "probably the most remarkable first book of American poems to appear since *Leaves of Grass*"⁴⁵⁵ had a printing of 1500, but fewer than 100 copies were sold and Stevens' royalties for the first half of 1924 amounted to \$ 6.70. Following the publication of *Ideas of Order* in 1934, Stevens began receiving increasing recognition as an important and unique poet. The publication of *The Auroras of Autumn*, thanks to which Harold Bloom declared that "Stevens' last phase (1950–55) was his best,"⁴⁵⁶ established him as a major American poet.

Since then, Stevens has been belatedly acknowledged as one of the great American poets of the twentieth century. Harold Bloom declares that "Stevens is the principal American poet since Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson."⁴⁵⁷ Similarly, Daniel J. Kornstein gives Stevens the same recognition considering him as "one of best American poets ever perhaps the major American poet after Walt Whitman and Emily Dickinson."⁴⁵⁸ Helene Vendler, for her part, views Stevens' poetry as "nothing short of miraculous."⁴⁵⁹

Stevens' popularity was also launched in England with the three printings of his *Selected Poems* respectively in 1953, 1954, and 1962. Peter Du Sautoy Chairman of Faber

454. Christopher Beach, *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, 5.

455. Robert Von Hallberg, *American Poetry and Culture, 1945-1980* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1985), 12.

456. Harold Bloom, quoted in B. J. Leggett, "Stevens Late Poetry," *The Cambridge Companion to Wallace Stevens*, ed. John N. Serio (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 62.

457. Harold Bloom, quoted in Charles Van Doren, *The Joy of Reading: A Passionate Guide to 189 of the World's Best Authors and Their Works* (Naperville: Sourcebooks, 2008), 373.

458. Daniel J. Kornstein, *Unlikely Muse: Legal Thinking and Artistic Imagination* (Bloomington: Author House, 2010), 73.

459. Helen Vendler, quoted in Daniel J. Kornstein, *Unlikely Muse*, 106.

and Faber reported that the sale of the book "really took off when the paperback appeared."⁴⁶⁰ His success in England was assured by the publication of Frank Kermode's *Wallace Stevens* in Writers and Critics Series. Since then, Stevens' poetry has received laudatory reaction in England. Stephen Wintry proclaimed Stevens as "one of the half-dozen representations of American poetry."⁴⁶¹ For Donald Davie, Stevens was "a poet to be mentioned in the same breath as Eliot and Yeats and Pound. . . . He is a great poet indeed."⁴⁶² An anonymous reviewer in the Times Literary supplement, acclaimed Stevens as "the best poet writing in America, and one of the best now writing in English."⁴⁶³

When Eliot published "The Wasteland," only few "experienced readers older than Eliot appreciated his poetry, H. L. Mencken, Harriet Monroe, Van Wyck Brooks, Louis Untermeyer, Amy Lowell, Harold Monro, W. B. Yeats . . . never understood why Eliot's poetry was so much admired."⁴⁶⁴ By contrast, Eliot became a model for younger poets who praised both his poetry and criticism. David Perkins explains this influence saying: "For twenty-five years T. S. Eliot exercised an authority in the literary world not possessed by any writer before him for more than a century. By the end of the 1920's, his poetry was an inescapable influence on younger poets, and his criticism shaped their work even more pervasively. Twenty years later, "The Waste Land was still widely regarded as the most radical and brilliant development of Modernist poetry."⁴⁶⁵ Stanley Kunitz argued that "for more than three decades, you could scarcely pick up a poem of a younger writer without

460. Stephen Wintry, quoted in George S. Lensing, "Wallace Stevens in England," *Wallace Stevens: A Celebration*, eds. Robert Buttell and Frank Doggett (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1980), 147.

461. Ibid.

462. Donald Davie, quoted in George S. Lensing, "Wallace Stevens in England," 146.

463. Ibid., 146.

464. Perkins, *History of Modern Poetry*, 6.

465. Ibid., 3.

overhearing [Eliot] somewhere in the background In the twenties and thirties one had to follow Eliot in order to win a reputation or an audience."⁴⁶⁶

Stevens' resurgence in the 1950's with his splendid creativity led not only to the rise of his reputation and influence on younger poets at this time, but also engendered reactions against Eliot. The question one may ask, therefore, is why Eliot's impact was earlier than Stevens'. David Perkins suggests three reasons.⁴⁶⁷ First, his alliance with Pound from 1920 to 1925 increased his authority. Second, his literary criticism reinforced his prestige and many critics I.A. Richards, William Epton, F.R Leavis, Allen Tate, and others were themselves influenced by Eliot. His authority was further increased by his job as an editor. Once settled in Paris, "Eliot founded and edited *Criterion* magazine and became an editor at the publishing firm of Faber and Faber. Younger poets in England and the United States were published by Eliot or hoped to be."⁴⁶⁸

Eliot and Stevens count among the American poets that other poets whether American or not could admit as literary models. They are influences whom the young poets look up to as masters. Eliot's achievements are incorporated and transformed in the works of W. H. Auden, Robert Lowell and Arab poets like Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab and Muzaffar Al-Nawab, and Stevens' in the works of John Ashbery, Charles Tomlinson, and José Ángel Valente.

C- Eliot as a World Master

a- Eliot and Auden: An Apophrades from a Marxian and Freudian Divergence to an Eliotian Religious Conversion

Though Auden begins by falling away from Eliot as he makes use of Freud and Marx in his treatment of ills of individual and society, the poetry he wrote after his conversion enacts

466. Stanely Kunitz, quoted in David Perkins, *History of Modern Poetry*, 4.

467. Perkins, *A History of Modern Poetry*, 5-6.

468. *Ibid.*, 5.

an apophrades in relation to Eliot's. According to Bloom, an apophrades is a ratio in which "the strong poet peers in the mirror of his fallen precursor and beholds neither the precursor nor himself but a Gnostic double, the dark otherness or antithesis that both he and the precursor longed to be, yet feared to become."⁴⁶⁹ After his conversion, Auden took Eliot, whose conversion to the church preceded Auden by a decade, as a model to develop a Christian poetic operable in the modern godless world. In an attempt to reach this goal, he allows the precursor, Eliot, to speak in and through the breath of the ephebe.

Like Eliot, Auden gives a religious interpretation to the sickness and distortion of society and the crisis in the contemporary world. He traces the political and social corruption of the world back to the original sin and to the spiritual emptiness:

Day breaks upon the world we know
Of war and wastefulness and woe;
Ashamed citizens come to grief
In brotherhoods without belief. (CWWHAP, 238)

However, before his conversion, Auden suggests that Freudian psychology then Marxist political theory, rather than the religious Christian paradigm, might constitute a cure for political illness. In search for the lost key to a just society, Auden absorbed the important Freudian idea that disorder in individuals and society is engendered by the continually conflicting impulses for supremacy within human psyche. For example, Auden's "New Year Letter" points out that the political evils result from the psychological evils. In this poem, he relies on allegory to trace social ills within every human heart. First, Auden uses the symbol of rain to show how the opposing impulses within the individual's conscious self lead to social ills. Then these impulses become thunderstorm that drives the self or the ego to fear and error:

469. Ibid., 147.

Up in the Ego's atmosphere
And higher altitudes of fear
The particles of error form
The shepherd-killing thunderstorm
And our political distress
Descends from her self-consciousness. (CWWHAP, 233)

Then, Auden turns to the symbol of the mad woman in the attic imprisoned by her own choice to represent the narcissistic ego. Instead of using "her free-will to choose / The actions that this world requires / To educate its blind desires" (CWWHAP, 233), the woman prefers the "right to lead alone / An attic life all on her own, / Unhindered, unrebuked, unwatched, / Self-known, self-praising, self-attached" (CWWHAP, 233). Then the ego takes the form of a lunatic witch who is "self-tortured" (CWWHAP, 233) because "She worships in obscene delight / The Not, the Never, and the Night" (CWWHAP, 233). The negative terms "Not," "Never," "Night," suggest the ego's relinquishing self-consciousness, the Id in Freudian terms, and its desire becomes privations.

The poem ends up with the conclusion that psychoanalysis makes the problem of self-consciousness worse. The poem's last setting is the modern American bars from where

the revelers go home to change
Back into something far more strange,
The tightened self in which they may
Walk safely through their bothered day. (CWWHAP, 234)

Most people who face privations must ignore them; they turn to alcohol to help them go on living as though nothing were wrong with their self.

Auden incorporates many Marxist profound philosophical insights into his work. Industry, for the Marxists, arose in response to a genuine human need, the need for "bringing

a natural force under the control of society, of economising, of appropriating or subduing it on a large scale by the work of man's hand that first plays the decisive part in the history of industry."⁴⁷⁰ The Marxists also believe that the Industrial Revolution "produc[ed] not only enough for the plentiful consumption of all members of society and for an abundant reserve fund, but also . . . [left] each individual sufficient leisure so that what is really worth preserving in historically inherited culture may . . . be preserved."⁴⁷¹ The grave social ills that people inherited during and after the Industrial Revolution were not the fault of industrialism but the fault of capitalism which guaranteed the monopoly of the means of production by the few and the unequal distribution of productions.

Auden's response to industrialism is very similar to Marx's. He believes that overconfidence in the machine may lead to man's ruin. In other words, the machines are not to be accepted as "our heart's spontaneous fruits,"⁴⁷² but as instruments to be directed by the disciplined love. Marx and Engels believed that personal ideals and morality alone, unaccompanied by environmental changes, could never significantly modify a culture. For Marx and Engels, freedom means the ability to control the world in order to satisfy human needs. In short, as Auden says, "These moods give no permission to be idle, / For men are changed by what they do."⁴⁷³

Yet after becoming disillusioned with secular humanism resulting from the ascension of the Nazis, Auden turned to Christianity. He began to retreat from his position as an engaged poet and started to use art for its effectual possibilities in order to support the Church. In an attempt to develop a Christian poetics for the modern secular world, Auden took Eliot, whose conversion to the church preceded Auden by a decade, as a model. Therefore, his poetic

470. Karl Marx, and Frederick Engels: *Collected Works* (New York: International Publishers, 1988), 325.

471. *Ibid.*, 515.

472. W. H. Auden, *Some Poems W. H. Auden* (London: Faber and Faber, 1940), 60.

473. *Ibid.*, 61.

formulations and practices became remarkably similar to those of Eliot. In fact, Eliot showed Auden how to face the extraordinary difficulties involved with developing a Christian aesthetic in a secular society. For Eliot, tradition originating in the Middle Ages is "the more pure"⁴⁷⁴ because its "bond was with the Church, with tradition."⁴⁷⁵ However, Eliot's theology struck many people with secular sensibilities as anachronistic.

