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**THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN  
IN T.S. ELIOT'S EARLY AND MIDDLE  
POETRY**

**Dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of  
Magister in Anglo-Saxon Studies (option literature/civilization)**

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## **Disclaimer**

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

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## Abstract

The present research work examines women representation in T.S. Eliot's early and middle poetry. It follows Kate Millett's theory of Sexual Politics, in which the woman-man relationship – along with the social conventions associated with it – is looked upon in terms of power. Carl G. Jung's theory of collective unconscious and archetypes is applied to the different archetypes that seem to be dominant throughout Eliot's poetry.

The present research traces the implications of late nineteenth and early twentieth century modern society in terms of gender and the literary production of the age in order to set the background against which Eliot's poetry was composed.

T.S. Eliot's early poetry is mainly associated with a sense of anomie, boredom and spiritual draught, with very little hope for redemption. "Hysteria" and "Sweeney Erect" for instance are exemplary of the degraded state of modern civilization. Women representation in early poetry is associated with such sense. Hence, the female archetype for early poetry is the fallen woman. Starting with *The Waste Land*, the sense of disintegration was coupled with an attempt at achieving wholeness. Deliverance can only be sought through contemplating modern chaos as opposed to classical grandeur. In this particular poem, women representation is grimly associated with pain and suffering – along with men. Although power is distributed unequally between men and women, they are equally torn. The female archetype, thus, is Philomela or the torn woman. The journey into the wastelands of modern Europe is but an attempt to seek redemption. The search for wholeness culminates in Eliot's

middle poetry, namely in *Ash-Wednesday*, where it is associated with spirituality. The image of woman in the poem is also associated with the divine. She is an earthly image of the Virgin Mary; therefore, the female archetype in the poem is the goddess.

Women representation in Eliot's poetry is attuned to the age and to his personal progress towards spirituality. The present dissertation traces the image of women in Eliot's poetry from the early image of the fallen woman to the pristine woman, along with Eliot's process of poetic maturity, discerning male-focused culture along with female resistance.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my amazing parents, Fatiha and Youcef whose words of encouragement still ring in my ear. A special feeling of gratefulness is due to my siblings Djamila, Ikram, Ihcen, Ahmed, Nasrellah and Ayman for being as loving and supportive as they were. I also dedicate this work to my beloved fiancé and soul-mate Rabah who kindly supported my endeavor. I cannot but offer my sincerest thanks to my friends Touha, Sally, Fatima, Khadidja and Meriem who never left my side and cheered me up through the toughest hours of work.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The representation of women in literature became the main concern of recent literary criticism. A long line of women-writers argued that women are often misrepresented in men's literature. The understanding of human experience is gender-bound. Thus, it is indeed difficult to state with any certainty whether the experience of a gender can be told by an author of another one. The noted French Feminist Hélène Cixous argues that "Women must write women. And men, men"<sup>1</sup>.

The role of women in western societies changed as shall be illustrated. The Victorian era – ironically named after a strong queen, a woman – noted for its prudishness and high moral tone, established a marginal position for women. It was a position strictly defined by religion and social conventions. This representation is very close to that of fairy tales. For instance, in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* women were portrayed either as naïve, weak and unable of surviving on their own like Snow White or as shallow, evil and conspiring like her step-mother. Indeed, women were represented as either meek, sweet companions, capable of motherly love, living an ever-after happy life or as mean creatures seeking self-interest leading ultimately to their self-destruction. The female protagonist, thus, is not a real heroine because she does not engage in any moral conflict or changes the course of events – At least not willingly. Her goodness does not stem from action but from passive, almost fatalist acceptance of her environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Hélène Cixous, *The Laugh of the Medusa*, trans. Keith Cohen and Paula Cohen (Chicago University, 1976), pp. 875-893. The noted French feminist discusses the impossibility for men to tell women's tales and understand women's experience. She urges women to write themselves, write about themselves and bring other women to writing.

The very same attribute can be applied to other fairy tales like *Cinderella*. The beautiful but unintelligent young girl cleans the floor, cooks, takes care of others and waits for a man to save her from the injustice of her step-mother and step-sisters. This image of submissive, weak female characters in fairy tales does not satisfy women's aspirations, neither does the image of mean, scheming women. Despite the claim that a woman does not need Prince Charming to sweep her off her feet, the misrepresentation of women persists.

Feminists like Andrea Dworkin who focused on Far East mythology investigated cultural practices that quite objectify women. Footbinding in china, for instance, served as a "Cerberus of morality and ensured female chastity in a nation of women who literally could not "run around".<sup>2</sup> Women in ancient China were believed to be naturally perverse, thus they require society's intervention to keep them unblemished. The belief in the innate wickedness of women is present in the western culture as well. Indeed, misogyny, however mild, is rooted in the Western culture. It is based on a supposed inherent female inferiority, hence, giving credibility to male dominance and setting patriarchy as the plausible order. Literature is one of the mediums that sought to justify patriarchy and the subordination of women. It reinforces the notion of female "natural" weakness both physically and emotionally. Women in the western culture are usually associated with either sheer evil or unsophisticated naivety. The stereotypical mean step-mother for instance is common in fairy tales. Ancient myths tend to set labels to women. The Greek Medusa, the Roman goddess Eris, Lilith and Delilah of

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<sup>2</sup> Andrea Dworkin, Woman Hating, (New York, Penguin Books: 1974), p. 103.

the Old Testament along with the Biblical Jezebel are bleak ancient accounts of the feminine. They are clichéd representations of women in typical patriarchal settings. Patriarchy seems to set women as essentially sinful; Eve in Christian mythology is the foremost example. While she is believed to be seduced into eating from the Forbidden Tree, Adam seems almost completely blameless. The systematic stereotyping of women is deeply engendered in the European male-dominated society. The female in all its forms seems to threaten men: “Child or woman, wife or mother, this female cuts men into ribbons or swallows them whole”<sup>3</sup>. One may think of dozens examples of women’s misrepresentative labels.

One of the issues often pondered in literature is the space occupied by women in men’s literary works and how the female self and body are treated. Men’s awareness of the female self and the female body vary. Labels persisted in Modernist male writing which in general did not fairly portray women. A reflection of patriarchy, modernist male literature presented an andro-centric view of women’s role within society. The woman in modernist writings is mostly misrepresented; her voice silenced, her own desired repressed, her body violated and her very identity cancelled in favor of a domineering patriarchal system that sees women as a “second sex”, to use Simone de Beauvoir’s words.

Modernist men-writers in particular were quite aware of the masculinity of the movement, and seemed to establish its masculine norms. But despite the fact that modernism is the product of a male-focused culture, women played an active role

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<sup>3</sup> Christopher Lasch, The Culture of narcissism, (New York, Warner Books : 1979) p. 345.

especially in its beginning as shall be explained in the first chapter. T.S. Eliot did not deny their role in his early career. Shortly after arriving in London in 1914, he wrote a letter to Conrad Aiken in which he states with some apparent shame: “I am very dependent on women (I mean female society)”<sup>4</sup>. Such a cautious confession is worth observing because it attests to the importance of the feminine in the poet’s life. Eliot was influenced by a number of women throughout his life; his mother, his first love Emily Hale, his first wife Vivienne Haigh-Wood, his friend Mary Trevelyan, and his second wife Valerie Fletcher, later.

From a different angle, T.S. Eliot is very likely to identify with women in the Western society and their marginalized position due to the estrangement and marginalization he himself felt as a child. Eliot speaks of his lonely and estranged childhood in a letter to Herbert Read dating to 1928 – all in one sentence:

Someday I want to write an essay about the point of view of an American who was not quite an American, because he was born in the South and went to school in New England, as a small boy with a nigger drawl, but who wasn’t a southerner in the south because his people were northerners in a border state and looked down on all southerners and Virginians and who so was never anything anywhere and who therefore felt himself to be more of a Frenchman than an American and more an Englishman than a Frenchman and yet felt that the USA up to two hundred years ago was a family extension.<sup>5</sup>

In the letter Eliot describes how he never felt himself to be an American because he was originally born in the south and brought up in the north. He was a “resident alien” – terms he occasionally used to explain his connection to his birth country. His sense of alienation is not uncommon in the modernist tradition; Ezra Pound used the same terms to describe his position in the United States.

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<sup>4</sup> Gabrielle McIntire, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2008), p. 94.

<sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot, “To Herbert Read”, 1928, quoted in Dartington, <http://www.pschoanalysis.org.uk/paper1.htm> accessed on 04/07/2013.

It is an extremely difficult experience for a child to feel alienated within his own community. Eliot's childhood enables him to identify with women. Gender-blind identification<sup>6</sup> occurs when one identifies with a person of a different gender. One may go as far as to draw the link between this childhood experience and Eliot's acquired British citizenship. Biographers of T.S. Eliot noted a strong feminine influence in his childhood and adult life as well. The poet's mother, who was a poet and social reformist, was a thwarted artist who turned her full attention to her gifted son. Charlotte Eliot monitored her son's career as shall be explained in the forth chapter. T.S. Eliot did not oppose the mainstream of Western literary men on the subject of gender at that time. He was aware of gender, sensitive of the feminine, carefully attending to the androgyne, yet his poetry reflected an ambivalent view of women ranging from utter disgust to bewilderment, to veneration.

This dissertation aims at casting light on a very vital aspect of early twentieth century modern Western society that seemed shaken by various causes. The study is to be conducted in a feminist and Jungian psychoanalytic approach with special consideration to the text. One of the most important issues to be explored is the evolution of T.S. Eliot's view of women during the course of his literary career from about 1910 to 1930 i.e. his early and middle poetry. It aims to show how T.S. Eliot's view of women evolved from revulsion to veneration in a process of maturity. The present work purposefully overlooks *Four Quartets* despite its importance as the last major poetic production in Eliot's career because of the fact that the poems do not

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<sup>6</sup> Sarah Sceats and Gail Cunningham, *Image and Power: Women in the Twentieth Century Fiction*, (London, Routledge: 2014). I borrowed the term to explain Eliot's sympathy toward female characters that seem out of place, like he himself seemed.



offer a clear image of women. In the entire twenty-pages long *Four Quartets* the words woman/ women appear only four times while there are no other words associated with the feminine. Hence, the focus of the dissertation is restricted to early and middle poetry.

The choice of the topic was dictated by a personal awareness of the significance of such a study and a genuine interest in modernist literature, particularly Eliot's poetry. The dissertation consists of four chapters, one theoretical and three analytical. The first chapter entitled "Modernism, Women and T.S. Eliot" offers an over view of the theories applied during the analysis and examines the context in which Eliot's poetry was composed. It explores the issue of gender and sexuality in modernism and proposes a literature review concerned with the image of women in modernist works. Indeed, it is almost impossible to view Eliot's poetry without its historical and cultural background.

The second chapter entitled "Women in Eliot's Early Poetry: The Gruesome Feminine" is concerned with gender-biased portrayal of women in Eliot's earliest poems namely "Hysteria", "Sweeney Erect", "Sweeney among the Nightingales", *Portrait of a Lady* and *The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

The third chapter entitled "*The Waste Land: a Plight Transcending Gender*" is devoted to *The Waste Land* in recognition of its importance as a bridge between early and middle poetry. It discusses women portrayal in comparison to that of men in the poem and draws an analogy between myth, modernity and femininity. In this chapter,

Eliot's understanding of modern society's predicaments is made clear. The plight does not seem to be limited to a particular gender; it is rather universal.

The last chapter entitled "T.S. Eliot's Middle Poetry: The Safe Feminine" deals with two poems *Ash Wednesday* and "Marina". In the first poem, women's representation will be looked at with a special consideration to Christian mythology in the first section while relating the second to a Shakespearean play. In both poems, Eliot departs from the sordidness of femininity to its elevation.

The four chapters aim at uncovering the ambiguity associated with Eliot's representation of women and his treatment of their bodies. This endeavor cannot be achieved without setting the proper approach which will be identified in the first chapter.