Likewise, the period immediately after Auden's conversion known as transitional is full of doubt and anxiety over the possibility of reconciling spiritual and artistic values. During this period, he wrote poetry very similar to Eliot's transitional poetry in which nature and art are temptations against his progress toward spiritual maturity rather than a reflection of God's glory. Auden reveals that he is most worried that he will allow his religious beliefs to undermine his artistic integrity. For example, he states that he must proceed with "Our faith well balanced by our doubt / Admitting every step we make / Will certainly be a mistake" (CWWHAP, 222). The implication of his own emerging faith is tempered by doubt.

After the period of doubt, Auden began to feel more settled in his Christian faith and seemed to have much more confidence in Christianity, particularly the doctrine of the Incarnation, than he ever had in Freud's or Marx's theories regarding its ability to solve many individual and social problems. Auden's position on the significance of the Incarnation is very similar to Eliot's. Both show that Incarnation is not an event belonging to the past but continually recurring and thus relevant to the modern world. Auden, like Eliot, began to apply his understanding of the Incarnation to subjects of interest such as the nature of time and the shape of history. In Eliot's "Four Quartets," it is experienced in England in the present. In Auden's *For the Time Being*, the narrator employs a more quotidian language to suggest that the Incarnation can take place during mundane tasks of contemporary life:

474. Eliot: *Selected Essays*, 352.

475. *Ibid.*

In the meantime

There are bills to be paid, machines to keep in repair,

Irregular verbs to learn, the Time Being to redeem

From insignificance. (CWWHAP, 400)

Once the time is redeemed, Christ provides the poet with the necessary orientation for art, and poetry no longer reveals a fear that will allow his artistic ambitions to compromise his spiritual development. Auden explains that since "in Him the Flesh is united to the Word without magical transformation, Imagination is redeemed from promiscuous fornication with her own images"(CWWHAP, 389) and so "by Him is the perpetual recurrence of Art assured" (CWWHAP, 388-89). Christ provides the necessary orientation for art.

Like Eliot who presents the Incarnation through the "intersection of the timeless / With time," Auden speaks of "our familiar tribulations" (CWWHAP, 351) of the natural time resulting from political conflicts, natural disasters and illnesses:

And we have been through them all before, many, many times.

As events which belong to the natural world where

The occupation of space is the real and final fact

And time turns round itself in an obedient circle,

They occur again and again but only to pass

Again and again into their formal opposites. (CWWHAP, 351)

However with the Incarnation everything has changed into "outrageous novelty" (CWWHAP, 351), and

We can only say that now It is there and that nothing

We learnt before It was there is now of the slightest use,

For nothing like It has happened before. (CWWHAP, 351)

From the above discussion, it can be seen that Eliot's religious poetry has a deep influence on Auden during the year when Auden was struggling to find new poetic forms emphasizing the relevance of the doctrine of the Incarnation in modern time. It is partly for the same reason that Robert Lowell is attracted to Eliot's poetry. On the other hand, Lowell's new confessional poetry with its concern with the poet's individual experience marks his departure from Eliot, but Eliot's influence is still felt in it.

b- Eliot's Presence in Lowell's Poetry: Clinamen or Revisionism from Eliotian Modernism to Confessional Poetry

With the publication of *Life Studies* in 1959, Robert Lowell pioneered a new style in American poetry that M.L. Rosenthal labeled "confessional." In this new style, the poet represents his private psychological problems and makes them an embodiment of his civilization: "The poems were presented in the first-person voice with little apparent distance between the speaker and the poet; they were highly emotional in tone, autobiographical in content, and narrative in structure. The personal reflections of poets were no longer couched in the distanced idiom characteristic of both Modernism and New Criticism."⁴⁷⁶

The use of the autobiographical self and memory was a departure from the Eliotic aesthetics that poetry is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. The concept of clinamen is particularly important to Lowell's stance in relation to Eliot's poetry. Clinamen, or poetic misreading, is "of creative revisionism."⁴⁷⁷

The poet's protests against the Second World War and the Vietnam War contributed to the rise of confessional poetry. During the Second World War, he was imprisoned for being a conscientious objector.⁴⁷⁸ He also protested against the war in Vietnam. In 1967, Robert

476. Beach, *Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, 155.

477. Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, 42.

478. Robert Lowell, *Robert Lowell, Interviews and Memoirs*, ed. Jeffrey Meyers (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1988), 1.

Lowell took part with prominent intellectuals in a march on the Pentagon to protest the Vietnam War.⁴⁷⁹ In 1965, Lowell had written a letter to Lyndon Johnson declining an invitation to be part of a gathering of artists at the White House. In the letter, he expressed his disillusionment with the President's and his administration's war policies and lamented that he "could only follow [their] present foreign policy with the greatest dismay and distrust."⁴⁸⁰

In the following passage from "Memories of West Street and Lepke," Lowell relies on his personal experience to depict his situation as part of the American political scene:

These are the tranquilized *Fifties*,
and I am forty. Ought I to regret my seedtime?
I was a fire-breathing Catholic C.O.,
and made my manic statement,
telling off the state and president, and then
sat waiting sentence in the bull pen
beside a Negro boy with curlicues
of marijuana in his hair.⁴⁸¹

On the one hand, the poet describes himself in prison as a conscientious objector with "a Negro boy." On the other hand, he challenges the idea of American war policy followed by "the state and president."

In Lowell's poetry, there is the same Eliotian awareness of the fallen world and the urgent need for salvation. Many Lowell's poems manifest the worst effects of the fall: "the

479. Ibid.

480. Robert Lowell, quoted in Leonard Unger, *American Writers: A Collection of Literary Biographies* (New York: Scribner, 1974), 18.

481. Robert Lowell, *The Achievement of Robert Lowell: A Comprehensive Selection of His Poems with a Critical Introduction* (Illinois: Scott Foresman, 1966), 67.

waste / Of the great garden rotten to its roots."⁴⁸² In "The Dead in Europe," he laments "O Mary, marry earth, sea, air, and fire; / our sacred earth in our day is our curse."⁴⁸³

Though he traces the chaos of modern world back to religious reasons, he at first does not offer redemption in the Christian sense as the only possible way to restore order. Because of the secular nature of his society and his doubt about the relevance of Christianity to the modern world, he tries out art as a substitute for religion to redeem the modern world. In "The Bomber," Lowell uses religious images to depict the violent modern warfare. Death caused by blasting by the Bomber is juxtaposed with Christ sacrificing his life. The bomber causes "the bloody sweat" from Christ's brow and his crucifixion on the cross. However, in the violent modern warfare, there is no promise of redemption and what remains from Christ's sacrifice is darkness over the earth as Christ hung on the cross in the garden of Gethsemane:

O godly Bomber, and most
A god when cascading tons
Baptized the infidel Huns
For the Holy Ghost,
Did you know the name of flight
When you blasted the bloody sweat
And made the noonday night:
When God and Satan met
And Christ gave up the ghost?⁴⁸⁴

In "Beyond the Alps," the opening poem of *Life Studies*, he, against his will, replaces Rome the "City of God" by Paris the city of art as Christianity is irrelevant to a modern

482. *Ibid.*, 29.

483. *Ibid.*, 49.

484. Robert Lowell, *Collected Poems*, eds. Frank Bidart and David Gewanter (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003), 871.

secular world: "Life changed to landscape. Much against my will / I left the City of God where it belongs."⁴⁸⁵ His abandonment of Roman Catholicism and breaking up with religion is provoked by the abuses of the highest political and spiritual authorities. Rome is now ruled by the imperialistic tyrant Mussolini whose lustful or "skirt-mad" attitudes leads to the recreation of ancient Rome under fascism: "There the skirt-mad Mussolini unfurled / the eagle of Caesar."⁴⁸⁶ Like Mussolini, the Pope is also corrupt:

When the Vatican made Mary's Assumption dogma,
the crowds at San Pietro screamed Papa.
The Holy Father dropped his shaving glass,
and listened. His electric razor purred,
his pet canary chirped on his left hand.⁴⁸⁷

The Pope appeals to the irrational passions of the crowd who cannot see "the lights of science"⁴⁸⁸ that may bring them closer to Mary. The fact that they call the Pope "Papa" is symptomatic of their child-like dependence.

Unable to find satisfaction in religion, he turns to the city of art Paris to seek solace. However, when he arrives in Paris, he discovers that art has been misused: "Now Paris, our black classic, breaking up / like killer kings on an Etruscan cup."⁴⁸⁹ These two lines imply

485. Lowell, *Achievement*, 57.

486. *Ibid.*

487. *Ibid.*

488. *Ibid.*

489. *Ibid.*

that Paris is "pagan, sinister, and mysterious"⁴⁹⁰ and that the poet "has returned to the twentieth century, Etruscan in its remoteness—a buried world."⁴⁹¹

Lowell sees Christianity at odds with the violence of war, and he, like Eliot, asserts that Christianity forces one to engage with the present and to share Christian revelation to redeem the violent modern world. Realizing that contemporary man's redemption is denied through art, he decides again to turn to religion. In "The Wood of Life," Lowell offers a Christian view of redemption. As he meditates on the cross, he links it to Old Testament sacrifice and sees it as the solution to the problem of the fall: "Here are scales whose Reckoning-weight / Outweighs the apple's fell dejection."⁴⁹² He ends the poem by acknowledging the power of the cross:

Christ Crucified is all our reason
And most in this dark hour
We will invoke, O Cross, your power,
Our prime, at best, is Passion's season.⁴⁹³

In this violent world, Lowell sees Christian redemption as the only hope.

In his confessional poetry, Lowell uses his personal experiences to address spiritual, political and social issues. Yet his poems are also replete with luxuriant allusions to Classical myths and old literary masterpieces and historical personalities juxtaposed in the context of contemporary events. This allusive method is reminiscent of Eliot's mode. "Beyond the Alps" epitomizes the spiritual crisis of the twentieth century brought about by materialistic values. The poem is enriched by the use of references to figures from Classical mythology:

490. Hugh. B Staples, *Robert Lowell: The First Twenty Years* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), 72.

491. *Ibid.*

492. Lowell, *Collected Poems*, 882.

493. *Ibid.*

When the Goddess stood,
prince, pope, philosopher and golden bough,
pure mind and murder at the scything prow
Minerva, the miscarriage of the brain.⁴⁹⁴

Athena with her pure mind and murder is the goddess of art and war. Her presence in modern time serves merely to sanctify violence. From here, the poet concludes that the city of art Paris is now "black classic."⁴⁹⁵

The same allusive method combined with his personal experience is employed by Lowell to discuss such issue as the failure of marriage in modern age. Lowell juxtaposes the picture of unstable marriage of his parents and the marriage breakdown of Marie de Medici and King Henry IV of France. In his prose accounts "Revere Street," Lowell presents his mother who urges his father to leave the naval and forces him to deed his property to her. Lowell overtly states that his "parent's confidences and quarrels stopped each night at ten or eleven o'clock, when my father would hang up his tuxedo, put on his commander's uniform, and take a trolley to the Naval Yard at Charlestown."⁴⁹⁶ Though this passage relies on his personal experience of his parents' marital relation to describe the failure of marriage, it is foreshadowed by the marriage failure of Marie de Medici and King Henry IV in "The Banker's Daughter." This marriage represents a lashing marriage because Marie de Medici is twenty years older than her husband.⁴⁹⁷ Their marriage, like Lowell's parents' marriage, is full of hatred and is doomed to failure.