**CHAPTER I:**

**WOMEN, MODERNISM AND T.S. ELIOT**

Modernism is a literary, artistic and cultural movement that appeared at the turn of the twentieth century as the outcome of intense cultural and historical upheavals. It is a movement with a wide scope and a challenging amorphousness. It is quite ambivalent towards women. The representation of women in modernist works is governed by a set of ideas about the nature of modernism itself and women as both a driving-force and a subject of interest. The very same epoch in which modernism emerged, the feminist movement started to gain momentum. In order to understand the intriguing relationship between the modernist mind and the representation of women, it is necessary to analyze the ways in which the modernist mind perceives the feminine. This will also allow us to better follow Eliot's awareness of and ambivalence towards women.

### **1.1. Approaching Eliot's Poetry: Sexual Politics and Archetypal Theory:**

T.S. Eliot's works both in poetry and drama are of multidimensional nature. The modernist deep engagement with history is manifested in the poems along with an infatuated commitment to the present and to the plights of Western society in particular. This makes Eliot's poetry a rich ground for research. The study at hand follows T.S. Eliot's representation of women in his early and middle poetry. To fulfill such study, the poems chosen for analysis are examined through a feminist and a psychoanalytic lens. Women's representation is considered, on one hand, in terms of power; their position within the text, their anti-patriarchal resistance, and their relation to their male counterparts. On the other hand, the study aims at attributing the female archetype appropriate to each period. A special consideration is paid to the analysis of the male-female relationships in the poems. The latter will be carried out through Kate

Millett's feminist theory of sexual politics, while the analysis of characters will refer to Carl Jung's theory of archetypes.

Feminist criticism, as Toril Moi suggests, is a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism<sup>7</sup>. Feminism in all its forms aims to denounce the sexist practices within the patriarchal society. By definition, patriarchy is a social organization system by which the father or the elder male is the head of the family and descent is reckoned through the male line. It favors the male sex, considering it inherently endowed with better qualities than the female. Men are privileged with authority as to dominate women. Hence, while men are the supreme rulers in such system, women are marginalized. Cora Kaplan confirms that: "Patriarchy creates and recreates the psychic conditions for women's subordination which are not the thin voile of false consciousness, but rather the very flesh and blood of female subjectivity"<sup>8</sup>. Indeed, western women are compelled to believe in their own inferiority through a systematized patriarchal scheme that sets men as superlative and women as subordinate. It is this sense of inferiority that allows their subjugation and justifies their oppression.

Kate Millett is said to have started the entire tradition of American feminism. Her 1970's *Sexual Politics* is considered by many as the earliest attempt to set a feminist paradigm for literary analysis. Feminist criticism and particularly Millett's is political in nature. Politics in this sense is not the narrow and exclusive world of meetings and

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<sup>7</sup> Toril Moi, *Feminist, Female, Feminine*, p. 117. Ed. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore, *The Feminist Reader*, (New York, Basil Blackwell: 1989).

<sup>8</sup> Ed. Mary Eagleton, *Feminist Literary Criticism*, (London, Longman: 1991), pp. 163- 164.

chairmen; it rather refers to “the power-structured relationships, arrangements whereby one group is controlled by another”<sup>9</sup>. In this respect, the group controlled is that of women. Sexual politics stands upon the idea of politicizing the man-woman relationship. Basically, American feminism focuses on textual analysis of male writers’ works to point out the patriarchal ideology embedded within. The focus is usually on the ways in which such ideology is systematized to secure male dominance. Millett argues that the patriarchal setting within society makes “male” and “female” distinct cultures. Indeed, social circumstances render the experiences of women and men very different. Gender roles are defined by social circumstances:

Implicit in all the gender identity development which takes place through childhood is the sum total of the parents’, the peers’, and the culture’s notions of what is appropriate to each gender by way of temperament, character, interests, status, worth, gesture and expression. Every moment of the child’s life is clue to how he or she must think and behave to satisfy the demands which gender places upon one<sup>10</sup>.

Gender roles are most clearly set since childhood to provide for a society ruled by men: a patriarchy. Society and the cultural definitions of what is convenient to a gender or another define the behavioral code and even the individual’s way of thinking since his or her early upbringing. This analysis examines how male dominance and female powerlessness manifest themselves in society through a text. Millett suggests that there are eight foundations upon which patriarchy is set: ideology, biology, sociology, class, economy and education, myth and religion<sup>11</sup>. Each of these foundations manifests itself in Eliot’s poetry. The patriarchal structure of power is patent in the relationships of the sexes and in coital intercourse. Eliot’s female

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<sup>9</sup> Kate Millett, *Sexual Politics*, (New York: The Congress Library, 2000), first published in 1969, p31.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.23-24.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26- 47.

characters along with male ones, as we shall see, reflect the thoughts of the entire Western civilization in terms of women's representation and women's roles. The place of women in a civilization gendered male is a haunting question. This dissertation applies Millett's theory to the poems of Eliot, singling out instances of sexual politics, weighting power balances and fathoming the ways in which female characters tend to resist the patriarchal system. Viewing the man-woman relationship in terms of power allows a better understanding of patriarchy and a better understanding of women's representation in Eliot's poetry.

Every theory, however convincing, must be approached with a healthy dose of skepticism. Being aware of the short-comings of Millett's theory, this work attempts to cover more issues. Millett's *Sexual Politics* is so preoccupied with the patriarchal ideology and power that it neglects other aspects of women's position within society such as race, class and culture. In this study women are examined in terms of class, sexuality and position within the text. It is also neglectful of the resistive actions of female characters. These aspects are of uttermost importance to the analysis. Moreover, in a feminist study the focus must be on the female characters as much as their male counterparts. The overemphasis on ideology does not fulfill the idea of feminist criticism. Hence, the work will give a special consideration to the position, space occupied, and functions of women in the text. The role of women under an ideal patriarchal regime as opposed to that within the feminist imagination is quite unsatisfactory for women. The wide range of women portrayed in Eliot's poetry allows different readings of characters.

Along with Millett's *Sexual Politics*, this work is based on Carl Jung's theory of Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious. Jung's analytical psychology broke with the Freudian theory in favor of the collective unconscious. He criticized the former's over-emphasis on sexuality while turning its back on philosophy<sup>12</sup>. The unconscious as defined by Freud is all inherent desires, wishes and memories that cannot be accessed by the conscious mind. It stems from personal experience. Jung introduced the term collective unconscious which refers to the primordial knowledge acquired throughout the human history and stored within the unconscious of all human beings regardless of their skin-color, countries and cultural legacies. The Jungian theory believes that a great literary work does not stem from the author's personal repressed desires; it is rather the display of desires shared by the entire human race but forced into oblivion only as a result of the advent of civilization.

Archetypes are the language of the collective unconscious. They are universal archaic patterns and images that derive from the common repertoire of the human race. Jung recognized certain images recurrent in the mythologies of different cultures. Such figures include: the mother, the king, the fool, the savior and the demon, to mention a few. These archetypes are not random; they are the inheritance of ages of raw human experience. They function as a key to the unconscious mind of human kind:

There are as many archetypes as there are typical situations in life. Endless repetition has engraved these experiences into our psychic constitution, not in the form of images filled with content, but at first only as *forms without content* representing merely the possibility of a certain type of perception and action. When a situation occurs which corresponds to a given archetype, that archetype becomes activated and a compulsiveness

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<sup>12</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *The Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, (London: Routledge, 2004). First pub., 1933, p120



appears, which, like an instinctual drive, gains its way against all reason and will, or else produces a conflict of pathological dimensions, that is to say, a neurosis.<sup>13</sup>

The fact that Jung did not limit archetypes to a restricted number, allows us to experiment with an endless range. Archetypes manifest themselves most vividly in dreams. They are spontaneous and unaltered by the scrupulous conscious mind, hence, granting a faithful representation of the collective unconscious.<sup>14</sup>

Modernism, personified in poets like Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot, is obsessed with the notions of time, history and past. Both condemning it and revering it, the ambiguous relationship between modernism and the past is viewed from different angles. The modernists are critical of recent past, namely the nineteenth century, but are preoccupied with the remote one. The classical period is of an uttermost significance to the modernist thought. Eliot's famously noted that it is only the past that gives significance to the present. Myth cannot be overlooked when dealing with Eliot's poetry. The noted modernist composes his poems on a mythical background that supports the overlapping modern imagery of decay. The modernist obsession with the past is most exemplary in his poetry. He frequently uses images from classical mythology to convey the spirit of his chaotic age. Sometimes he compares the rich past to the empty present. Eliot applies what he termed "the mythical method". In his critique of James Joyce's novel *Ulysses*, he declares:

In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him... It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history... It is a method

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<sup>13</sup> Carl Gustav Jung, *Archetypes and The Collective Unconscious*, ed. Sir Herbert Read et al., (London, Routledge: 1991), p. 48.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48- 50.

for which the horoscope is auspicious. Psychology (such as it is, and whether our reaction to it be comic or serious), ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago. Instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art<sup>15</sup>.

Indeed, it seemed quite difficult to give shape and significance to a turbulent pre- and post- First World War Europe. The failing cultural systems cannot stand without the solid grounds of the Classical period. The mythical method is a term coined by T.S. Eliot to refer to the implicit or explicit use of mythological references as a backdrop to the modernist text. Eliot's extensive use of epigraphs is a testimony to his deep reliance upon the past. Ancient cultures, both eastern and western form an indispensable part of his aesthetic background. Hence, the application of Jung's theory makes this dissertation a two-fold endeavor, adding a new scope to the feminist study. The female characters in Eliot's poetry seem to fall into three archetypal categories: the fallen woman in the earliest poetry, Philomela in *The Waste Land* and the goddess in middle poetry.

Intersections of gender, sexuality, class-awareness and cultural intensity in Eliot's poetry make the use of the two theories a credible choice. The Western society's complexity along with the density of the human experience at the turn of the century is demonstrated in the Eliotic text. While Jung's theory places Eliot's female characters within a universal, all-encompassing frame, Millett's focuses on the issues of women's representation.

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<sup>15</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Ulysses, Order and Myth*, first published in 1923, <http://people.virginia.edu/~jdk3t/eliotulysses.htm>. accessed on 04- 05- 2013

## **1.2. Gender and Sexuality in the Modernist Thought:**

For a poet as absorbed in the Western culture as Eliot, it is imperative to set the context into which he composed his poetry. The later reflects the turbulence of the entire civilization. Modernism is the inevitable outcome of the intense cultural and political upheavals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. Major changes at all levels could only result in a system of thought different from what preceded it. The optimism that was lost, especially during the First World War, could only be regained through contemplating the complexity and instability of the age. The spirit of modernism holds a conviction that the structures that once sustained humanity are dissolved by now. Therefore, man is alienated and hopeless, confused and frightened. Modernism, as James McFarlane suggests, has a preservative element in which the task of art is to redeem the formless universe of contingency.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, late nineteenth and the early twentieth century were characterized by large-scale changes in the Western culture. Certainties were torn to pieces. In biology, Charles Darwin altered the world with his theory of evolution in which different kinds of living organism are believed to have developed from earlier forms, especially by natural selection. The latter means that organisms that are better adapted to their environment tend to survive and produce more offspring. Darwin believed human beings to have evolved from apes. The theory's pessimistic view on the origin of man and on his status in a blind cosmos seemed to shake people's faith in Religion. Christianity was then put into question.

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<sup>16</sup> Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, Modernism 1890-1930, (Middlesex, the Penguin Group: 1976) p. 59.