Lowell also combines his collection of personal forces and some historical figures to express his disillusionment with politics. In "The March 1," he describes the march on the

494. Lowell, *Achievement*, 57.

495. *Ibid.*

496. Robert Lowell, *Life Studies, and For the Union Dead* (New York: Noonday Press, 1967), 22.

497. *Ibid.*, 5.

Pentagon in October against the War in Vietnam in October, 1967. Lowell describes the march from his personal perspective by focusing on his bored self in his attempt "to keep [his] wet glasses from slipping"⁴⁹⁸ while he sees "the cigarette match quaking in [his] fingers."⁴⁹⁹ However, to give the march a sense of legitimacy, Lowell associates the march's demand to stop the war with the ideas of original American independence and freedom by invoking Abraham Lincoln and George Washington: "Under the too white marmoreal Lincoln Memorial, / the too tall marmoreal Washington Obelisk."⁵⁰⁰

Lowell also learns from Eliot how to incorporate imperfection and ugliness into poetry. Eliot's poetry contains many images that imply ugliness as an objective correlative for modern man's frail faith. The following passage which precedes the scene that depicts the rape of the typist by the clerk in "The Wasteland" includes such ugly images as the sound of a car, scattered bones, and rats:

White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors. (CPTSE, 70)

The same images are incorporated by Lowell in his "Skunk Hour" to fulfil the same purpose. "Skunk Hour," like Eliot's "The Wasteland," is about America's religious, historical, economic, sexual and moral predicaments. The poem is peopled by three characters : weird "hermit / heiress," the ambiguous "summer millionaire," and "the impostor."⁵⁰¹ They all suffer from the same spiritual emptiness as the inhabitants of Eliot's poem. The words "hermit

498. Lowell, *Collected Poems*, 545.

499. *Ibid.*

500. *Ibid.*

501. Lowell, *Achievement*, 71.

/ heiress"⁵⁰² used to describe the old woman suggest wealth and seclusion stressing that wealth leads only to alienation. As an illustration between wealth and alienation is the unused land that she bought to find refuge in. The millionaire represents a real possibility of economic thriving, yet his death has directed the village to poverty. The imposter "who'd rather marry"⁵⁰³ for wealth as he earns no money himself incarnates the departure from moral values and practices. To represent this sterility of modern culture, Lowell presents the image of stinky and disgusting skunks searching for food in the trash which is reminiscent of Eliot's rat. In this morally bankrupt society, Lowell finds value only in an animal associated with garbage and noxious odor:

under the chalk-dry and spar spire
of the Trinitarian Church.
a mother skunk with her column of kittens swills the garbage pail.
She jabs her wedge-head into a cup
of sour cream, drops her ostrich tail,
and will not scare.⁵⁰⁴

Charles Altieri sums up the symbolic significance of the skunks: "As the skunk makes her way beneath the 'chalk-dry church spire' reminding the reader of the dead vertical world, she embodies whatever possibilities Lowell can find for restoring a context of value within secular and biological necessity."⁵⁰⁵

In addition to this image of the animal, Lowell employs the images of the car and bones which are common to Eliot's poetry to support the poet's uncomfortable feeling with the

502. Ibid.

503. Ibid.

504. Ibid.

505. Charles Altieri, quoted in Beach, *The Cambridge Introduction to Twentieth-Century American Poetry*, 158.

vulgar love scene that he witnesses:

One dark night,
my Tudor Ford climbed the hill's skull;
I watched for love-cars. Lights turned down,
they lay together, hull to hull,
where the graveyard shelves on the town. . . .
My mind's not right.⁵⁰⁶

The scene that depicts the two lovers make love in the graveyard near the "hill's skull" is an indication of the decline in human values. Being in the car with its mechanical connotation and lying together "hull to hull" is reminiscent of the behaviour of the clerk and the typist in their love which is only physical and has no spiritual meaning.

What can be implied from my discussion of Eliot's influence on Auden and Lowell is that Eliot makes a deep impact on the work of the following generation of American and English poets. However, the appeal of his poetic genius is not limited only to the English speaking poets. In fact, Eliot's influences are also seen at work in the poetry written in distant and non-English-speaking countries like Arabic countries.

c- Eliot's Influence on Al-Sayyab and Al-Nawab: Tessera or Arab Politics and Eliotian Religion and Modernism

Many critics have argued that Eliot is the most influential poet and critic in the modernist Arabic literature. His theories and Modernist poetry brought tremendous changes thematically and stylistically to Arabic literature written after the Second World War. Shmuel Moreh argues, "Shakespeare, Shelley and the Romantic poets of the West did not exert so deep an influence on Arabic poetry as did T.S. Eliot who almost cut it entirely from its roots.

506. Ibid.

Eliot's work changed the form and technique of Arabic poetry as well as its contents to an extent that has no precedent in the whole history of Arabic poetry."⁵⁰⁷

Eliot's image of the arid wasteland as a criticism of a dying civilization, and his use of the fertility myth and the hope for redemption through self-sacrifice attracted the Arab poets. They took Eliot's poetry particularly "The Wasteland" as a model to recapture a sense of loss and disillusionment after the defeat of the Arabs in the 1948 war against Israel over Palestine, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the displacement of the Palestinians.

To discuss the presence of Eliot in Modern Arabic poetry, Tessera seems particularly suited to the case of Arab poets like Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab's and Muzaffar Al-Nawab and their ambivalent stance toward Western literary forebears like Eliot. In fact, these two poets with their Arabic and Islamic background hold Eliot in mind as a model to let their poetic voices soar, but they have to repel his Eurocentrism. For them, Eliot's concentration on the Western experience is the fragment that the Arab poets would complete by applying his theories to their Arab World.

What the modern Arab poets learned from Eliot is how to incorporate the urban environment as an ideological and political discourse to criticize political corruption in the Arab World. Traditionally, Classical Arab poets have always incorporated the city and the countryside to vehicle the cultural differences between the sedentary and the nomadic life. Many advocate the nomadic ways of life with its emphasis on innate wisdom, the courage to face the hardships of desert life, and the deeds of their heroes at war. Yet some other poets find the nomadic ways of life unrefined and the nomads uncivilized and ignorant to appreciate the sedentary life.

507. Shmuel Moreh, *Modern Arabic Poetry: 1800 – 1970: The Development of its Forms and Themes under the Influence of Western Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1976.), 216.

For example, Abu Nuwâs (762- 810) criticizes the Bedouin's life and celebrates the splendour of Baghdad and other Persian cities. Abû Nuwâs rejects sarcastically any attempt to compare the greatness of urban Persian civilization exemplified in palaces of Persian kings with the deprived Bedouin life way of living reduced to the drinking of camel's milk:

For this is the life,
Not desert tents,
Not camel's milk
How can you set the Bedu
Beside Kisra's palace? ⁵⁰⁸

Even with the rise of Neo-classical Arabic poetry, during the 19th century and the early 20th century and the development of the urban life during this period, the city continued to be idealized. The Neo-classical Arab poets did not come with contemporary approach toward the city and the urban landscape. In the following lines from Ahmed Shawqi's poetry, that best represents neo-classical poetry, Edenic imagery of Damascus is a paradise on earth:

I believe in God and exalt his Garden
Damascus is an absolute joy, gardens of Eden and sweet sage
In Damascus, the river of Barada, which flew and stormed, welcomes us like
Ridwan who welcomes you before (you enter) Paradise. ⁵⁰⁹

However, in the post-WWII era, with their openness to Western poetry and under the influence of T.S. Eliot's criticism of the modern city particularly in his "The Wasteland," Arab poets offered a new poetic toward the city. Whereas Eliot's city suffers from spiritual emptiness, alienation, and estrangement, Arab poets presented the city to reflect their

508. Abû Nuwâs, quoted in Yair Huri, "Seeking Glory in the Dunghills:" Representations of the City in the Writings of Modern Arab Poets" *The South Carolina Modern Language Review* 4, no.1 (2005): 51.

509. Ahmed Shawqi, quoted in Huri, "Seeking Glory in the Dunghills," 52.

disillusionment with the political predicaments related to the Arab world in the aftermath of the Second World War.

In "Jaikur and the City" Al-Sayyab presents the city of Baghdad as an evil. Its streets are compared to poisonous snakes that strangle the poet: "The city streets coil around me: Thongs of mud bite into my heart."⁵¹⁰ The evil in Baghdad is not attributed to cultural crisis resulting from urbanization and industrialization as in Eliot's poetry, but the result of tyranny, persecution and political corruption from which the poets suffer: "In Baghdad who crucified the poet? / Who auctions off his poems."⁵¹¹ Al-Sayyab uses the same image of sterile waste land found in Eliot's poem to suggest political corruption in the Arab world and uses rain motif to evoke dire need of resurrection:

I cried out in winter:
Bestir, o rain,
Make the seeds grow, let the flowers open,
And set the sterile threshing floors
On fire with lightning.⁵¹²

Unlike Eliot's "Wasteland" in which sterility is the result of the moral bankruptcy, the Arab city is sterile in Al-Sayyab's poetry because of tyrannical regimes and oppressive rulers that cause death to innocent citizens. Thus, under these dictatorial systems, resurrection does not come, and even the Euphrates River with its abundant water as a symbol of fertility is now filled with dead killed by the Iraqi regime:

And, flowing over with your gifts.
The Euphrates muddy turned

510. Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab, quoted in Saddik M. Gohar, "Engaging T.S. Eliot's City Narratives in the Poetry Badr Shaker Al-Sayyab," *Journal: Studies in Islam and the Middle East* 5, no. 1 (2008) : 10.

511. Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, "Two Poems," *Banipal: Magazine of Modern Arab Literature* (1998): 9.

512. Saddik M. Gohar, "Toward a Dialogue with the West: The use of Eliot's Modernism in Al-Sayyab's City Poetry," *Comparative Civilizations Review* no. 56 (2007): 50.

The tombs moved, their dead
And their bones cried out;
Blessed be the god who grants us
Blood in the form of rain.⁵¹³

In Eliot's "The Wasteland," the spiritual emptiness of the city-dwellers is conveyed through the recurring image of the raped woman. Arab poets use the same image of rape to depict the tyrannical regime in the Arab world. Al-Sayyab's "The Blind Prostitute" uses the persona of a country girl Salima turned into a prostitute to depict the failure of the Intifada⁵¹⁴ of 1952. Salima is an innocent countryside girl, whose father is killed by a feudal Sheikh, and the men of her village refuse to marry her. With the outbreak of the war, foreign soldiers come in flux to Iraq who rape her and force her into prostitution:

I am an Arab: My nation is their blood
The best of all blood, as my father used to say
In the filthy parts of my body, in my revealing breasts
Flows the blood of the conquerors. So come and defile it, O Men
Ah, the sex of men. For yesterday the soldiers ravaged it
Crawling from the seas like a herd of squirming worms
Would God that my death take my eyes like dust in the wind.⁵¹⁵

In the context of the intifada, Terri DeYoung suggests an allegorical reading of the poem. According to him, "Salima is the people of Iraq, her child the Intifada itself - the rebellion that died for the lack of nourishment."⁵¹⁶

513. Ibid.

514. Intifada is the Palestinian uprising against Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The first intifada lasted from 1987 to 1993, and the second began in 2000.

515. Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, quoted in Khalid Kishtainy, *The Prostitute in Progressive Literature* (London: Allison and Busby, 1982), 71.

Likewise, Al-Nawab employs the image of rape very common in Eliot's "The Wasteland" to criticize Arab defeats and political failures. In the following lines, Al-Nawab compares the Arab to a prostitute raped by Arab rulers:

My lady
we are all whores
like you
being raped by
tyranny and false religion
and false news
everything could be forged
in the Arab World
even funerals and eulogies.⁵¹⁷

Elsewhere, Al-Nawab depicts Jerusalem as an Arab lady being raped by invaders to attack contemporary Arab rulers for their cowardice and lack of manhood: "Jerusalem is the bride of your Arab nationalism / why did you allow all the gonorrhoea infected invaders to enter her bedchamber?"⁵¹⁸

Like Eliot, the Arab poets attach more value to the historical sense. Influenced by Eliot's understanding of tradition, they explore their past searching for heroic figures and significant event to juxtapose the past and the present personalities and contemporary history. Yet Eliot's aim of using the material from the past is to fulfil moral purposes which are very

516. Terri DeYoung, *Placing the Poet: Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab and Postcolonial Iraq* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1998), 250.

517. Saddik M. Gohar, "The Use of T.S. Eliot's Literary Traditions in Contemporary Arabic Poetry," *Chewing over the West*, ed. Doris Jedamski (New York: Rodopi, 2009), 145.

518. *Ibid.*, 152

different from Arab poets' political issues. Al-Nawab employs the figure of Muawiyya⁵¹⁹ from Arab history to identify him with the selfish dictatorial rulers: "the Arab rulers / from Baghdad to Jiddah are not Arabs / All the Arab rulers are selfish opportunists like Muawiyya."⁵²⁰

Al Sayyab, like Al-Nawab, appropriates elements from Arabic tradition to depict the present political experience. He compares the contemporary Iraqi dictatorial rulers with the Tatars who invaded Baghdad and "have advanced, / Their knives are bleeding, /And our sun is blood."⁵²¹ Baghdad is described as modern Babylon where the Arab dictators still persecute and kill their people:

As if walled, ancient Babylon
Had returned once again!
With its high domes of iron
Where a bell is ringing, as if a cemetery
Were moaning in it, and the heavens.⁵²²

More importantly, the Arab poets adopted from Eliot's cultural hybridity that combines Western and Eastern traditions. Despite their Muslim background, they went westward to incorporate Western and Christian symbols in their poetry to articulate issues related to the political situation in the Arab world in the post war era. They found in Eliot's poetry of redemption, a universal model to convey their political predicaments. They frequently appropriate figures from Western traditions including Christ, Lazarus, Judas, Saint Augustine

519. Muawiyya was an influential figure descended from a well-known tribe in Makka. During the reign of Uthman, the third Muslim Caliph, Muawiyya was appointed governor of Damascus. When Ali, the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, was selected as the fourth Caliph, Muawiyya set out to topple the Caliphate and remove Ali from power. After the assassination of Ali, Muawiyya became Caliph and, in 632, succeeded in founding the Umayyad Dynasty.

520. Muzaffar Al-Nawab, quoted in Gohar, "The Use of T.S. Eliot's Literary Traditions," 154.

521. Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, quoted in Gohar, "The Use of T.S. Eliot's Literary Traditions," 52.

522. Ibid., 53.

that they combine with Islamic and Arab historical personalities as the Prophet Muhammad, Ali,⁵²³ Tammuz,⁵²⁴ and Al-Hussein.⁵²⁵

Both Al-Nawab and Al-Sayyab use the figure of Christ in their treatment of such themes as sin, suffering, crucifixion and salvation. He is associated with other figures from Arabic literary tradition as with Prophet Muhammad or Tammuz. In "The Prince of Sailors," a poem in which Al-Nawab denounces the political corruption of Abdul-Karim Qasim's regime, he compares the Iraqi Marxist revolutionary not only with such Islamic figures as Ali and Abu Thar but also with their Western Marxist counterparts like Mao, Marx, and Che Guevara: "All the peasants came in great multitudes toward me / among them I recognized Ali, Abu Thar, Guevara, Marx, and Mao."⁵²⁶ The grouping of Eastern and Islamic figures enables him to transcend the narrow local nationalistic features of his poetry and to give it a universal touch.

Likewise, Al-Sayyab utilises Eliot's hybrid poetics by integrating both Arabic and Western traditions to address local political issues from a more universal perspective. In his attempt to denounce the dictatorial regimes that govern the Arab world and to lament the defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 war with Israel, Al-Sayyab appropriates Christian motifs of suffering, death, resurrection, and rebirth related to Christ, Judas, and Lazarus along with myths from Arabic culture as Mohammed, Ishtar, and Tammuz. Al-Sayyab's poem identifies the leaders of the Iraqi government with evil figures like Judas: "Judas grew pale when he saw me / for I was his secret / he was a black shadow."⁵²⁷

523. Ali Ibn Abi Talib was the cousin and son in-law of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, ruling over the Islamic caliphate from 656 to 661.

524. Tammuz was the name of a Sumerian god of death and resurrection.

525. Al-Hussein was the son of Ali Ibn Abi Talib.

526. Saddik M. Gohar, "The Use of T.S. Eliot's Literary Traditions," 133.

527. Saddik M Gohar, "Toward a Hybrid Poetics: The Integration of Western / Christian Narratives in Modern Arabic Poetry," *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal for the Study of History, Philosophy, Religion, and the Classic* 3, no. 1 (2008): 11.

Under the Arab dictatorial regimes Lazarus comes back from his tomb but to suggest the difficulty of redemption in the bare and sterile modern Arab world:

Who awakened Lazarus from his long sleep?
That he might know the morning and evening
And summer and winter that he might be hungry
Or feel the burning coal of thirst.⁵²⁸

Peggy Rosenthal sums up the symbolic presence of Lazarus in the above lines: "Lazarus represents the Iraqi people rehearsed from a deadening autocratic regime only to be awakened to a false life since the bloody revolution has betrayed his troops; thus, Lazarus is revived to the city of death."⁵²⁹ Like Lazarus, Eastern Ishtar the goddess of fertility and Western mythic figure fail to fulfil their traditional roles as their presence promises no resurrection. Adonis is killed: "Adonis! Behold the defeat of heroism / death indeed has shattered every hope within you"⁵³⁰ and "Ishtar is dying of thirst."⁵³¹

However, the most recurring symbol in Al-Sayyab's Arabic poetry is Jesus Christ who is associated with many Arabic and Islamic figures. The poet attributes the crucifixion of Jesus to the prophet Mohamed: "They have burned Muhammad, the orphan, / And the evening glows from his fire"⁵³² to describe the atrocity of the Iraqi regime. In another context, he draws analogy between his own death and the resurrection of Christ to convey a sense of hope for the future rebirth of the nation:

When even the darkness grows green

528. Al-Sayyab, quoted in Robert Atwan, George Dardess, and Peggy Rosenthal, eds., *Divine Inspiration : The Life of Jesus in World Poetry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 178.

529. Peggy Rosenthal, *The Poets' Jesus: Representations at the End of a Millennium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 119.

530. Badr Shakir Al-Sayyab, quoted in Saddik M Gohar, "Toward a Hybrid Poetics," 12.

531. Ibid.

532. Al-Sayyab, quoted in Saddik M. Gohar, "Toward a Dialogue with the West," 51.

Warmth touches my heart
And my blood courses through its soil
My heart is water and the ear of corn
Whose death is resurrection.⁵³³

Christ is also associated with Tammuz to suggest that the redemption of the Arab world is conditioned by the end of the dictatorial regimes. The presence of The Christ / Tammuz brings fertility to the earth and the Iraqi: "for Tammuz, his splendor once stolen by the traitor / has arisen and Iraq is reborn."⁵³⁴

After dealing with the influence of Eliot on Auden, Lowell, Al-Sayyab's and Al-Nawab, the focus in what follows is on the impact of Stevens on younger generation of poets. Though Stevens, except for short-term trips to Cuba, never left the United States, he has become a poet of the world, and his influence is no less universal than Eliot. Like Eliot, Stevens has made an impact on poets from different nationalities. In fact, his influence is strongly felt in the poetry of John Ashbery, Charles Tomlinson, and José Ángel Valente.

D- Stevens as a World Master

a- Stevens and Ashbery: Clinamen or Stevens' Imagination Without Optimism

Stevens' influence on Ashbery has been frequently noted in the body of Ashbery critical studies, not least in the influential early work of Harold Bloom, who calls him "the most legitimate son of Stevens."⁵³⁵ Lynn Keller, in the paper, "Thinkers without Final Thoughts," focuses on the role of Stevens' influence over the course of Ashbery's career, noting its presence particularly in early Ashbery writings, especially *Some Trees*. She writes that "Ashbery's first major collection *Some Trees* (1956), unabashedly adopts both Stevens'

533. Al-Sayyab, quoted in Saddik M Gohar, "Toward a Hybrid Poetics," 10.

534. Ibid., 12.

535. Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, 42.

theories and Stevens' modes, particularly those of his first volume, *Harmonium*.⁵³⁶ Stevens' poetic attitudes has been the guiding principle for Ashbery to address important issues about the relation between reality and the imagination, time and obsolescence, the role of art and the place of traditional religion.

Ashbery's poetry performs a *clinamen* in relation to Stevens'. He misreads his master Stevens to find his new poetic voice, but the echoes of Stevens are still heard in it. In fact, Ashbery shares many Stevens' views of poetry such as the imagination as a modern substitute for religion and scepticism toward tradition. However, he makes a turn when he swerves away from his precursor's optimism. In fact, Ashbery lacks Stevens' optimism that the imagination bestows meaning to this disjointed world.

Ashbery, like Stevens, does not look nostalgically to the past and accepts change as a necessary condition for the life of the imagination. For Ashbery, poetry has to cope with the flux of time so that it can meet people as they are in the present, in view of themselves and of their world. Poetry has to change with time. It must evolve as culture evolves; otherwise, it would not belong to its contemporary culture or its people. In this context, Ashbery argues that "continuing but ever beginning / My perennial voyage" (SPJA, 73). The idea of the necessity of change is an echo of Stevens' "Then the theatre was changed / To something else. Its past was a souvenir" (WSCPP, 218).