The most significant, image-shifting event of the period was the First World War (1914-1918), which was a traumatic experience to both those who took part in it and those who did not. Four years of callous bloodshed reaped the souls of eight million people and left twenty-five millions maimed.<sup>17</sup> One may speculate the immensity of shock received by societies that believed in the progress of human kind. Henry James stated a distressed view in a letter he wrote at the eve of the First World War: “The plunge of civilization into this abyss of blood and darkness...is a thing that so gives away the whole long age during which we have supposed the world to be, with whatever abatement, gradually bettering.”<sup>18</sup> Indeed, the technological advances tempted the world into believing in better conditions. Similar to his contemporaries, James was distraught by the events of early twentieth century. The anguish and chaos that resulted from the massive destructiveness of the war was beyond the grasp of the literary society.

Unease, disappointment and resentment are resonant in most modernist works. In 1919, William Butler Yeats, realizing that civilization is falling apart, composed “The Second Coming” in which he expressed the anguish of the modern world:

Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;  
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,  
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere  
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Stephen Coote, *The Waste Land*, (London, The Penguin Group: 1985), p 9.

<sup>18</sup> Henry James quoted in Stephen Coote, *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>19</sup> William Butler Yeats. *The Second Coming*, first published in 1919, <http://poetry.rapgenius.com/William-butler-yeats-the-second-coming-annotated#note-509755>, accessed in 20-05-2013.

“The Second Coming” refers to the Jesus Christ’s resurrection before the Apocalypse. Ironically, in the following lines Christ does not come; instead, a beast with a lion’s body and a man’s head does. The poem’s play upon the biblical myth adheres to the modernist concern with modern society’s loss of faith and guiding principles. The poem enacts the falling apart of the principles that sustained humanity. In this respect Yeats is very close to Eliot whose early work is primarily occupied by the disintegration of Western civilization, its moral collapse and cultural decline.

Modernism, nevertheless, is not a simple collage of failing civilization images and irredeemable large-scale errors. Eugen Wolff’s 1888 article<sup>20</sup> is considered a preamble to modernism. He defines the modern:

As a woman, a *modern* woman, filled with the modern spirit, and at the same time a typical figure, a working woman, who is nevertheless saturated with beauty, and full of ideals, returning from her material work to the service of goodness and nobility, as though returning home to her beloved child – for she is no young virgin, silly and ignorant of her destiny; she is an experienced but pure woman, in rapid movement like the spirit of the age, with fluttering garments and streaming hair, striding forward... that is our new divine image: the Modern<sup>21</sup>

Interestingly, the first attempt at defining the modern was through projecting it into a woman. The modern is a working woman who is thoroughly absorbed in beauty, filled with ideals, pure yet experienced, which contrasts the usual mode of portrayals of Victorian women. The early image of modernism as woman is termed divine. She is rich both materially and spiritually, with endless possibilities for noble acts. One may also notice the reference to motherhood and kindness; a trademark of nineteenth century “True Woman” as shall be illustrated. Yet, she is a different kind of women

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<sup>20</sup> Ed. Malcolm Bradbury and James McFarlane, op. cit., p. 41.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

with “fluttering garments and streaming hair, striding forward”. She is not modest in her clothing and needs not to tie her hair; she is free. This definition of the modern is optimistic. It reflects the pre-World War era. Although this definition is not accurate by the standards of modernism as we know it, it serves as a reminder of the iconic role that women played while the movement was in its cradle. She was central to the making of modernism despite its heavy masculinity. Women took part in every single field of modern life. They worked in major industries as blue-collars.

They also promoted literature and managed their way into the poetry of modernists like William Carlos Williams and T.S. Eliot who very often presents the banality of modern society through down-to-earth human interaction and the horridness of intimacy. The relationship between Eliot, modernism and women is of a curious nature. This section provides a panoramic view on vital issues that concern modernism, Eliot and women.

It is important to identify the notions of gender and sexuality during the age because gender was seen as a new notion that accompanies modernity. Eliot was aware of such notions. Moreover, a part of women’s representation is associated with their sexuality in his early poetry. Issues of gender and sexuality were rarely if ever discussed before the twentieth century. The Western literary canon was almost exclusively male during the Victorian age and even earlier, therefore, there was no need to raise such debates. However, with the advent of women writers that struggled for the feminist cause in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe, they acquired considerable importance in literary theory and criticism. Indeed, the newly-attained political awareness prompted intellectual women to call matters of gender and

sexuality, along with questions of women representation into cultural and esthetic debate. Gender roles, which refer to the societal and behavioral standards that are recognized as normative to either men or women, were a part of the issues studied in an effort to promote feminism.

Patriarchal gender roles set a definite code of behavior for both men and women in the nineteenth century. The Victorian doctrine of “separate spheres” limited women to the domestic life of home and child-rearing and men to the public life of politics and work. Muliebrity had a very clear definition during the Victorian era: “True Woman”. To commoners as well as intellectuals, the phrase “True Woman” refers to the ideal women of early to middle nineteenth century. She was marked by modesty, submissiveness, moral and religious piety and dedication to her husband and home. Marriage and procreation were her only function. Considered as the possession of either a father or a husband, the only choices for an adult Victorian woman were marriage, working as governesses, or becoming spinsters. Work was considered disreputable for women and spinsterhood was not any less dreadful. Indeed, femininity and masculinity are performances<sup>22</sup>. Femininity is the predefined patterns of sexuality and behavior imposed by cultural and social norms on all biological women as the noted Norwegian feminist Toril Moi puts it<sup>23</sup>. It is the pure product of a deep-rooted androcentric culture. Literary stereotyping reflects the traditional patriarchal view of gender roles. Women conformed to their traditional roles as passive, dependent, child-

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<sup>22</sup> Ed. Shari Benstock, Suzanne Ferris and Suzanne Woods, A Hand Book of Literary Feminism, (New York, Oxford University Press: 2002), p. 190.

<sup>23</sup> Toril Moi, *op.cit.*, p. 122.

bearing, care-taking subordinates of men, while men were the active, protective, independent individuals that provide them with food and shelter.

Power in patriarchal gender relationships is inherited. The male traditionally rules while the female is a subordinate. A “good” woman with the Victorian standards, thus, was the submissive and kind subservient of men. The latter must be strong, virile individuals. However, during the last decade of the nineteenth century gender roles and the behavioral codes of masculinity and femininity changed noticeably. Women, who were not allowed to roam without a serious reason to, swarmed the streets of big cities. Male homosexuals dressed in feminized outfits and some women cross-dressed as men<sup>24</sup>. Cross-dressing was a significant act at that time. Dressing in outfits ascribed to the opposite gender debunks the long-standing idea that one’s identity is strictly linked to one’s inborn sex and establishes that the process is more cultural and social than biological. It is culture and society that constructs and maintains this system. Cross-dressing also helps blur the cultural distinctions between male and female<sup>25</sup>. Women started to enter the work fields of men, and before long the Victorian separate spheres doctrine started collapsing. Gender roles, hence, were no longer heavily based upon the biological components of the individual but about their own will, social standing, and education.

Modernist literary works play upon the social structure, creating feminine men and masculine women and ambivalent sexuality such as Woolf’s *Orlando: A*

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<sup>24</sup> Ed. Shari Benstock, op. cit., p.91.

<sup>25</sup> Ed. Elizabeth Kowaleski Wallace, *Encyclopedia of Feminist Literary Theory*. (New York: Routledge, 2009) 1<sup>st</sup> published 1996, Cross-dressing, p. 134.



*Biography*<sup>26</sup>. In this experimental novel, the protagonist undergoes a sex change into a woman. The novel seems to evidence the complex relationship between femininity, masculinity, gender roles and society. It reinforces the idea that one's biological sex does not determine one's gender and therefore one's future. Gender roles, then, are not biologically defined but societally. One's social identity is not bound to one's body. Orlando lives both as a woman and as a man during a time-span of almost four hundred years, and in each body she acts according to the mannerisms dictated by her community. In each of these periods, she wears the attires appropriate to her socially-defined gender. She also dresses as a man – while she is a woman – assuming masculine behavior and attitudes. Orlando does not change his name after being transformed into a woman; Orlando's name remains unaltered. Her identity never really changes through the transformation. The only part to be altered is society's views of her, as she becomes obliged to “find a husband” according to the Victorian traditions. The protagonist is also a poet. She starts her poem “The Oak Tree” while she is a man during the Elizabethan era, but only completes it when she becomes a woman. The poetic composition seems to necessitate a female consciousness along with the male one. Woolf also initiates these issues with sharp enthusiasm in her non-fiction work *A Room of One's Own*. She emphasizes that the best literary works are androgynous. The drift toward androgyny is a modernist trait. Androgyny marks the progress toward a large, all-encompassing modernist thought. The conscious of a modernist author usually engenders a work that can be seen from both a female and a male standing point. T.S. Eliot is the epitome of such identity fusion. His deep

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<sup>26</sup> Virginia Woolf, *Orlando*, (London, Penguin Books: 1965), first published in 1928.

immersion into the European culture allowed him to present it in all its decay and dullness. Although he is not a social reformer, his interest in human relationships and in man-woman interaction renders him a critic of late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Western societies. The idea of a person who lives both as a woman and as a man is not limited to Woolf. Eliot's poetry had its share of the idea. The narrator in his 1922 poem, *The Waste Land* is a hermaphrodite, having lived both as a man and a woman. While Eliot's mythical character Tiresias has both male and female biological components, Orlando is an individual who lives in two different bodies. Nevertheless, both characters discover the otherness and the sameness of the other. Gender is inserted into the modernist discourse, taking manifold forms. Indeed, gender and sexuality are of an uttermost importance to the modernist thought.

Sexuality in the modernist era is an indispensable part of this work. The representation of women in literary works is seldom devoid of sexual references. T.S. Eliot's representation of women does not quite stray from that path. Women in his poems are often treated according to their sexuality. When they are sexually "active", they are either prostitutes, victims of rape or simply unhappy spouses. When they are deprived of sexuality, they are saintly beings that bring relief. Sexuality in the Victorian era was not a matter of which one can talk unreservedly. It was tabooed. The prim self-righteous atmosphere of Victorianism left very little room for any attempt at discussing the issue. Michel Foucault argues that the prudishness and ambiguity

regarding sexuality is strictly Victorian<sup>27</sup>, linking this attitudes to the rise of capitalism. Indeed after centuries of openness about sexuality, repression seems to be a 19<sup>th</sup> century product. He asserts that during the seventeenth century coitus was not a matter of shame and “...things were done without too much concealment.”<sup>28</sup> Sexuality was viewed in terms of sin<sup>29</sup>. In fact, studies on sexuality started with the work of Sigmund Freud who believed that all human behavior is stimulated by the desire for pleasure. In 1905 he published his ground-breaking *Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, in which he emphasizes the cruciality of the libido; the internal force behind human action<sup>30</sup>. Undeniably, Freud was one of the most influential thinkers that quite left an imprint on the modernist art. The modernist understanding of sexuality is indebted to his work. In fact, one would doubt if the issue would ever come out of the Victorian closet without his immense contributions. He pioneered studies on the human psyche, emphasizing the importance of the unconscious as a source of creativity. The modernist focus on bringing the conflicts of the unconscious to the conscious is inspired by the Freudian model. From the very beginning of the twentieth century, artists attempted to penetrate the mysteries of the unconscious mind, revealing its inherent decadence and its intermingled passions. Freud’s work on psychosexual development was scrutinized by feminists like Millett and Irigaray who claimed that it privileges the phallus<sup>31</sup>. In psychoanalysis and in society alike, female sexuality has long been denied. It has been

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<sup>27</sup> Michel Foucault, *The Will to Knowledge*, vol I. first published 1976. (London, Penguin: 1998) tans. Robert Hurley, p. 5.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>30</sup> Liesl Olson. *A Companion to Modernist Literature and Culture: Sex and Sexuality* (Blackwell: Malden: 2006), p.143.

<sup>31</sup> Ed. Shari Benstock, op. cit., p. 187.

forced into oblivion in order to standardize male sexuality as normative and female as deviant. Women's desire was often ignored and women were frequently reduced into mere objects of male craving<sup>32</sup>. Modernist works play upon the representation of women and sexuality with an unparalleled audacity. James Joyce published his masterpiece *Ulysses* in 1922. The novel deals with sexuality as an inseparable part of the lives of its protagonists. Female sexuality embodied in Gerty MacDowell and Molly Bloom may appear at first sight mere stereotypical representations. Both characters appear fraught with carnal desire and wanton gratification. But a closer look may unfold more than the oversimplified, clichéd females. Self-assertion and unique sexuality are a part of their identities<sup>33</sup>. Female sexuality is most lucidly expressed through the revolutionary "stream of consciousness" which allows the characters to display their thoughts without any hindrance. The eighteenth episode of the novel is devoted to Molly's fantasies as she lies down with her husband, fusing nostalgia and desire. The entire episode is written in eight sentences, beginning and ending with yes. Very few works compare to Joyce's frankness in revealing women's sexuality.

D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* which was published in 1928 explored physical intimacy almost without a reserve. The novel was heavily criticized for its then-indecent display of sexuality and was banned in Europe and the United States. Lady Chatterley seeks a lover because of her husband's impotency. Sexuality plays a large role in the construction of the storyline. Its radical depiction of coitus suggests a new possibility of expression provided by the modernist acquaintance with

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p. 188.

<sup>33</sup> Mariah Sondergard, Identity in Ulysses: Sexuality of Gerty MacDowell and Molly Bloom, <http://www.bu.edu/writingprogram/journal/past-issues/issue-1/sondergard/> accessed in pp. 97- 103.

sexuality as investigated by Freud. Millett identifies D.H. Lawrence as a subtle sexual politician who conveys the laws of male supremacy through a female consciousness<sup>34</sup>. Connie, awe-struck, describes Mellors' phallus as proud, lordly and lovely, suggesting that it most understandably justifies male dominance. Docile, submissive and passive in the three coitus scenes, Connie evokes the stereotypical dependent female. The candor and audacity with which modernist writers approached sexuality allowed a more honest, down-to-earth representation of early twentieth century Europe and of human relationships.

Sexual indeterminacy is tightly linked to modernity. Heterosexual relationships were no longer a stable reference in a fast-pacing, ever-changing modern society. Homoeroticism unfolded slowly but steadily in modernist works like Radcliffe Hall's 1928's *The Well of Loneliness* and Djuna Barnes's 1936 *Nightwood*, for instance. Although many modernists were overtly against homosexuality like Wyndham Lewis and Ezra Pound, it implicitly gained momentum. Slowly, it was not shocking to early twentieth century European readers to follow the lives of sapphic or gay characters. Unquestionably, the era in which Eliot started his literary career was fraught with change. Superstition superseded religion, uncertainty was a trade mark of the age and sexuality along with race was difficult to articulate. In fact, Eliot's poems are microcosmic images of the degenerate state of modern civilization. Disturbing allusions to the falling bridge of London and to the collapsing great cities are present in *The Waste Land*, for instance. There are also various references to war-stricken

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<sup>34</sup> Kate Millett, op. cit., p. 239.

Europe as shall be illustrated later. It is very challenging to read Eliot's poem out of their context. The changes that occurred in the western societies and culture had the uttermost effect on the poet who initiated the theory of "impersonal poetry". He firmly believed that poetry must not be an expression of personality but an escape from it and saw the poet as the writer of an age not a chronicler of his own life: "the progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality"<sup>35</sup>. Eliot was preoccupied with the change in modern civilization that left it ethically barren. Like his fellow-authors –Yeats and James for instance – Eliot saw the Western civilization in what seemed its deathbed. The First World War burst in Europe, bringing nothing but death and destruction. Religion no longer satisfied the souls of war-torn people. Societies lost their bonds. Human interaction became a fragile mimicry of its former vigorous image.

Eliot's interest in gender and sexuality is ubiquitous in most of his pre-conversion poetry. Desire, both heterosexual and homosexual is implied through the body of his works. *The Columbo and Bolo* poems, for instance, which he regularly exchanged with male writers – like Ezra Pound, Wyndham Lewis and Conrad Aiken<sup>36</sup> highlight a poet who is different from the Anglo-Catholic, asexual, elitist modernist that he seemed to be. The poems are preoccupied with deviant sexuality along with colonialism. The short rhythmic verses deal with race and desire in a rather unsophisticated and sadistic manner. Female sexuality is represented as distinctly bestial and exaggerated. Eliot makes references to "King Bolo's big black bassturd

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<sup>35</sup> T.S. Eliot, *The sacred Wood, Tradition and the Individual Talent*, (New York, Barnes and Noble Inc.: 1928), pp. 52- 53.

<sup>36</sup> Gabrielle McIntire, *Modernism, Memory and Desire*, ( Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2008), p. 11.

kukquheen [sic]”<sup>37</sup>. No publisher admitted the poems during Eliot’s life despite his various attempts. These short rhythmic poems attest to the poet’s awareness of the modern issues of race and gender. Although they seem to suggest sexism, they are humorous and meant for friendly entertainment.

In fact Eliot, shortly after arriving in London in 1914, complained in a letter to Conrad Aiken of “nervous sexual attacks” and admitted with some apparent shame that he is “very dependent upon women”<sup>38</sup>. It is this dependence, one may argue, that led to the variety of attitudes he manifests toward the female body in his poetry. Regardless of the biographical implication, women constitute a significant part of his poetry. Female sexuality seems to provoke unease and even resentment to his male characters. Desire lies at the centre of modernist poetry. Modernist characters are either enacting their desires, subverting them or attempting to dismiss them. It is this clash of desire and reality that creates tension in Eliot’s characters. The modern self-aware man constantly contemplates his actions and society’s opinion of him. McIntire eloquently puts it:

Indeed, so much of Eliot’s poetry speaks precisely to the crisis that is staged when the erotic and the phantasmatic desires of a modern, self, conscious subjectivity encounter conventional codes of conduct and must acknowledge a troubling call to respond to regimes of social and cultural control<sup>39</sup>

Indeed, modern man find himself in a vulnerable position in which he either gratifies his craving and risks his image, or suppresses his desires, awaiting a socially-convenient outlet. In Eliot’s early poetry, sexuality mostly appears in its most horrid

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 80.

manifestations: rape and prostitution. Men are seldom portrayed as understanding or responsive and women are often portrayed as torn and emotionally wrecked. In fact Sweeney, Eliot's early prototypical male character is a frequenter of brothels. He treats women like mere flesh. They seem bereft of individuality; they stand like pleasure tools. Eliot pictures the lasciviousness of modern men despite his disgust by his very own desires. Eliot very often "situates women within the discourse of sex"<sup>40</sup> especially in his early poetry. They are rarely looked upon as more than objects of men's lust. They are frequently an object of desire even if undesirable. The female body, hence, is treated with much contempt. In "Sweeney Erect" for instance, the woman suffers an epileptic fit while the man stands shaving without the least sign of concern. In an attempt to diminish the threat that women seem to pose, their corporeality is interlaced with repulsion. Disgust replaces fear. In *The Waste Land's* third section "The Fire Sermon", the female typist meets her lover in her house. Her body is violated and so is her dignity as his attempt to "make love" stem of his own desires only. He does not seem to take a heed of her repugnance and indifference to his "exploring hands". Women's sexuality defines their role in Eliot's poetry as shall be illustrated in the next chapters. Female genitalia are depicted as monstrous in "Sweeney Erect" whereas there is no description of male ones, as though male genitals are original and matter-of-fact. This subscribes to the Freudian theory, in which it is only female sexuality which is deviant and controversial while male sexuality is normative.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 92.



The traumatic experiences of war in Europe put many certainties into query. Gender issues embody the modernist apprehension of modern culture's inference on society. Eliot's awareness of gender is apparent in the ambiguities that he creates in the identities of characters. Gender anxieties appear in several of his characters. In *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the eponymous character is imbued with uncertainty about his role in society, his aspirations and the roles of his peers. In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias, having undergone both male and female experiences, is a hermaphrodite who witnesses and tells the lives of the various characters. Lil, in the same poem, is a married woman who yields to the patriarchal gender roles at the expense of her own happiness.

### **1.3. Women in Modernist Male Writing:**

Modernism is an amorphous aesthetic movement, encompassing dozens of artistic currents that are different and sometimes contradictory in their approach to arts, and to literature in particular. The modernist era was fraught with change and disruption on the political, economic and social levels. Socially, awareness spread among the lower classes. Women at the turn of the twentieth century were conscious to the fact that they were undervalued by the masculine society. They were not satisfied with the marginal position they occupied in society and politics despite their large contribution to the work force. Accordingly, they claimed more rights; suffrage in particular was a fundamental demand. The agitation for political rights marked the rise of the feminist movements as shall be demonstrated in the next section. Economically, with women joining the work force in unprecedented numbers, they entered into sectors that were strictly male-dominated like weapon factories and

battlefields in the First World War. These points will be further expanded and analyzed in the next section.

One can note how women's progress toward power may have appeared intimidating to the masculine society. It threatened to weaken patriarchy and set a new order to society. Feminism was not welcomed by the literary scene. Many thinkers and literary men called against such movements including Ezra Pound, a representative of modernism. In a letter to Dora Marsden, *The New Freewoman's* editor, he proposed to change the title of the magazine into what would make it "an organ for individuals of both sexes"<sup>41</sup>. He pointed out that the current title seemed to limit the magazine to "an unimportant cause" referring to the women's suffrage movements. In an intense era when spirituality was shaken, economy grew more complicated and war threatened to tear Europe apart, women movements seemed too trivial an issue for discussion. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the initiator of Futurism, also notoriously denounced all feminine values as the main cause for the cultural decline of twentieth century Europe<sup>42</sup>. In his *Futurist Manifesto* he openly calls against feminism and promotes "scorn for women". The Vorticist Wyndham Lewis attacked the "effeminacy" usually associated with Victorianism. In his short-lived magazine *Blast*, he insisted that masculinity is the only mould that fits the virile modernism.

Modernism is considered a masculine movement, i.e. a movement started and developed by male writers. Indeed, a panoramic view of modernism demonstrates the

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<sup>41</sup> Katherine Mullin. *Modernisms and Feminisms*, ed. Ellen Rooney, *The Cambridge Companion to feminist Literary Theory*, (New York, Cambridge University Press: 2006), p. 138.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 137-138.

crucial role male writers played at the beginning of the movement. In his 1971 book *The Pound Era*, Hugh Kenner introduces modernism as an almost exclusively male movement, led by one mastermind. In an interesting study on popular culture and its association with the feminine, the philosopher and scholar Andreas Huyssen identifies a “powerful masculinist and misogynist current within the trajectory of modernism.”<sup>43</sup> This current was perhaps ushered in because of a “masculine crisis” caused by the loss of faith in the Victorian values of society primarily considered feminine. Eliot’s associates himself with a patriarchal lineage of writers as opposed to the “feminized” literary style of eighteenth and nineteenth century literature<sup>44</sup>.

It is important to see how the modernist mainstream dealt with women and the feminist movement. In fact, it foreshadows the ways in which Eliot creates female characters and treats their bodies. The western literary canon seems to locate women within the discourse of inferiority. They are often in a passive position, always on the weak side of the power game and seldom positioned out of their patriarchal-set traditional roles. The woman is the second sex as Simone de Beauvoir puts it: “...she is the inessential as opposed to the essential”<sup>45</sup>. Patriarchy most noticeably presents gender stereotyping as incontrovertible facts. Cultural assumptions and attitudes of one period are inevitably reflected in its literature. The representation of women in modernist male literature was predominantly pessimistic. It was aware in a change in

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<sup>43</sup> Andreas Huyssen, *Mass Culture as Woman*, 1905. <http://www.mariabuszek.com/kcai/PoMoSeminar/Readings/HuyssenMassCult.pdf>. accessed in 23-06-2013.