Given his insistence on the importance of change, Ashbery adopts the Stevensian view of change on Classical mythology and religion. For Ashbery, religion and Classical mythology belong to the past and are no longer relevant to the present. His poem "Tuesday Evening" juxtaposes an earthly garden with a celestial paradise. Gardening is not only a place of man's wellbeing but also of constant renewal:

Man must return to his earth,

536. Lynn Keller, "Thinkers Without Final Thoughts": John Ashbery's Evolving Debt to Wallace Stevens," *ELH* 49, no. 1 (1982): 235.

experience its seasons, frosts, its labyrinthine
processes, the spectacle of continual rebirth
in one's own time. (JACYHB, 149)

The landscape with its prosperity suggests a "plenitude" (JACYHB, 149), and man has to "forget additional worries" (JACYHB, 149) of the metaphysical world. Then, an enigmatic figure enters the scene: "the snow, / a naked stick figure "(CYHB, 146) that reminds the reader of Stevens' "snowman." Like the "snowman" that beholds / Nothing [metaphysical] that is not there," Ashbery's snow arrives at the same encounter with the nothingness:

We all tagged along, and in the end there was nothing
to see—nothing and a lot. A lot in terms of contour, texture,
world. That sort of thing. The real fun and its clothing. (JACYHB, 156)

With the emptiness of the scene, faith becomes as a futile and blank staring at the sky: "Better to live in a fictive aura, / I say, than putter in one's garden forever, praying to NASA" (JACYHB, 145). The belief in heaven is futile like "Praying to NASA" and the searcher for the divine in the sky will fall prey to "the celestial pantomime / [which] engulfs them slowly" (JACYHB, 147). Thus, the concept of God and faith should be easily dismissed.

Ashbery also rejects Classical mythology though his poetry, like Stevens', is replete with allusions to Classical myths but only to refute them. In fact, the aim of the inclusion of the mythical materials is to show how things of the past are no longer credible in modern time. In "Syringa," Ashbery uses the myth of "Orpheus and Eurydice"⁵³⁷ to show how incompatible this myth is to the present. The poem takes the form of a dialogue between two

537. In classical mythology, Orpheus was a great musician, and Eurydice was his wife. The music of Orpheus was so beautiful that it could calm the wildest animal and even make stones rise up and follow. When Eurydice died, he went to the underworld, played his lyre for Hades, ruler of the dead, and asked that Eurydice be sent back to Earth. The god was so moved that he agreed to let her return, on one condition: that Orpheus go ahead of her and not look back until they had reached the Earth again. Orpheus led Orpheus up, but at the last moment, when he had come out of the underworld and she was about to leave it, he could resist no longer and turned to look at her. She vanished, and he had lost her forever. He spent the rest of his days wandering about, playing his lyre, and singing. In the end, he was torn to pieces by crazed followers of Bacchus, the god of wine.

voices. The first voice is of Orpheus's that expresses the desire to revive the past. It is always retrospective, always "coming back / To the mooring of starting out."⁵³⁸ The second voice of the poet argues for innovative experimentation and does not glorify anything that belongs to another time. This voice thus resists any attempt to look back to the "stalled moment" (SPJA, 245) of remembered happiness.

The loss of Eurydice was a necessary condition of the power of Orpheus's songs, but now Orpheus "made his mistake" (SPJA, 245) of still singing about her who "vanished into the shade" (SPJA, 245). This has a negative impact on Orpheus's artistic performance as his songs are no longer "vivid performances of the past" (SPJA, 245). Then, Ashbery uses the season metaphor to convince Orpheus that change is natural and that he should not be regretting what has been lost:

All other things must change too.
The seasons are no longer what they once were,
But it is the nature of things to be seen only once
As they happen along, bumping into other things, getting alone
Somehow. (SPJA, 245)

Thus, the poet must set his mind free from all that comes from the past since the past blurs the imagination. This renewal of the present should be accomplished by the loss of the past:

Speaks of a totally different incident with a similar name
In whose tale are hidden syllables
Of what happened so long before that
In some small town, one indifferent summer.(SPJA, 247)

538. John Ashbery, "Soonest Mended," *The Anthology of Contemporary American poetry*, ed. Helen Vendler, (London: Tauris Parke, 2003), 226.

Ashbery shares Stevens' desire to use his imagination to face the pressure exerted by reality.

To fulfill this desire, the poet has first to avoid the escapist romanticist approach to reality.

Though reality in the twentieth century is chaotic, ugly and without values:

The twentieth-century scheme of things;

That urban chaos is the problem we have been seeing into and seeing into,

Descending code of values...

...deterioration of moral values, punctuated

By acts of corporate vandalism every five years. (SPJA, 101)

However, the poet has to make this reality the subject matter of his poetry. In this respect,

Ashbery stated, "There are no subjects in the usual sense, except the very broad one of an

individual consciousness confronting or confronted by the world of external phenomena."⁵³⁹

Thus, it is when the poet accepts to be "Close to the zoo, acquiescing / To dust, candy,

perverts"⁵⁴⁰ that he can re-establish harmony through the poet's imagination.

Ashbery's "Illustration," like many of Stevens' poems, affirms the value and power of the imagination through the story of an emblematic and enigmatic nun "sitting on a cornice / High over the city" to commit suicide. The townspeople and police beg and bribe the woman to come down. Prayers are offered up for her:

One lady promised to be her friend.

"I do not want a friend," she said.

A mother offered her some nylons

Stripped from her very legs. Others brought

Little offerings of fruit and candy,

the blind man all his flowers. If any. (SPJA, 17)

539. John Ashbery, quoted in Albert Gelpi, *American Poetry after Modernism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 80.

540. John Ashbery, *Some Trees* (New York: Ecco Press, 1978), 35.

She rejects all these prayers and everything offered to her from friendship to flowers and candy, and she prefers to "move figuratively" (SPJA, 17), which is an illustration of the universal need for an imaginative vision of a higher human potential. Thus, the nun represents Ashbery's version of the Stevensian blue guitarist in "The Man with the Blue Guitar" and other "figure [s]of capable imagination" (WSCPP, 205).

Stevens' exaltation of the imagination can also be discerned in Ashbery's poetry. In "Le Livre Est Sur La Table," Ashbery urges toward the imagination to the detriment of reason "by deprivation of logic" (SPJA, 28). If "this being so" (SPJA, 28), it becomes possible to "imagine" (SPJA, 28) the woman who exemplifies "beauty, resonance, integrity" (SPJA, 28). As a genuine knowledge "we give fullness to the dream" (SPJA, 28) in which the imagination animates, such as "the plume [that] leaps in the hand" (SPJA, 28).

Since both poets are aware of the constant change of the universe, both show scepticism about the existence of any fixed truth. In fact, truth is credible for particular periods; thus, what is important for the poet is the process of searching truth rather than the truth itself:

. . . Each moment
Of utterance is the true one; likewise none are true,
Only is the bounding from air to air, a serpentine
Gesture which hides the truth behind a congruent
Message, the way air hides the sky (SPJA, 28).

In Stevensian terms, the role of the poet is "To discover. To discover an order as of /A season" (WSCPP, 349).

Because of Ashbery's preoccupation with such themes as the relation between reality and the imagination, or beliefs and poetry, many critics have attacked his poetry for its irrelevance to political and social issues. Stevens' poetry has also been attacked for the same grounds. For example, Stanley Burnshaw, a Marxist literary critic, has criticized Stevens for

irrelevance to political and social issues. He calls the poet "a man who, having lost his footing, now scrambles to stand up and keep his balance."⁵⁴¹ Likewise, some critics like Louis Simpson have accused Ashbery for his detachment from political issues.⁵⁴² Ashbery reacted to the charges and replied to Simpson: "All poetry is against war and in favour of life, or else it isn't poetry, and it stops being poetry when it is forced into the mould of a particular program. Poetry is poetry. Protest is protest. I believe in both forms of action."⁵⁴³

541. Burnshaw Stanley, quoted in Frank Kermode, *Wallace Stevens*, 65.

542. Gargi Bhattacharya, "The Poetics of John Ashbery," *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities* 3, no. 2, (2008): 315.

543. *Ibid.*

Wooden and external representation

Returns the full echo of what you meant. (SPJA, 63)

This sudden return to the self recalls the solipsistic world of the imaginary poetry, a world that results from his failure to achieve a balance between the imagination and reality.

It is apparent from the above discussion that Stevens' skepticism about the literary past, his insistence on change, his rejection of religion and Classical mythology. However, Aschery's Aschery, like Stevie. These Stevensian poetic principles manifest what Charles Tomlinson to Stevie. Through both poets regard poetry as the attempt to bridge the gap between man and his world. A Stevens' Influence on Tomlinson: Climate is a Sworn of the Poetics of the because Imagination to Political Poetry with Commitment and Ideology can accomplish. To better understand a Modernist Didactic Stevens is not William to the Poets of Charles Tomlinson, "The poet represents in Charles Tomlinson on Guadalajara, Mexico. The aim of the 'Agrarianized' of the English poets experience to ordinary in the the poet, the speaker confessing that Guadalupé War⁵⁴⁴ was not to see, rather his disillusion (SPJA, 5). This poetic quality of American literature by Modernism and his description of the core African what an British as British and American imagination as he has different and that this is to taste the drinks, and search the color reds, "En How ever ab his ideal" His volume (SPJA, 7) this England⁵⁴⁵ of Guadalajara! (SPJA, 7) is a child's dream happy in American poetry because a little and with his is a child's. Only a poet the Impressionist left by explains full a boy from the provinces, going to the English at Cambridge in 1945, as I did, will have learned little of American poetry particularly in a significant statement of the kind "Chapman".⁵⁴⁶

It may be assumed that you have won, that this

544. Eeckhout and Ragg, eds., *Wallace Stevens across the Atlantic*, 9.

545. Michael Kirkham, *Passionate Intellect: The Poetry of Charles Tomlinson* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), 234.

546. Charles Tomlinson, quoted in Ian Brinton, *Contemporary Poetry: Poets and Poetry since 1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 19.

Tomlinson discovered Stevens' and Oscar Williams' poetry by accident in a pub. Yet, it was Stevens' poetry that attracted him more: "One evening, late in 1947, my new tutor...read to me, in a pub in Trumpington, Williams' 'tract' from Oscar' Williams' *Little Treasury of Modern Poetry, English and American*. I thought it delightful. He handed me the book to reread it and, as he did so, the pages fell open at Stevens' 'Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird.' I gazed through this rapidly then moved back to 'Track.' It was 'Thirteen Ways' that stayed in mind. . . . The Williams sank from recollection."⁵⁴⁷

In my discussion, I suggest that Tomlinson performs a Clinamen in which there is an implication that "the precursor poet went accurately up to a certain point, but then should have swerved precisely in the direction the new poem moves."⁵⁴⁸ Tomlinson's early poetry accepts many Stevensesan poetical attitudes. However, his late poetry of overt political commitment aims at revising and correcting Stevens' irrelevance to political and social issues.

Many Tomlinson's poems share Stevens' preoccupation with defining poetry as a substitute for religion. Like Stevens, Tomlinson believes that though "art grows from hurt" (SPCT, 109), it is the healing power that "Makes reparation for what hurt" (SPCT, 109), as it gives rise to "a wish to speak beyond the wounds" (SPCT, 109). It is not religion because "Adam in Eden would have need of none . . . neither hurt nor art" (SPCT, 109).

To support his belief in art as a secular replacement for religion, Tomlinson uses the same Stevensesan arguments. In fact, he, like Stevens, hardly laments the disappearance of religion which will free reality from the burden of its vanished divinities:

Now the gods are dead
their houses greet a sky

547. Ibid., 5.

548. Bloom, *Anxiety of Influence*, 14.

freed of their weight.⁵⁴⁹

In the modern secular age, the air is empty of the supernatural additions. The sign that the Pharisees once saw will never appear again. Now that the gods have departed, what remains in the air is only its "inviolable sign." Thus, there is no other miracle than the place that the eye sees:

Twilight was the going of the gods: the air
Hung weightlessly now its own
Inviolable sign. From habit we
Were looking still for what we could not see. (SPCT, 114)

Tomlinson refutes traditional religion for its obsolescence. For him, reality changes, so faith changes; an argument which is reminiscent of Stevens' "it must change." The main concern of Tomlinson's "In San Clemente" is the failure of religion to resist time. The poem describes the Church of Rome with three layers constituting its foundations: Beneath the Christian site is the older shrine of Mithras, and below that, is the eternal water:

the roar
Of subterranean waters pouring by
All of the centuries it takes to climb
From Mithras to the myth-resisting play
Of one clear jet chiming against the bowl
In the fountained courtyard and the open day.⁵⁵⁰

This passage is an echo of Stevens' line: "The fire eye in the clouds survives the gods" (WSCPP, 205). Stevens considers the gods as human creations and their existence is tied to a culture. Ironically, the eternal sun, which is supposedly created by the gods, witnesses the rise

549. Charles Tomlinson, quoted in Michael Kirkham, *Passionate Intellect*, 234.

550. *Ibid.*

and fall of cultures and of the gods associated with those cultures. Tomlinson substitutes Stevens' sun with water to represent reality that has survived despite the passing of all the centuries of time while Christianity and Mithraism, Christianity's major competitor in the Roman Empire, vanished. The "subterranean waters" climbs out from under the earth through the cave of Mithras and through the foundations of the church, resisting time and the darkness of myth whether Christian or Mithras. Now water continues to burst out to the light of the "daylong play"⁵⁵¹ of the present.

The rejection of religion enables the poet to focus on the physical world, but this world is an uncompromising alien to man. In "The Snow Fences," nature and man are not just enemies, but enemies at war. It shows the heroism of being human resisting to the wind and cold, and time and death:

The bitter darkness drives you
back valley wards, and again you bend
joint and tendon to encounter
the wind's force and leave behind
the nameless stones, the snow-shrouds
of a waste season: they are fencing
the upland against those years, those clouds. (SPCT, 44)

However, at the end of the poem the mood changes and becomes more optimistic. Despite the "levelling zero" (SPCT, 43) of a winter cold that reduces human body into "an aching skeleton" (SPCT, 43), the effect of this deadly condition is invigorating as it prompts man to rally his force to resist his final defeat. The phrase "The breathtaking rareness of winter air" (SPCT, 43) emphasizes the presence of water as a life-giver despite its rarity and suggests the possibility of human survival.

551. Ibid.

Tomlinson also rejects what Stevens calls "the gaunt world of reason" (WSCPP, 649) as the only reliable source of knowledge to face this alienating reality. Tomlinson's "Descartes and the Stove" challenges the Cartesian dualism which distinguishes between mind and matter. In the poet's imagination, the distinction is often ignored: "hot delight of the stove is also the hot delight of the body's" (SPCT, 78). Yet, the philosopher views it as a threat "to melt him into recognition" (SPCT, 78). The poem ends:

The great mind
Sat with his back to the unreasoning wind
And doubted, doubted at his ear
The patter of ash and, beyond, the snow-bound farms,
Flora of flame and iron contingency
And the moist reciprocation of his palms. (SPCT, 78)

There is the division between subject and object or between the inside reality and an outside one. The former is reflected by the image of cold winter whereas the latter by the image of warmth. The outside reality offers its warmth and suggests fusion with the inside whereas the inside remains indifferent because it is subjected to immutable rule of physical law that creates "snow-bound" world of "iron contingency."

However, in the world of the imagination, the alienation of man from reality is a source of inner nourishment. In Stevens' words it is "a violence within that protects us from a violence without" (WSCPP, 665). In "Arizona Desert," man is set against the arid nature, but the poverty of the desert triggers his imagination. To man's eye the desert becomes a garden full of petal:

Eye
drinks the dry orange ground,
thecowskull

bound to it by shade:
sun-warped, the layers
of faked and broken bone
unclench into petals. (SPCT, 50)

Thus, Tomlinson shares Stevens' idea that "the imagination is not a free agent. It is not a faculty that functions spontaneously without reference" (LWS, 789). For Tomlinson, reality is primary, and man's senses are subservient to it. It is things of reality that catch the senses before the senses seek to possess them. Yet, reality impinging on the senses is physical and inhuman and becomes human once known to the mind:

Facts. And what are they?
He admired accidents, because governed by laws,
Representing them (since the illusion was not his end)
As governed by feeling. The end is our approval
Freely accorded, the illusion persuading us
That it exists as a human image. (SPCT, 50)

The mind sees fact and its analogues; art translates fact and explores extensions beyond the fact. The world of perception is in one aspect. Art imitates, but at the same time it imbues observation with the quality of the artist's response: "delight / Describes" (SPCT, 15) in Constable's paintings, and the painter's hand "Bodied the accurate and total knowledge" (SPCT, 15) of what he saw "in calligraphy of present pleasure" (SPCT, 15).

Tomlinson, like Stevens, believes in the ability of human mind to transform reality. Reality is rather a state where an imperfect thing that "we see" is transformed by the poet's imagination into a "perfect thing":

Did Eden
Greet us ungated? Or was that marrying

Purely imaginary and, if it were,
What do we see in the perfect thing? ⁵⁵²

In "At Holwell Farm," Tomlinson uses the same image of light as a metaphor for the illumination shed by the poet's mind on the place: "I have seen Eden. It is a light of place / As much as the place itself" (SPCT, 71). These lines have a striking resemblance with Stevens' statement that the imagination is like "light, it adds nothing but only allows us to see more" (WSCPP, 681).

Tomlinson's account of the imagination giving life to static objects can be found in "A Given Grace." Two static cups are placed "on the mahogany pool of table" (SPCT, 48) which any observer can say only that they are there. Then they become objects contained in the mind: "They unclench / the mind, filling it / with themselves" (SPCT, 48). The mind is not merely the passive recipient but an active agent of transformation:

Though common ware,
these rare reflections,
coolness of brown
so strengthens and refines
the burning of their white,
you would not wish
them other than they are (SPCT, 48).

The "reflections" are also mental performed by the mind so that the cups which were "common ware" become rare because they are strengthened and refined. In addition, the two cups need the coolness of the mind to intensify their burning essence.

If Tomlinson's early poetry embraces most of Stevens' poetic theories, the poems he wrote from 1969 to 1978 depart from Stevens' poetry as Tomlinson's development knew

552. Charles Tomlinson, *Selected Poems, 1955-1997* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 112.

changes of direction form. During this period, political subjects entered his poetry.

Revolutionary idealism started to replace the ethic of perception as his major preoccupation.

The Russian Revolution and the French Revolution provided the context and the characters for his poetry of that time.

"Prometheus" refers to the tone-poem of Scriabin completed in 1910, inspired by the legend of the Titan's theft of fire from the gods and the liberation of mankind from their oppressive rule. The poem is about the utopian dream of the Romantic art and revolutionary ideology of "transforming the world by music and rite" (SPCT, 69). The outcome of such dream is the real and tragic events of the October Revolution: "the events / Were less merciful than your mob of instruments." (SPCT, 69)

The second stanza of the poem begins with: "We have lived through apocalypse too long: / Scriabin's dinosaurs" (SPCT, 69). Lenin transforms Scriabin's egalitarian Utopia to the fields of politics when he arrives from exile by train at the Finland Station. Ironically, Lenin adopts "merciless patience" (SPCT, 69) for dictatorship and the policy of terror in post revolutionary Russia. In the real world, extremism must be avoided, and man must also recognize his limitations. Lenin's indifference to historical facts leads to tragic historical consequences:

I set Lenin's face by yours_

Yours, the fanatic ego of eccentricity against

The systematic son of a schools inspector. (SPCT, 70)

Scriabin and Lenin share the same partiality of view which ignores the human and physical dimensions that surround them. For the artist Scriabin, the centre is his ego while Lenin's centre is his ideological system that guides his actions. The shift of utopianism from the field of art to the field of politics will have a different consequence:

History treads out the music of your dreams

Through blood, and cannot close like this

In the perfection of anabasis. It stops". (SPCT, 70)

The illusions of utopianism degenerate into disillusion by an appeal to the facts, and the consequences are disastrous:

Hard edges of the houses press

On the after-music senses, and refuse to burn,

Where an ice-cream van circulates the estate

Playing Green sleeves, and at the city's

Stale new frontier even ugliness

Rules with the cruel mercy of solidities. (SPCT, 70)

The myth of fire in Scriabin poem contradicts the cooled world of reality. The ideal world of music "refuse[s] to burn" in the world of facts with its "solidity" and its "hard edges of the houses." In the field of politics, the rule of city based on Leninist model proves, in the world of facts, to be "ugly" and "cruel."

In "Charlotte Corday," Tomlinson incorporates the characters from the history of the French Revolution to discuss the dichotomy between idealism and reality. The poem recaptures the story of the murder of Marat by Charlotte Corday. On the one hand, the poem sympathizes with her impulse because she is an enemy of tyranny; she is the selfless heroine who gives her life for the hope of saving France. Tomlinson describes the blow with which she murders her victim as "faultless blow" (SPCT, 130), and Charlotte Corday as "a daggered Virtue" (SPCT, 130) and "an innocence" (SPCT, 130). On the other hand, she contracts her humanity and subjects it to an idea. When she comes to kill Marat, she does not see the tyrant Marat but a Julius Caesar whom she has known through her reading: "A girl whose reading made a heroine / Her book was Plutarch, her Republic Rome" (SPCT, 129). In addition, in her

single narrow mindedness, she is unaware of the outcome of her murder: "How should she know / The Terror still to come?" (SPCT, 130).

Though Charlotte Corday is successful at murder, she fails at the very act of murder. Her act of murder embodies her attempts to import her utopia from a world of idea to reality. However, the cry of the dying Marat awakens her to her humanity, and the memory of that cry haunts the human Corday: "Perhaps it was the memory of that cry / that cost her most" (SPCT, 131).