<sup>44</sup> Colleen Lamos, *Deviant Modernism: sexual and Textual Errancy in T.S. Eliot, James Joyce and Marcel Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004),

<sup>45</sup> Simone de Beauvoir. *The Second Sex*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1987). p. 16. First published in France in 1949.

the traditional patriarchal gender roles and of women's achievements. It may also suggest a fear of usurpation; women's growing influence menaced male authority. It sought to represent along with women, men's sense of despair and anomie that characterized late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe.

Ezra Pound's "Portrait d'une Femme" and William Carlos Williams' "Portrait of a Lady" along with T.S. Eliot's poem that bears the same title recall Henry James's novella. The three poems differ in their treatment of the female self. One may wonder why it became so fashionable to make portraits of women in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. A credible answer may be the growing importance of women in society. Another reason may be the poets' desire to identify with Henry James' tradition of social/cultural critique. The two poets attempt to reach for audiences troubled by the changing roles and identities of women<sup>46</sup>. Women were no longer confined within the narrow sphere of home care-taking. They grew aware of their surroundings, the amount of power they could acquire, and of the importance of acquiring it.

Although the three modernist poems differ in the way in which they depict women, they are similar in the fact that a male speaker is appointed to speak for/to the woman. The women in Pound's poem and in Eliot's speak through the voice of a man who either shapes their thoughts or interpret them. In fact, the only woman that demonstrates resistance was Williams'. Williams' poetry strays from the modernist adherence to the politicization of art and from the stylistic complexity and

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<sup>46</sup> Cary Nelson, *On Portrait d'une Femme*, <http://www.modernamericanpoetry.org/criticism/cary-nelson-portrait-dune-femme>. Accessed in 08-09-2013.

experimentation that characterize modernist poetry, preferring simple, not-so-high-flown words and plain, mundane objects. “Portrait of a Lady” is centered on an ordinary scene of a man’s advances attempting to seduce a woman through beautiful metaphors describing her physical beauty. The woman calls each metaphor into question, causing the male speaker to lose his temper. The man describes the corporeality of the woman without any reference to her as an individual. In fact, the speaker’s depiction of her starts from her thighs to her knees and ankles, dismissing her head – the part of her that thinks and speaks. In the very first line, he refers to the woman’s thighs as “appletrees /whose blossoms touch the sky”. Instead of compliantly accepting the praise, she interrupts him asking: “which sky?” to which he mistakenly replies: “the sky/ where Watteau hung a lady’s/ slipper”. The man proceeds then to compare her knees to “a southern breeze” but the woman interrupts again suggesting another metaphor (“a gust of snow”) and asks “what sort of man was Fragonard?” The woman’s corrective reference to Fragonard is interesting, for the French nineteenth century rococo painter’s tableau is marked by a delicate hedonism<sup>47</sup>. The woman in the painting is pushed by her husband while a young man sits opposite to the lady as her legs are partially uncovered. The allusion to the painting suggests the sensual dimension of the man’s courtship. Moreover, it suggests the woman’s awareness of it.

The woman’s sign of individuality in the poem is her voice. The female character seems to resist and rebuff the advances of her suitor. She ultimately refuses to be

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<sup>47</sup> Jean-Honoré Fragonard, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/215648/Jean-Honore-Fragonard>, Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suit. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015. Accessed in 04- 07- 2014.

rendered weak and helpless through the traditional process of love poems. She is not the submissive Victorian True Woman; she is rather rebellious, playful and intelligent. By the end she succeeds to render the male speaker anxious and impatient. As the woman insistently asks “which shore?” the man helplessly asserts his authority over the scene by referring to his first metaphor: “petals from an apple tree”.

While Williams’ female character possesses a voice of her own, Pound’s is silenced. Her thoughts are revealed through a male speaker; a spokesman of the patriarchal order. The poem, published in 1912, is different in its approach to subject, for it treats the woman as a representative of an entire era and civilization. It is noteworthy that the poem is devoid of any corporeal description of the “femme’s” body parts. The focus is ultimately on her intellectual endeavors to be a recognized part of the highly-masculine society. The woman and her mind are “our Sargasso Sea” which is situated within the Atlantic Ocean and named after a genus of seaweed that floats upon it<sup>48</sup>. It is the only sea without a land boarder. It is rather defined by the ocean currents. Like the “femme” portrayed, it has nothing that is quite its own; it is shaped merely by outer forces without any solid bases. The fact that the woman’s mind is singled out puts an emphasis on her intellect. The male speaker refers to “Our Sargasso Sea”. The possessive determiner alludes to the Western Civilization to which perhaps the male speaker and the modernists belong, and to which the “femme” is a by-product. Living for twenty years in London, the woman is overloaded with “ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things”; still she does not seem to possess a substance. She

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<sup>48</sup> Saragasso sea, def., Ocean Service, <http://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/sargassosea.html>, accessed in 09- 7 2014.

has an identity without a defining principle. The woman is sought by “great minds” referring maybe to artists and philosophers who seek her as a second choice. But she only ends up with a “dull” average man. Though uxorious, the “femme’s” husband is far from satisfying his wife’s preoccupations: he’s a mere average mind “with one thought less every year”. As she receives the “ideas and old gossip”, the woman also gives away some “strange gain”. She gives away wonderful yet useless tales. What she gains and what she offers is intangible. She seems to trade in ideas. Indeed, with all those “riches”, the woman possesses a great store. In the end, the lady is a mere receptacle to the vast, varying yet empty modern civilization. The speaker declares that “There is nothing! In the whole/ yet this is [her]”. Associating the woman with the sea may evoke the depth of her mind and her liability to change. But the reference to the still Sargasso Sea undoes the idea. In contrast to Williams’, Pound’s poem is a critique of the modern world, embodied in the hollow, self-consciously cultured woman. The flexible free-verse allowed Pound to extend the Sargasso Sea metaphor all through the thirty lines of the poem. The careful choice of diction reinforces the idea: *ships, spars, floated up, fished up, ambergris, sea-hoard* to mention a few. The description of the woman is not coupled with contempt but rather with wonder. The poet, for instance, uses the word “strange” thrice. He also juxtaposes other adjectives asserting the uniqueness of the woman despite her representativeness of the entire era. The disdain is in fact directed toward the social and cultural landscape of useless knowledge.

Regarding the tight literary and personal camaraderie between Eliot and Pound, literary resemblance is almost inevitable. In fact, Pound - *il miglior fabbro* in Eliot’s words- notably corrected *The Waste Land* reducing it to half its size when published.

Like Eliot, Pound tends to explore of universal ruin and moral break down in twentieth century Europe. In fact, Pound's "Portrait d'une Femme" foresees Eliot's *The Hollow Men* which was published in 1925. Indeed, the "portrayal" of women by modernist male writers suggests men's sense of despair and their masculine crisis anxiety. The two poems illustrate an aspect of the modern women. Williams' "lady" is a free-thinking, self asserted woman while Pound's "femme" is a consciously committed woman of social meetings and cultural exchange. The modernist endemic obsession with women is exemplary in Eliot's poetry as we shall see in the next chapters.

#### **1.4. Women's Progress towards Power:**

Women's status, roles and expectations changed immensely from nineteenth century onwards. The progress of women towards power took different forms. It marked the beginning of a modern era different from what preceded it. It ushered in a new set of norms that changed the way in which women were represented in literature and arts. Although early attempts to improve women's conditions date back to the eighteenth century<sup>49</sup> women's voices were not loudly heard till the twentieth century. The drastic change in gender roles witnessed during the modern era was the inevitable result of several factors ranging from anthropological breakthroughs, to historical events and political achievements.

Anthropology discovered primitive societies where matriarchy was the norm. Patriarchy, thus, is not a necessary development of human societies. This discovery

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<sup>49</sup> Roger Webster, *Studying Literary Theory*, (London, Hodder Headline Group: 1996), p 75. Mary Wollstonecraft's "A Vindication of the Rights of Women", 1792.



prompted feminists into calling for more freedom and more rights. The feminist cause was put into the political agenda of the time.

The First World War (1914-1918) was a further development in favor of the change in gender roles. It is speculated that women's engagement in manufacturing rose by 28% from 1904 to 1914. By October 1918, over 1,500,000 women worked in essential war industries in the U.S.<sup>50</sup>. Not only did women nurse soldiers in battlefields and made weapons, but they fought when duty called upon them as well. In fact the rights that women acquired thereafter were considered by many as a reward to their commitment during the war. Suffragettes achieved a relative success in 1918 when women above thirty acquired the right to vote in Great Britain. The political rights were at the core of the women's movement. With women in comparatively better political positions, feminist movements continued demanding more freedom and better conditions. The flappers of the Jazz age are exemplary of the new emancipated woman. During the roaring twenties the American economy reached its zenith. Women had their share of the freedom that usually accompanies affluence. Some of them publicly smoked, drank, wore revealing attires and led a libertine life in previously Puritan America, challenging the norms of society and contesting patriarchy. This further altered the way women were portrayed in literature and arts. The early nineteenth century model of the True Woman was challenged by that of the New Woman, who spoke out, took part in politics and rejected male dominance in different ways. They gradually annihilated the Victorian old separate spheres model.

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<sup>50</sup> A. B. Wolfe and Helen Olson, *War-Time Industrial Employment of Women in the United States*. *Journal of Political Economy*, Vol. 27, No. 8 (Oct., 1919), pp. 639-669. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1821903>. retrieved 08/ 11/2012

The new concept of gender allowed new renderings of the feminine in literature. Some Modernist women writers focused on the traditional feminine mundane like Gertrude Stein in her 1914's experimental work *Tender Buttons: Object, Food and Rooms*. Stein seems to rework common language into a polemic against patriarchy. The traditional sphere occupied by women is finally worth being the subject matter of a literary work. Other women writers portrayed a woman different from the one conceived by society as the true woman. Women were portrayed as single, free thinkers and rebellious. In fact literature was among the means by which women defied the strict patterns of patriarchy that defined their conduct. Writers like Sara Grand, Grant Allen and Rhoda Broughton wrote explicitly feminist novels in the 1890's. Undaunted, courageous and self-proving women were typical for such novels. Broughton's *Dear Faustina* (1897) for instance tells the story of the heroine of the same name that does not abide by the social conventions and dedicate her life to fight injustice<sup>51</sup>. The strong female characters created by these writers aim at subverting the traditional image of women that had long been maintained by the patriarchal order. The meek, subdued woman was a powerful icon. The reversal of the "True Woman" myth was not quite welcomed by the conspicuously masculine literary scene of the time. These writers were not easily admitted into the modernist spectrum. Few male writers sympathized with the feminist cause like Grant Allen who wrote *The Woman who Did* in 1895. The novel is about a self-assured middle class woman who defies the social conventions but her ending is not optimistic.

In her 1928 seminal essay “A Room of One’s Own” Virginia Woolf describes women’s writing as a separate genre of literature because it stems from a marginalized position different from the dominant, central position of men. A contemporary of hers, T.S. Eliot appears perceptive of women’s immersion into modern culture, as shall be demonstrated in the next chapters. He is also aware and very likely to identify with their marginal position in society as has already been mentioned.

William Courtney’s 1904’s *The Feminine Note in Fiction*<sup>52</sup> launched a massive attack on the late nineteenth century “New Woman” novels that concerned themselves with gender relations and sexuality. He points out that “it is the neutrality of the artistic mind which the female novelist seems to find it difficult to realize”<sup>53</sup> He also suggests a “virile” standard for esthetic value. Associating the artistic merit with masculinity is a trend in modernism. Many of the esthetic movements within modernism tended to set a masculinist paradigm for the emerging movement.