It implies from this discussion of the influence of Stevens on Ashbery and Tomlinson that Stevens has become a significant model for younger American and English poets. The following discussion of his presence in Valente's works reveals that Stevens' impact has extended well beyond English-speaking countries.

c- Stevens' Influence on Valente: Apophrades or a Swerve from Politically Committed Poetry to Stevensian Abstract Aesthetics

The remarkable influence of Stevens on Valente is not surprising "since Valente read Stevens who then might have become a significant model for him."⁵⁵³ Valente's essay, "Las palabras de la tribu" contains a quotation from Stevens' *The Necessary Angel*: "One function of the poet at any time is to discover by his own thought and feeling what seems to him to be poetry at that time."⁵⁵⁴

In 1950's, Valente adhered to a movement called "Generation of the 1950's." The movement whose main concern was the social issue "attempted to incorporate one or more of the following: a social-realist; thematic, a nod toward populism, an overt concern for

553. José Ángel Valente, quoted in Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero "Wallace Stevens' And José Ángel Valente's First Stage of the Creative Process: Notes On A Supreme Fiction And "Cinco Fragmentos Para Antoni Tàpies," *Revista de Estudios Norteamericanos*, no.16 (2012): 108.

554. José Ángel Valente, quoted in Santiago Rodríguez Guerrero "Wallace Stevens' And José Ángel Valente, 110.

promoting justice and denouncing injustice, and an interest in communicability."⁵⁵⁵ This tendency was known as "poetry of communication." However, in the 1980's, during Spain's transition to democracy, Valente distanced himself from this movement and became "the intellectual leader of those poets championing the belated avant-garde / modernist tradition in contemporary Spain."⁵⁵⁶ Their poetry was known as "poetry of knowledge" which abandoned the "visible level of poetry's societal function"⁵⁵⁷ and focused "on exploration of poetic knowledge, the creative process, as well as what may be called the fact or matter of language."⁵⁵⁸ In relation to Stevens' poetry, Valente's "poetry of communication" and his "poetry of knowledge" exemplify the ratio of apophrades.

Stevens' belief in the necessity of the poet's detachment from reality makes him very close to Valente who also rejects the requirement that the poet must write from a social view rather than from within his own imagination because this kind of poetry forces the poet to accept the state "institutionalized order"⁵⁵⁹ which "carries with it an institutionalization of language"⁵⁶⁰ called "public language."⁵⁶¹ According to Valente, this public language, which is different from poetic language, is unable to harbor new meanings and is subjected to the same immobilizing and disabling process that characterizes the repressive, self-preserving development of the city's order that characterizes all forms of ideological crystallization."⁵⁶²

555. Osvaldo de la Torre, "José Ángel Valente and the Poetics of Retraction," *Confluencia* 27, no. 1 (2011): 124.

556. Jonathan Mayhew, *The Twilight of the Avant-garde: Spanish Poetry, 1980-2000* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), 83.

557. De la Torre, "José Ángel Valente and the Poetics of Retraction," 124.

558. Ibid.

559. Ibid., 125.

560. Ibid.

561. Ibid.

562. José Ángel Valente, quoted in De la Torre, "José Ángel Valente and the Poetics of Retraction," 125.

On the other hand, the poetic language, though "devoid of its own content, sequesters and imprisons within its surface discourses that are in themselves substantive and which pose a threat to the official linguistic structure and imperatives of the State."⁵⁶³ In this context, Christine Arkininstall, reading Valente's in relation to the own political Francoist context of Spain, argues that "the poet's [Valente's] descent into the bowels of the earth is synonymous with his penetrating the Regime's ideological corpus, so as to recover the devoured, retained matter."⁵⁶⁴ She further claims that it is "the poet [Valente] who will struggle with the superficial and official meaning imposed on the word in order to wrest from it the meaningful layers of a forgotten history."⁵⁶⁵

Valente's retraction also shares Stevens' "first idea" that the poet should "take the varnish and dirt of generations off"⁵⁶⁶ and to incessantly make new poetry. For Valente, retraction also implies stripping the mind of all the preconceptions of the past which may distort his poetic imagination: "Create is to generate a state of readiness, in which the first thing created is empty, an empty space. Well, perhaps the only thing the artist creates is the space of creation and in the space of creation there is nothing (so that something can be in it recreated). The creation from nothing is the absolute principle of all creation."⁵⁶⁷

Thus, for Valente, a poet must always begin anew and must always begin from "nothing[ness]." The same term "nothing[ness]" recurs in Stevens' poetry to mean the place from which all imaginative activities start. In "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," Stevens argues that "To discover an order" (WSCPP, 349) must begin "Out of nothing" (WSCPP, 349).

563 Ibid.

564. Christine Arkininstall, quoted in De la Torre, "José Ángel Valente and the Poetics of Retraction," 125.

565. Ibid.

566. Wallace Stevens, *Letters of Wallace Stevens*, 427.

567. Nicolas Fernandez-Medina, "Intertextuality and Poetic Practice in José Ángel Valente's Dialogue with Antonio Machado," *Revista Canadiense de Estudios Hispánicos* 35, no. 3 (2011): 550.

In "Snowman," Stevens compares the poet's blank mind to the snowman that listens and beholds "Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is "(WSCPP, 8).

Stevens' "snowman" resembles Valente's ashes which mean nothingness from where the poem arises. There is "the nothingness as an abyss, a primordial darkness or void from which all poetic creation swells into being."⁵⁶⁸ The poem describes the poet's night journey from the "secret / nameless desolation"⁵⁶⁹ of the desert full of "dry stones."⁵⁷⁰ It is in the middle of the journey that he realizes that only ashes may bring hope:

I get up to the sky
and even if I proclaim ash:
Ash even as I have so far,
I have been set for me by way of hope.⁵⁷¹

It is this nothingness by ashes as Nicolas Fernandez-Medina explains that "leaves man no choice but to reflect upon and take stock of the here-and-now of existence through the creative act."⁵⁷²

In his essay, "Rudiments of Destruction" Valente uses the traditional Nahua rituals in Mexico to explain his idea of retraction. For Valente, these rituals, held every fifty two years in honor of the god Quetzalcoat,⁵⁶⁹ provide a good example of an exercise of destruction that leads to creative imagination. During these rituals, the Nahuas destroyed all the components of their art such as walls, vases, ornaments, frescoes, even palaces and temples. For Valente, this act of destruction which "toppled both material and abstract structures that

568. Ibid. 550.

569, José Ángel Valente, quoted in Medina, "Intertextuality and Poetic Practice in José Ángel Valente's Dialogue with Antonio Machado," 548.

570. Ibid.

571. Ibid., 549.

572. Ibid., 550.

had attained a certain level of negative formalization and dogmatization"⁵⁷³ can serve as a model of positive decreation for contemporary poets. Valente argues that such model "[f]aced with the crystallization of forms"⁵⁷⁴ would establish the "perpetual flow of creative movement."⁵⁷⁵

In religious terms, Valente's nothingness, like Stevens', implies the rejection of traditional religion which may hinder rather than further the vital activity of the mind. This kind of religion is "a totalitarian system of concluded forms"⁵⁷⁶ under which "lies buried the original forms of what could have been or of what was in a given time a creative vision capable of sheltering an epiphany of the real, or, if a properly religious terminology is preferred, a revelation of the divine."⁵⁷⁷ Thus, these religious preconceptions which were credible "in a given time" are no longer so to the world of the present because they may prevent the poet from finding what is fresh and attractive in reality. Stevens shares the same idea when he says:

Throw away the lights, the definitions,
And say of what you see in the dark
That it is this or that it is that,
But do not use the rotted names. (WSCPP, 150)

Both poets offer poetry as a secular alternative to the absence of religion. Like Stevens, Valente is aware that the modern poet has to face the spiritual emptiness of a godless world:

The look of the young consults the horizon.
But in vain.

573. De la Torre, "José Ángel Valente and the Poetics of Retraction," 129.

574. José Ángel Valente, quoted in De la Torre, "José Ángel Valente and the Poetics of Retraction," 121.

575. Ibid.

576. Ibid., 129.

577. Ibid.

A leaden sun not watched now
the empty silence of the gods .⁵⁷⁸

The poet's responsibility is to fill the spiritual vacuum in the wake of the gods' disappearance. In *Opus Posthumous*, Stevens writes, "after one has abandoned a belief in God, poetry is that essence which takes its place as life's redemption" (WSCPP, 901).

Valente's nothingness does not prevent him from incorporating elements from literary tradition. In fact, Valente, like Stevens, employs and manipulates his references to Homer and the Bible to question the credibility of Classical and religious texts in modern Spain. In "El sacrificio," Valente rewrites the biblical episode of Abraham and his son Isaac. The power of the biblical tale resides in Abraham's allegiance to Yahweh, and his being rewarded at the last moment for his faith. In the *Old Testament* version, an angel declared "do not lay a hand on the boy; do nothing to him. I know now that you fear God, since you have not withheld your only son from me" (Genesis 22, v. 12). Instead of sacrificing his son, Abraham offers a ram instead. Valente's version departs from the biblical story twice. First, Abraham who is a "furtive" patriarch that fools his wife is inspired not by blind obedience to a divine presence, but rather by his lust for power. Second, Isaac is saved not by God's angel but rather by his own actions. In fact, out of wrath the son defeats his father physically:

Isaac furtive and terrible.
The old man bit the dust,
He begged and cursed,
to plunge after sadness.
The look of the young consulted the horizon.
But in vain.
A leaden sun not watched now

578. José Ángel Valente, quoted in Julian Palley, "The Angel and the Self in the Poetry of José Ángel Valente," *Hispanic Review* 55, no. 1 (1987): 64.

the empty silence of the gods.⁵⁷⁹

By reversing the biblical story, Valente's aim is to make the reader aware of the changes of the moral values of a "world in which a god counsels evils and a man must save himself from a sadistic father."⁵⁸⁰ In other words, the poet's reverses of the story's ideals is to question moral and religious authority and offer a philosophical and cultural critique of the effect of blind obedience to any culturally imposed ideology, religious or otherwise.

Many Valente's poems contain episodes of Homer's texts. In "The Return of the Heroics," he rewrites the death of Antinous, one of Penelope's suitors in Homer's text to suggest a clash of values. Valente changes the reason behind Antinous's reluctance to take part in the contest. In the original text, he postpones the game because he wants to distract those present with wine. In Valente's poem, he hesitates to enter the game because the bow is "an anachronistic accoutrements"⁵⁸¹ which is no longer credible for modern life:

Let's get together, then, to cross betting
on the future that we are
and forget the bow, the king bow hard,
that heavy and anachronistic object
that the sentimental Penelope
still it has sacred.⁵⁸²

Antinos's appeal to forget the past which is represented by the bow implies "his ethical positioning based upon individual benefit"⁵⁸³ opposing "the ties of valor, community, and

579. José Angel Valente, quoted in Margaret Persin, "José Angel Valente's Blindness and Insight: Rewriting as Discovery," *Hispania* 90, no. 3 (2007): 434.

580. Andrew Debicki, *Poetry Of Discovery: The Spanish Generation of 1956-1971* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky 2015), 118.

581. Persin, "José Angel Valente's Blindness and Insight," 436.

582. José Angel Valente, quoted in Margaret Persin, "José Angel Valente's Blindness and Insight," 435.

583. *Ibid.*

shared history."⁵⁸⁴ This clash of values ends up with the confrontation in which Ulysses kills Antinous. What Valente explores is "whether the justification for Antinos's actions based upon a change of cultural ethics deserves the violent implementation of vengeance visited upon him, considering the changed set of circumstances."⁵⁸⁵

Eliot's and Stevens' preoccupations with the problems of modern man like urbanization, alienation, and moral disintegration contributed to the modernization of poetry. Many younger poets from different countries learned these qualities from Eliot and Stevens and incorporated them in their poetry. Yet, despite this undeniable influence of Eliot and Stevens on Ashbery, Tomlinson, Valente, Auden, Lowell, Al-Sayyab and Al-Nawab, these younger poets did not follow blindly their precursors; they rather misread them. It is also important to note that religion is an important criterion in choosing the precursor. While Eliot's poetry with its religious sensibility attracted poets in revolt against the secular ideologies, Stevens' serves as a model for poets who seek to create a secular poetry which they offer as a substitute for religion to fill the spiritual vacuum caused by the absence of religion.

584. Ibid.

585. Ibid.

Conclusion

This study has explored the ways in which Eliot's and Stevens' poetry corrected and cured fundamental Romantic principles. Stevens and Eliot wrote poetry accountable to the conditions of the contemporary world which was shaped by their disillusionment with the war, the loss of spirituality and the urbanization and the social problems that came with it. Eliot and Stevens carried out attacks on both aesthetic and moral grounds against the Romantics who failed to face such issues. The solitude of the self in its dealings with the world, the return to nature as a means of escaping reality, and the excess of feelings and emotions which were crucial to the thought of the Romantics, are addressed in Eliot's and Steven's own poetry.

To guard art against Romanticism's isolated self, Eliot offered literary tradition to which the poet must surrender in order to obliterate his personality. With the apparent lack of a literary tradition in America, Eliot turned to "the mind of Europe" which served as an intellectual guidance to project his poetic concerns objectivity and universally. Eliot's great emphasis on European tradition became a subject of Stevens' attack because that tradition, which is geographically too distant from America, seemed aesthetically remote from the proper concerns for modern American poetry. Stevens, instead, attempted to offer poetry that focuses on what is real: the conditions of American experience. For Stevens, the adherence of poetry to reality may have multifold goals. It is the assertion of physical American reality against any other form of reality whether the remote European continent, the Christian metaphysical world, the solipsistic setting of Romanticism.

Eliot's poetry takes the form of arguments to suggest a return to traditional Christian belief to provide a cure to the ills of the isolated, fragmented and alienated contemporary self. Stevens has the same obsession to rescue humanity from confusion, disorder and ugliness of

reality. However, this could happen when human intelligence denies appeal to the supernatural. This is an unalienable condition to make the human existence not only enduring, but also credible. Poetry as offered by Stevens does not revive or revise the old myths but attempts to replace them. It is based on a secular conception of man instead of a divine or metaphysical one. Thus, the human imagination is "the value of a way of thinking by which we project the idea of God into the idea of man."⁵⁸⁶

However, these Eliot's and Stevens' poetic ambitions force them to confront the inevitable failure of such a project. In their aesthetics, the problem of Romantic escapism is not solved but replaced by other forms of refuge: Christianity and medievalism for Eliot, and the imagination for Stevens. Eliot suggests his own solution: a return to traditional Christian belief to provide a cure to the ills of the isolated, fragmented and alienated contemporary self. Eliot's adoption of Christianity comes as an alternative to the Romantic vision of art as a sort of substitute for religion. His faith is initially based on an extreme denial of such Romantic ideals as nature, secular art and the self which are among the many things to be cast out by a Christian poet. After his conversion, these Romantic ideals are no longer demonic forces but elements that he subsumes into his Christian faith because they are necessary for his religious development.

Stevens also fails to cure the Romantic poetry from solipsism which results from the divorce of the imagination from reality. However, his new reality that he creates through his imaginative constructions is also solipsistic. This raises the important question about the commitment of his poetry. Stevens is the poet who believes that poetry is the "violence within" an aesthetic designed to resist the "violence without" under the form of social unrest and actual war. This is why the political significance of Stevens' work has become, increasingly, a matter of debate. His aesthetics makes him the most authentic successor of

586. Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Wallace Stevens and the Image of the Man," in *Wallace Stevens*, ed. Borroff . 157.

Romanticism. Moreover, his idea that poetry should be the secular substitute for traditional religion carries with it the Romantic antichristian spirit; it is very comparable to Shelley's view of the poet as a Christ-like figure and thus as a secular replacement for Christ.

Stevens attempts to construct his own literary monuments to take the place of those that he rejects. In Stevens' poetry, the poetics of place takes shape as both an affirmation of the unique conditions of American experience as the proper ground for modern poetry and a rejection of a particular approach to Modernism that puts much emphasis on tradition. However, he fails to see the world as an ignorant poet without the preconceptions of the past. His confrontations with his literary precedents which are very similar to those of Eliot's contradict his Neo-modernist aspirations. His points of artistic reference were largely European predecessors and contemporaries.

To shape both American and English poetry, Stevens and Eliot combine European influences and tradition with their American background, and individual talents. Their American temper contributed to bring English poetry into the modern age by forcing it to face the harsh conditions of contemporary life, such as urban life, the loss of belief and the unprecedented violence of modern wars. They are both American and European.

However, if Eliot and Stevens are both American and European, their poetic contributions are universal because of their influence on the world literature of the twentieth century; they become among the most influential and most widely translated poets not only in America or England, but in the world. Their poetic views such as their theory of impersonality, the focus on modern urban life and their intertextual connections with their predecessors and contemporaries are transported to other cultures, nations, and continents. In Harold Bloom's terms, they become the "strong poets" of the past that the young poet must "misread" in order to carve out space for their own work and vision.

Frank Kermode's division of Modernism into the prohistorical Paleo-modernism and antihistorical Neo-modernism to contrast between Eliot and Stevens is not satisfactory. Though Eliot and Stevens hold different views on the relevance of European tradition in the modern context, their poetry often takes the form of an intertextual response to the same tradition. Their differences stem from their opposing religious beliefs. Eliot's religious orthodoxy and Stevens' atheism affect their aesthetics in theory and practice and contribute to create two schools of Modernism that serve as different models for younger poets. While Eliot becomes the guide for religious poets Christian or of other faiths, Stevens serves as a master for poets with secular sensibilities.

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Résumé

Cette thèse a pour étude la comparaison de deux poètes contemporains américains T.S. Eliot et Wallace Stevens qui représentent deux tendances majeures et opposées dans le mouvement moderne. Mon objectif est d'examiner comment chacun de ces deux poètes a réagi au solipsisme de l'époque romantique. Eliot se tourne vers le passé historique afin de trouver un égo transcendantal et culturel qui met fin à l'égo individuel de la poésie romantique. Contrecarrant le solipsisme romantique et l'attirance d'Eliot pour la tradition abstraite et distante des conditions contemporaines de la vie moderne américaine, Stevens par contre recherche une poétique qui se focalise sur les conditions immédiates de l'expérience américaine pour forger une tradition littéraire plus adaptée aux impulsions culturelles et matérielles du monde nouveau.

Cependant afin de justifier leur attitude contre le romantisme, aussi bien Eliot que Stevens s'appuient sur des textes écrits par des auteurs anciens et contemporains. Ils fusionnent des influences européennes classiques faisant appel aux légendes et mythes, comme c'est le cas pour John Donne, Charles Baudelaire, Ezra Pound et Pablo Picasso tout en façonnant grâce à leur talent individuel et leur origine américaine une poésie nouvelle qui est à la fois américaine et européenne.

Cet amalgame a donné naissance à une nouvelle tradition littéraire dont les principales caractéristiques qui sont, l'objectivité, la préoccupation par la vie moderne et urbaine, et l'utilisation de la littérature précédente et contemporaine sont à transporter vers d'autres cultures, nations, voire d'autres continents.

En raison du caractère du présent sujet, cette thèse s'inspire de trois théories d'influence: l'intertextualité de Julia Kristina, la défamiliarisation de Viktor Shklovsky et l'anxiété de l'influence d'Harold Bloom.

ملخص

يعد هذا البحث دراسة مقارنة بين شاعرين أمريكيين هما تس ايليوت و والاس ستيفنس، واللذان يمثلان أكبر تيارين متعارضين في الشعر الأمريكي الحديث. وأسعى من خلال هذه الدراسة الى تقصي السبل المختلفة التي انتهجها كل منهما للرد على نظرية الأنا التي تبنتها المدرسة الرومانسية. وقد رجع اليوت الى الماضي التاريخي لأوروبا لاستكشاف "أنا ثقافية متعالية" قصد التصدي للأنا الذاتية الرومانسية. أما ستيفنس وبصفته مناهضا للأنا الرومانسية ومعارضاً لانجذاب ايليوت نحو التقاليد، فقد سعى إلى الوصول إلى شعر يركز على الظروف الآتية للتجربة الأمريكية، وذلك لبناء تقاليد أدبية تستجيب أكثر للمظاهر الثقافية والمادية للعالم الجديد.

ومن جانب آخر، فقد اعتمد كل من اليوت وستيفنس ، لدعم مواقفهما المناهضة الرومانسية ، على نصوص عدة لكتاب سابقين ومعاصرين. بحيث قاما بالجمع بين التأثيرات الأوروبية والأمريكية، مثل الأساطير الكلاسيكية والشخصيات الخرافية و دانتى اليجيري و جون دون وشارل بودلار و ايزرا باوند و بابلو بيكاسو وبين مهاراتهم الخاصة وخلفيتهم الأمريكية للتأسيس لشعر جديد هو أمريكي وأوروبي في الوقت نفسه. وقد نتج عن ذلك ظهور تقليد أدبي جديد امتدت مبادئه إلى ثقافات وأوطان وقارات أخرى ومن هذه المبادئ الموضوعية نذكر التركيز على النمط الحضري للحياة والعودة إلى الكتاب الأدبيين السابقين و المعاصرين.

وانطلاقاً من طبيعة هذا الموضوع، تركز منهجية هذا البحث على ثلاث نظريات في التأثير، ونقصد هنا نظرية التناص لجوليا كريستيانا و نظرية التغريب ليفيكتور شلوفوسكي و نظرية قلق التأثير لهارولد بلوم. وهذه النظريات وبالرغم من اختلاف مناهجها فان أهميتها في هذه الدراسة تكمن في كونها تهتم بموضوع استحضار عناصر نص في نص آخر وكذا بالصراع الكبير الذي يخوضه الشاعر لإسماع صوته في ظل التأثير الطاعني لمن يعتبر قوته عليه.