Modernist women writers write against a masculinist regime in the European culture. Mina Loy’s *The Feminist Manifesto* that was written shortly before her 1915’s “Love Poems” was a reaction to the Marinetti’s *The Futurist Manifesto*. She encourages women to let go of the manners imposed by society as the “norm”, suggesting that the so-called femininity is but a means to control them. The noted English poet and painter argued that the “woman must destroy in herself the desire to

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<sup>52</sup> William Courtney, *The Feminine Note in Fiction*, (1904), p 16 (xii)<http://ia700307.us.archive.org/15/items/femininenoteinfi00courrich/femininenoteinfi00courrich.pdf>, retrieved in 20- 8- 2013.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, xxi.

be loved”, implying that the idealization of female purity and virtue is “the principle instrument of her subjugation”.<sup>54</sup>

The image of women in literature became significant in literary studies when women had a growing power in the non-domestic sphere. Women were involved in politics, science and cultural activities. The Victorian myth of womanhood was pulverized, replaced by the modern myth of the independent, smart woman who does not mind society’s unwavering antipathy towards her.

T.S Eliot appears aware of the progressive liberation of women. The change in women’s roles and eventually their attitudes was reflected in some of Eliot’s early poems, notably “Cousin Nancy”<sup>55</sup>. In this short light-hearted poem, included in his 1920’s *Prufrock and Other Observations*, Eliot describes a young New-England woman in a caricatural, ironic manner. Nancy lives an unorthodox lifestyle and does not conform to the conventions of her society. She strides and rides across the hills. Hounds and cow-pastures are an inseparable part of the traditional English landscape. Thus, Nancy breaks the once solid rules symbolized by the hills. The pastoral scenery put side to side with the modern European scene of smoking women and dancers, the image reflects an ironic diversity provided by modernity. Eliot tends to put the rich past alongside the doubtful present in most of his poems from 1910 onwards. It is this duality that marks his poetry as modernist. Nancy is a woman who has works of

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<sup>54</sup> Cary Nelson, Modern American Poetry, ed. Walter Kalaidjian, The Cambridge Companion to American Modernism, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 2006) pp 79-80.

<sup>55</sup> T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays 1909- 1950, (London, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich: 1971), p. 17. Further references to Eliot’s works will be imbedded within the text.

Matthew Arnold and Ralf Waldo Emerson on her bookshelves. The two writers represent reason. They guard the only unalterable law; that of change. Everything is liable to change except the law of change itself. In fact, “Cousin Nancy” expresses the duality and doubt that accompanies modernity. Young Nancy Ellicott follows the mainstream of modern society. She is a young woman that smokes and dances all the “modern” dances. Nancy’s aunts, who belong to the previous generation, did not quite form an opinion about it; they only know that it was “modern”. Indeed, the elder generation was confused by the changes in behaviors, attires and the general mood of the younger generations. The fear o the new was typical of a post-Victorian era. The idea of newness is crucial in this poem. “New” as a label marked modernism. Ezra Pound famously made of it his slogan “Make it new”<sup>56</sup>. Despite the changes that overwhelmed modern society, some laws cannot be altered

The power that literature wields is undeniable. It is the driving force of culture and the pure reflection of society. Eliot acknowledges the emancipating role of language. He also recognizes the extent to which words became associated with women. In *The Waste Land’s* second section “A Game of Chess” for instance, the neurotic woman’s very hair “Glowed into words” as she brushed it. Thus, the woman’s corporeality becomes her language, her form of expression and defense. The next chapter will look at the portrayal of women in Eliot’s early poetry.

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<sup>56</sup> Ezra Pound quoted in ed. Shari Benstock, op. cit., p. 95.

**CHAPTER II:**

**WOMEN IN ELIOT'S EARLY POETRY: THE GRUESOME FEMININE**

The image of women in Eliot's poetry takes different forms. In his early poetry, there is a wide range of labels that can be attributed to female characters because of the various roles they play. Women appear in streets, in brothels, in refined galleries and around romantic tea tables. Even when their roles seem marginal in comparison to those of men, women are an essential part of the poems as we shall illustrate. This chapter studies the representation of women in Eliot's early poems namely in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales", "Sweeney Erect", "Hysteria", *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady*.

### **2.1. Sweeney among Hysterical Women:**

The poems discussed in this section are "Sweeney among the Nightingales", "Sweeney Erect" and "Hysteria". Noticeably, the three poems share an obsession with the female, which is transformed into a variety of characters in different societal situations. This section focuses particularly on the image of the prostitute in the Sweeney poems and the image of the hysterical female in "Hysteria" with a special regard to the man-woman relationship in each poem.

"Sweeney Among the Nightingales" first appeared in Eliot's 1920 collection *Poems*. Modernist in its very nature, the poem avoids nineteenth century heroism and romanticism, introducing the characters as coarse, insensitive and mundane. The vision of modern man-woman relationships is rather pessimistic and cynical. They are quite deprived of spiritual bonding and based upon mutually taking advantage. Hence, the representation of women is associated with the nature of such relationships.

The poem starts with an epigraph extracted from Aeschylus' play *Agamemnon*. The Greek tragedy tells the story of the Trojan War hero Agamemnon. The importance of the epigraph is undeniable in Eliot's poetry. It organizes the work and braces the reader for what is to come. It also establishes a relationship between ancient Western culture and its modern continuation. Written in its original Greek wording, the epigraph translates as "Alas, I am struck with a mortal blow"<sup>57</sup>. These are the last words uttered by Agamemnon as he was struck by his wife Clytemnestra. The epigraph is very significant for it draws a parallel between Agamemnon the ancient brute and his modern counterpart Sweeney. Both characters are abusive to women; Agamemnon sacrificed his own daughter to gain the approval of gods and Sweeney merely uses women to gratify his needs. They are both driven by the same sensual motives<sup>58</sup>. There is a further dimension in the juxtaposition of ancient grandiose past with the pitifully commonplace contemporaneity. Sweeney is a rather caricatural mimicry of Agamemnon. He has Agamemnon's ruthlessness but not his glory. The sharp contrast between the two scenes is a critique of modern life. Eliot does not seem able to perceive modern Europe without comparing it to its richer past. The modern scene is too anarchic to stand on its own especially in terms of human relationships.

The poem is set in the dining room of a brothel. The first character to appear is Sweeney:

Apeneck Sweeney spread his knees  
Letting his arms hang down to laugh,

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<sup>57</sup>Martin Scofield, *T.S. Eliot: the Poems*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1998). p. 93. First published in 1988.

<sup>58</sup> Idem., p. 93.



The zebra stripes along his jaw  
Swelling to maculate giraffe. (ll. 1- 4)

With the neck of an ape and sideburns that resemble a zebra's stripes, "apeneck Sweeney" spreads his knees and drops his arms laughing, with two women sitting to the table. As he laughs his zebra stripes seem to expand into what resembles the blotches on a giraffe's fur. Sweeney's laughter betrays the bleak ominous mood as the moon moves westwards. Nature unfolds more dark omens as:

The person in the Spanish cape  
Tries to sit on Sweeney's knees

Slips and pulls the table cloth  
Overturns a coffee-cup,  
Reorganised upon the floor  
She yawns and draws a stocking up; (ll. 11- 16)

Drunk, the woman falls, pulling the table cloth and overturning a coffee cup. Still on the floor, she yawns in boredom and draws up her stocking. Although the scene may appear caricature-like, it induces an unmistakable sense of failure and despair that underpins the general mood of Europe back then. Notably, the first woman to appear in the poem is introduced sketchily. Her gender is not specified; she is an unidentified "person" who unsuccessfully tries to approach Sweeney. Her attempt to make physical contact with him does not succeed because of the latter's indifference. He remains unmoved and does not bother to help her up; neither does she try to stand up on her own. The prostitute here signifies in a way collapse and unfulfillment of the modern world. Civilization is in a state of intoxication, unable to stand on its feet again. In the subsequent lines, a man "in mocha brown" stares ungainly at the window as a waiter brings in tropical fruits. He leaves the room. The man is referred to as a mere "vertebrate", which places him among all other species; he is not defined by his

humanity. A minor character in the poem, he only serves to emphasize the subhuman state in Sweeney's world. Another woman appears to intensify the sense of gloom and animality. The Jewish name Rachel "née Rabinovitch" is a reminder of biblical Rachel in the *Old Testament*. In the Bible, Rachel is the beautiful, pious wife of Jacob<sup>59</sup>. She was a patient and spiritual woman despite her vulnerabilities. She dies in child birth. In an unflattering parody, the modern Rachel "tears at the grapes with murderous paws" (l. 26). She is given a bestial form, being endowed with paws instead of hands. Animality is a repeated image in Eliot's poetry, signifying the degraded state of modern society. Moreover, Grapes connote gratification and sometimes stand for the Greek god of wine Dionysus. They suggest sheer indulgence and down-to-earth aspirations. The modern scene is deprived of spirituality and the modern woman is a mere seeker of pleasure.

Sweeney believes that Rachel and the woman in the Spanish cape are conspiring against him. Their apparently malevolent scheme against him suggests that he abused them (like Agamemnon who abused women around him including his daughter and his wife). He leaves the room and appears nearby grinning with twining vines of wisteria framing his face. Conspiracy is a further reinforcement of the sinister mood of the poem, which is strong but never becomes explicit. The image of conspiring women is not uncommon in the Western mindset. For instance, in Greek mythology Philomela and Procne plotted against king Tereus. The famous story of Philomela's rape, mutilation and transformation into a nightingale is significant as it appears in *The Waste Land* as well. The nightingales sing near "the convent of Sacred Heart" (l. 36) where

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<sup>59</sup>John Baldock, *Women of the Bible*, (London, Arcturus Publishing Limited:2006), pp. 55-57.

oath-taking nuns take shelter. The birds' song is perplexing for it puts the sullied and the chaste side to side. This further depicts the variety of lives in modern society. Those birds sing also when Agamemnon took the fatal blow at the hands of his raged wife Clytemnestra and shouted the lines in the epigraph as we have seen:

And sang within the bloody wood  
When Agamemnon cried aloud  
And let their liquid siftings fall  
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud. (ll. 37- 40)

The birds' notes fall upon the shroud of the dead commander, staining it. The nightingales that the title tells about, thus, are women. They are the victims of modern time Tereus-like men.

In a 1922 letter to his brother, Eliot regarded "Sweeney among the Nightingales" (along with *Burbank*) as intensely serious and confirmed that they are the best he has ever written. He, however, was worried that he was considered a nothing but wit or satirist by newspaper critics in England, and would be "thought merely disgusting" in America<sup>60</sup>. The seriousness that Eliot sees is probably the link he made between modern society and classical myth, making the poem a multilayer composition. Obscure allusions to the past add to the richness of the poem and show a deep dedication to modernism.

Like the former Sweeney poem, "Sweeney Erect" is framed as a sharp satire against modern man and modern society. It is made complex by the infusion of classical myth. The poem opens with an epigraph from *The Maid's Tragedy* by Beaumont and

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<sup>60</sup> Martin Scofield, op. cit., p. 92.

Fletcher<sup>61</sup>. The scene chosen for this poem is a scene of lamentation. Aspatia, abandoned by her lover, poses like Ariadne who was forsaken by Theseus. She summons her maidens and bids them “be sad”<sup>62</sup>. As she sees one of the women embroidering a tapestry of Ariadne, she asks her to make it more desolate:

Suppose I stand upon the sea-beach now,  
Mine arms thus, and mine hair blown with the wind,  
Wild as that desert; and let all about me  
Tell that I am forsaken. Do my face  
(If thou had'st ever feeling of a sorrow)  
Thus, thus, Antiphilia: strive to make me look  
Like Sorrow's monument: *and the trees about me,*  
*Let them be dry and leafless; let the rocks*  
*Groan with continual surges; and behind me*  
*Make all a desolation. Look, look, wench!*<sup>63</sup>

Aspatia, thus, seems to take a delight in her supposed sorrow. Her pain, however, is of a theatrical kind. Her only goal is to “look/ Like Sorrow’s monument”. Implicit masochism is evoked by her insincere sorrow and her exaggerated demonstration of it. There is no genuine feeling of loss. Her peculiar pleasure with distress is underpinned by the bleak landscape that she orders her woman to make: dry leafless trees and groaning rocks. The first two stanzas of “Sweeney Erect” continue in what resembles Aspatia’s sad bidding, using a Latinate high-flown diction:

Paint me a cavernous waste shore  
Cast in the unstilled Cyclades,  
Paint me the bold anfractuous rocks  
Faced by the snarled and yelping seas.

Display me Aeolus above  
Reviewing the insurgent gales  
Which tangle Ariadne's hair

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<sup>61</sup>Jane Worthington, “The epigraphs to the Poetry of T.S.Eliot, *American Literature*”, Vol. 21, No. 1 (Mar., 1949), pp. 1-17. Published by: Duke University Press, Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2921214>, accessed in 21/11/2012.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 8

<sup>63</sup> Beaumont and Fletcher, *The Maid’s Tragedy*. Scene II, act ii, Opt. cit. Ibid., pp. 7-8

And swell with haste the perjured sails. (ll. 1 -8)

Then, after the magnificent display of classical grandeur, the squalidness of modern brothel is introduced. Sweeney “rises from the sheets in steam”. The first image we perceive of Sweeney is his orang-outang gestures as he leaves the bed in order to shave. It seems like a reminder of Poe’s “The Murders in the Rue Morgue” in which the murderer is but an orang-outang misusing his owner’s razor. An ape, however, is not the only animal that Sweeney is compared to, for he is compared to a zebra and a giraffe, too as we have already seen.

His female companion is still on the bed enduring an epileptic fit but apish Sweeney does not seem to care. Being in utter pain, she “claws” at the pillow slip like Rachel in the previous poem, who devours the grapes with “murderous paws”. Both women are presented as animal-like and unrefined. In a viciously mundane scene, Sweeney proceeds to shave without the least heed of the agonizing prostitute:

This withered root of knots of hair  
Slitted below and gashed with eyes,  
This oval O cropped out with teeth:  
The sickle motion from the thighs (ll. 13- 16)

The idea of the gruesome feminine is highlighted through the “oval O cropped out with teeth”. The female genitals are portrayed as unsafe; they pose the danger of castration. They also threaten to devour the man. The *vagina dentata* is not a rare concept in folklore stories. It has been used to encourage abstinence from sex. It is a further detail in the Western misrepresentation of women.

“Broadbottomed Sweeney” understands “the female temperament” and carelessly “wipes the suds around his face”. It seems as though the “female” belongs to a world

different from Sweeney's (and different from that of men, too). Ironically, other prostitutes are offended by the insipidness of the scene:

The ladies of the corridor  
Find themselves involved, disgraced,  
Call witness to their principles  
And deprecate the lack of taste (ll. 33- 36)

Judgments are pronounced by individuals commonly judged debased. It is likely that the "ladies" were not offended by the fact that their colleague entertained Sweeney all night long, but because she was shrieking too loud as to draw attention to "the house". Mrs. Turner, the owner of the brothel, believes that the "hysteria" might be misunderstood and "does the house no sort of good". Doris ends the scene as she comes in with alcohol. In the world of Sweeney there are no problems that cannot be cured by "sal volatile/ And a glass of brandy neat." Doris Dorrance appears in *Sweeney Agonistes*, the unfinished play. She is a prostitute who regularly entertains the protagonist. The treatment of the female body in "Sweeney among the Nightingales" and in "Sweeney Erect" is related to the banality of society and the disdainful nature of modern man which are satirized in most of Eliot's early poetry. The Sweeney poems are miniatures of modern society's corruption and decay; they are sketches of modern banality and satires against low sexuality. The fallen woman is a representative of a morally-destitute society.

The human memory contains, as Jung substantiated, images as old as the primordial human experience. These images are not subject to national, cultural or geographic change; they are universal. The collective unconscious holds a number of women images. The Christian beliefs set a woman as the cause behind the descent of

humankind from Heaven. The idea of the Original Sin takes different forms in different cultures, accusing women of bringing devastation upon their communities. The fallen woman, thus, is an important archetype in the Western mindset.

Women are voiceless in these poems. Their actions are banal and irredeeming. For instance Rachel “tears at the grapes with murderous paws” while Doris brings “Sal volatile and a bottle of Brandy neat”. The prostitutes are bound by both their gender and their social and economic status. Prostitutes often recoil to such life for financial reasons. A brief review of the history of prostitution reveals that this practice has existed since the earliest civilizations, taking different forms. Sexual politics appears in the power that Sweeney exercises over his female companions who are epileptic, dull-looking prostitutes. Sweeney, like a typical domineering male, enacts his hypothetical manhood over his company of women. Although he is but a second-rater, his gender allows him a larger authority over women. This representation adheres to the patriarchal system whereby women are mistreated, underestimated and ultimately subdued to male authority. The Sweeney poems elucidate the ways in which patriarchy maintains itself as the credible order of society. Women’s “natural” weakness and men’s supposed strength sets the order of power in favor of the strong sex. Sexuality asserts men’s status as strong virile individual. Moreover, the fact that men pay the prostitutes for their “services” also asserts male financial and economic supremacy. The economics of prostitution set the male as a client and the female as dealer, while the female body is a commodity. Prostitution is an objectification of women but it is both a manner of subjugation and resistance and we shall see.

Sweeney represents the early Eliotic modern male archetype. He is an ape-like, insensitive man. He is a frequenter of brothels. His physical adventures are loveless mechanical acts that spring out of mere biological need. Sweeney can be traced back to the early caveman. He is a primitive ape-like man that shows no sign of civilized behavior. He appears in three more of Eliot's works; *The Waste Land*, "Mr. Eliot's Morning Service" and *Sweeney Agonistes*. It is only in his 1927 unfinished play that he possesses a voice of his own. In the play he tells Doris that he will take her to a cannibalistic island and turn her into "a little white missionary stew". Doris replies that she will "convert" him –i.e. into Christianity – but he insists that *she* is the one to be converted "into stew". The treatment of the female body is mingled with cannibalism. Few lines later, he maintains that "every man wants to, needs to do a woman in"<sup>64</sup>. Eliot seem to "do a girl in" every now and then in his early poems. Moreover, "the best woman, Sweeney suggests, is a dead quiet one; her virtue, at least, is certain. Her body radiates a comforting domestic space and stasis"<sup>65</sup>. In his conversation with Doris, he also presents his "philosophy" on life. He cynically condenses it to "birth, copulation, death". Determinist as it is, his philosophy places sexuality at its center, pretty much like an animal. Sweeney was not endowed with a voice in the poems probably because at this period he is not seen as fit to talk. He is a mere brute whose voice would not add much to the poem. He is thus rendered animal-like. He only gesticulates like an orang-outang. He possesses no self-awareness; hence, men's consciousness of women's presence is blurred.

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<sup>64</sup> T.S. Eliot, *Sweeney Agonistes*, first published 1927. Op. cit., p. 74.

<sup>65</sup> Laurie J. Macdiarmid, *Eliot's Civilized Savage: Religious Eroticism and Poetics* (New York: Routledge, 2005), p. 33.



“Hysteria” was first finished in 1915 and published along with the two Sweeney poems in the volume. It is unique in the fact that it is composed in prose-poetry. It is presented in the first person point of view. The narrator, unlike that of the Sweeney poems, is involved in the events. The male speaker accounts for his rendezvous with a woman in a garden over tea:

As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it,  
until her teeth were only accidental stars with a talent for squad-drill. (ll. 1 – 3)

The woman’s sole action is hysterical laughter. The reader is not informed of the reason behind her laughter, which accentuates the sense of frenzy. She seems self-centered and unaware of her companion who is “involved in her laughter” despite himself, one may add. There are clear sexual implications in the poem. What the speaker notices in the woman is primarily “the shaking of her breasts”. She is reduced to a mere sexual object. The entire poem seems like a stereotypical description of the effect that that laughter had on the male speaker. He is one of the men unnerved by the presence of women. There is a taint of “Sweeneyish” primitivism in him that is carefully concealed by his polite “civilized” behavior. One can easily imagine him as he elegantly sits to the table, eloquently talking of world events or simply speaking amorously in an attempt to appeal to the woman. His behavior betrays his peculiar, gloomy thoughts. Those thoughts seem to stem from a genuine fear of emasculation as the feminine traits take over.

The term hysteria is derived from Greek *hystéra*, which denotes a uterus. Ancient observers believed that the womb became detached and “wandered” on its own, causing such neurotic disorders. Hence, hysteria became a specifically female disorder. Hysteria as a neurotic disorder was studied by the French neurologist Jean Martin Charcot in the

19<sup>th</sup> century. He focused on its physical manifestations. It was Freud that established the relationship between repressed, emotionally charged memories and hysteria<sup>66</sup>. The term is still a little bewildering. The woman does laugh hysterically but the speaker's nervous reaction to it seems hysterical as well. Desire seems to work on his nerves. His desire, not finding a suitable socially-conventional outlet, is repressed. Hardly able to keep it from overwhelming him, the speaker tries to distract his attention by thinking of the afternoon fragments. The trembling old waiter ought to be considered a second "victim" of the woman. He anxiously repeats: "if the lady and gentleman wish to take their tea in the garden..." Incomprehensible desire makes the man long for distractions. He cannot decisively rid himself from the uncomfortable sensation that his female companion seem to provoke. The man is, in this sense, a prelude to Prufrock. The modern image of intimate rendezvous is fraught with Eros.

In "Hysteria" the woman occupies a central position in the text; she is its essence and driving force. Yet, she is portrayed with a pessimism that undermines her strong position. She is reduced to a threat to the man who, by patriarchal rules, must be the central character in a text. Power in the poem is redirected and redistributed in favor of male dominance. The man-woman relationship is not the typical love scene of a woman captivated by a man. It is a drastic change as the man seems obsessed with his female companion. He is intrigued by her every move, shaken by her corporeality and engrossed by her presence:

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<sup>66</sup> Erika Kinetz, "Hysteria: a New Look at an Old Malady", The New York Times (09- 27 - 06) <http://www.freudpage.info/freudhysteria.html>, accessed on 01- 15- 14

I was drawn in  
by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in the dark caverns  
of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles. (l. 3 – 5)

It is a reminder of Williams' "Portrait of a Lady" where the woman seems in control of the situation. Williams' lady is endowed with a voice while Eliot's is silenced. Moreover, the narrator in "Hysteria" is not mesmerized by the woman's mind but with her body. The male speaker in Williams' poem is enchanted by the woman's body too, yet she appeals to his mind. Although far from the prostitute model, the woman in "Hysteria" still falls into the same vein of unfair representation. She is regarded in terms of corporeality. The patriarchal mindset deprives women from their voices in an attempted subjugation. Dispossessed of a voice, the woman's body becomes her language. Her gestures, her laughter, her very body is her medium of asserting herself. Thus, the patriarchal scheme to subdue women becomes their emancipating power.

"Hysteria" along with "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" and "Sweeney Erect", as illustrated, share a stereotypical representation of female figures. Women are hysterical, sensual objects, devoid of intellect or at best discomfiting presences to men as we shall see in the next section.

## **2.2. Female Presence and Male Unease:**

This section deals with *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* and *Portrait of a Lady*. The male speakers in both poems seem unnerved in the presence of women. Female power seems to intimidate them. In the "Portrait" the male speaker is struck by his female companion's social status and the authority that stems from that.

### **2.2.1. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*: “This is not what [she] meant at all”**

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* was finished sometime between July and August, 1911 but was first published only four years later in *Poetry* magazine in 1915. It appeared two years later in a collection; *Prufrock and Other Observations*. Prufrock, thus, is an observation. It is important, then, to consider him as an archetype of modern men. The poem is widely regarded as Eliot’s first major achievement. It follows the thoughts of its titular subject who makes the reader wonder whether any love song is genuinely attempted. Prufrock is an aging, balding, insecure man who constantly contemplates and evaluates his mediocre life. He is particularly anxious about his inadequacy within his society and among his peers. Interestingly, the poem was originally entitled *Prufrock among the Women*. This demonstrates the importance of women for in the poem. Moreover, the representation of women is linked to his awkward relationship to the feminine. Prufrock’s vulnerability is accentuated by the fact that he can scarcely if ever be involved in a conversation with a woman. The representation of women, thus, is correlated with Prufrock’s frail nature. The poem starts with an epigraph from Dante’s *Inferno*. The words are spoken by Count Guido da Montefeltro, a damned soul in the Eighth Circle of Hell in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*. He declares: “If I thought my answer were to one who could return to the world, I would not reply, but as none ever did return alive from this depth, without fear of infamy I answer thee”<sup>67</sup>. In this respect, Prufrock is the opposite of Count Guido. He knows that

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<sup>67</sup> Jane Worthington, op. cit., p. 2.

those he addresses are alive; they may well misunderstand or mock him. His self-consciousness bids him to speak with a certain degree of reticence.

The first stanza begins with a lover's invitation: "let us go then you and I" but the timing is atypical. The image of "the evening spread out against the sky/ like a patient etherized upon the table" (l. 7 – 8) is most remarkably an ominous start that does not quite suit a love song. One ought to think of a poem like Melville's "To His Coy Mistress" as a typical love poem, detailing the aspirations of those in love. Prufrock's *Love Song* breaks with the traditional sense of the genre. It takes from love songs nothing but the name. The poem follows with a description of the yellow fog and the yellow smoke that sinisterly rub their backs on the windows panes. The streets that Prufrock and his companion walk through are almost empty as he walks past cheap hotels and restaurants. The tediousness and mundanity of the city lead him to ask his unidentified "overwhelming question", which is most probably about the nature and aim of his life. The very first allusion to women in the poem is that of the prostitutes in cheap hotels. They belong to Sweeney's world but still they form a part of the vast, pale city. Prufrock's world differs from that of Sweeney's and the women he meets are completely dissimilar, too. While the latter lives among prostitutes and brothels, the former leads a refined life of genteel hostesses and art galleries:

In the room the women come and go  
Talking of Michelangelo. (l. 13- 14)

Unlike Sweeney's companions, Prufrock's are intellectual ladies that attend art galleries and discuss the works of great artists. They seem acquainted with the world of aesthetics; they show interest in Michael Angelo. Prufrock wonders whether they will be interested in a man as banal and uninteresting as himself. He is aware that he is no

match for the great Renaissance artist. The image that follows is that of the feline-like afternoon fog. It suggests the timidity and indecisiveness of Prufrock himself. He is shy, self-conscious but not self-assured enough for the city life. Like the cat-like haze, He is that shy guest that retires to the corners while other guests are dancing or discussing matters over cocktails. He still justifies his indecisiveness, claiming that “there will be time” (l. 23) for everything, starting from the yellow fog that envelops the city to murder and creation to indecision. His indecisiveness floats on top again as he thinks of taking a decision then of reversing it in a minute “In a minute there is time for decision and revision which a minute will reverse”. He believes that there is enough time to do many things and to think and rethink of them, before “the taking of toast and tea” with a lady. Again the women “come and go talking of Michael Angelo”. They are still dully talking of art and artists. Prufrock is aware of his intolerability among women, knowing they value a Renaissance painter. Prufrock contemplates his acceptability to women as his hair grows bald and his arms and legs grow thin. He even imagines the way in which women will talk about him: “but how his arms and legs are thin!” He also doubts the acceptability of his clothing: “My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin,/ my necktie rich and modest, but asserted by a simple pin-” Prufrock wonders “Do I dare?” twice. This is Prufrock’s “overwhelming question”. He thinks whether he dares to disturb the universe that placed him inferior to his peers. It is this universe that put him in a vulnerable position. Prufrock’s life seems like a continuous passing of time. He is very well aware of it. He is tired of boring conversations, pretentious social life and uninteresting people that he constantly meets. He is himself as affected and boring as they are. He has been gazed at many times. He was pinned into the wall like an insect

with the relentless stares of his peers. People judged him while he was unable to defend himself or explain the mediocrity of his life: “When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall”. He is particularly vulnerable to women’s stares. He declares that he already knew refined women:

And I have known the arms already, known them all—  
Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair!] (ll. 62 -64)

It seems as though they are merely braceleted white arms to him. He wonders what makes him think of them: “is it perfume from a dress that makes me so digress?” The sensual appeal in a woman surpasses the scholarly. Prufrock is not drawn into the intellect and knowledge of women but rather to the sheer perfume of their dresses. The daunting appeal of the women’s brown hair seems to work on Prufrock’s nerves. He is both intimidated by and drawn into their physicality. Prufrock contemplates telling a woman about the lonely men he sees leaning out the windows. These men are very much like him; they watch life goes by while they do not take part in it. But he tacitly worries that the woman does not care about his stories. He breaks the seriousness of his thoughts as he wishes that he were a crab in the depth of the ocean. But as caricaturist as it seems, Prufrock’s wish is a desperate longing to “escape the imperatives of consciousness”<sup>68</sup>. He wants to avoid the burdens of masculinity and the burdens of social life.

Time passes by peacefully. The speaker wonders again whether he should live a conventional life of making acquaintances and taking chances. He imagines his head

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<sup>68</sup> A. D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet*, Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1980), p. 36.

brought upon a platter like John the Baptist but of course he knows he is “no prophet” and that his entire life is not a “great matter”. He had seen his chances come and go; he saw death and it scared him. Prufrock wonders whether it will be worth it to try to talk to a woman while having tea, knowing that she will reject and mock him. He wonders whether it would have been worth it to be with the woman at sunset or with her in a dooryard. He is worried that she will unemotionally say: “That is not what I meant at all./ That is not it, at all” (l. 101 – 102). She turns toward a window in a detached casually, explaining that he was mistaken about her intentions towards him. Prufrock declares that he is “not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be”. The latter, although indecisive at the beginning of the Shakespearean play, eventually reacts causing his own death. Prufrock compares himself instead, to Polonius, the lord chamberlain in Shakespeare’s play *Hamlet: Prince of Denmark*. Polonius is sometimes the fool. He is a talkative old man who constantly involves himself in people’s affairs and ends up mistakably killed as he overhears a conversation. Through the nineteen stanzas, Prufrock contemplates his life. He particularly thinks of his relationship with women. Their presence seems to pose a threat. He is aware of his loneliness, indecisiveness and his awkward relationship both with women and with his peers. His worries reflect the genuine anxieties of the modern man: fear of emasculation and inadequacy which is the expected result of unduly self-scrutiny.

*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is primarily an insight into the mind of an archetypal middle aged modern man. Hence, Prufrock’s views on women reflect the views of the Western culture. Prufrock’s unease with women stems from his own weakness rather than their wicked nature. He is an individual frustrated by his own



gender. His masculinity compels him to assume certain attitudes that he does not want to adhere to. He has, however, no choice but to assume them in order to fit into his social circle of women and his peers of men. He is an awkward modern man in a world of unstable gender roles and social classes. It is a fair claim that most of Eliot's poetry "speaks precisely to the crisis that is staged when the erotic and the phantasmatic desires of a modern, self-conscious subjectivity encounters conventional codes of conduct"<sup>69</sup>. This is a particularly correct statement to pronounce on *Prufrock*. The psycho-sociological uncertainty that overwhelms him is the result of a confrontation between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. He obviously longs for both emotional and physical connection with women; his hesitation and weakness before women seem to cripple him. The gruesome feminine takes the form of emotional disablement. Women render Prufrock emotionally vulnerable.

The poem, like "Sweeney Erect", portrays the female world as different from the male one. Men and women seem to speak different languages and are consequently unable to understand each other: "this is not what I meant at all" the woman says. Eliot explores in this line the difficulty of communication. The failure of language to deliver one's thoughts is also present six lines earlier as the woman exclaims: "It is impossible to say just what I mean!" (l. 109). Women in Prufrock's world, like the women in Sweeney's, live in a world different from men. Hence, misunderstanding ensues. Remarkably, Prufrock's love song is never sung. The only song in the poem is that of the mermaids, and they do not sing to him. There is a faint reminder of Odysseus when

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<sup>69</sup> Gabrielle McIntire, op. cit., p. 80.

sirens tried to enchant him and his men. Prufrock's inadequacy and failure are so intense that the mermaids do not want to charm him. He is neither a great commander like Odysseus, nor a talented artist like Michael Angelo.

The women mentioned in the poem are the prostitutes – invoked by cheap hotels, the refined women discussing Renaissance artists, and the mermaids. Prufrock walks through bodies<sup>70</sup>, from the sawdust – used to cover animals' flesh and blood – to prostitutes' flesh in “one night cheap hotels”, to the places of higher culture where “women come and go talking of Michael Angelo”. Indeed, his walk through the city is a journey through bodies. The women in Prufrock's city vary in terms of social status. Prufrock walks past cheap hotels but he does not seem acquainted with them. He is rather looking at them from a safe distance. One may easily infer that Prufrock does not possess Sweeney's callousness and audacity; he is not a man who would visit prostitutes. He is a rather shy man that cannot even start a conversation properly. Prostitution, on the other hand, is a part of the city life which Eliot tended to explore in his early poetry. An immersed modernist, Eliot cannot help but portray the city life. As we have seen in the precedent section, prostitution was a way of asserting women's presence within a patriarchal community; affirming their control over their own bodies while gaining a living. In a different part of Prufrock's city, a more lucid female appearance is that of “The women come and go/ talking of Michael Angelo”. These two lines are fraught with modern fatigue associated here with intellectual

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 93.

women whose admiration Prufrock aspires to gain. Although they are the opposite of the former image of women –i.e. prostitutes – they are equally misunderstood.

Eliot's interest in portraying the relatively exclusive European social circles stems from his awareness of the affected nature of its people. Eliot once called the Boston society "quite uncivilized but refined beyond the point of civilization"<sup>71</sup>. The reference applies to all western societies associated with the modern city. Whether in Europe or the United States, the refined behavior is a mere image that hides the innate savagery of human kind. It is merely "a face to meet the faces that you meet". It is, in fact, a social necessity as demonstrated by Prufrock, the modern male prototype. Willing to fit into his society, he manages to find the right face for each occasion. Women, equally, seem preordained to assume the image believed as standard. Indeed the bare white arms ornamented with bracelets are closer to a social obligation than a genuine aesthetic attempt; Prufrock's women wear bracelets because they ought to in order to appeal to men and to other women as well. The refined talk about artists is another way to conform to the requirements of the intellectual society.

In the poem, the speaker's view of women oscillates continuously between curiosity, apprehensiveness and horror. Prufrock in fact embodies the state of unnerved men in the presence of women. Female corporeality seems threatening to Prufrock who has seen all the "Arms that are braceleted and white and bare/ (But in the lamplight downed with light brown hair!)". He seems to be endangered by the

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<sup>71</sup> Eliot quoted in Eric Sigg, The American T.S. Eliot: a Study of Early Writings. ( New York, Cambridge University Press: 1989), p. 155.

appeal of the arms then he exhibits repulsion and shock to the light brown hair revealed by the lamplight. His shock is revealed through the exclamation mark and the parenthesis. He exhibits the disturbance of vision and the inability to speak when facing a woman.

Another feminine image in the poem is that of the mermaids who sing but will not sing to Prufrock. They are presented in an active role (“Riding sea-ward”) and they seem caring. The image of combing the white hair of the waves suggests a typical feminine trait within a patriarchal background; women are supposed to be caring, tender and benevolent.

Hostile reactions to the feminine, thus, are the result of misunderstanding it. Fearing the female may be a result of fearing its authority. It is thus a way of admitting women’s position in society and history. Women’s innate power lies in their sexuality. Prufrock for instance, is intimidated by women’s appearance. The female presence, therefore, is not repulsive but threatening, causing men to lose composure.

### **2.2.2. *Portrait of a Lady*: Women and Class**

Interestingly, three of the most prominent modernist poems are entitled “Portrait of a Lady”. Pound’s “Portrait d’une Femme” and William Carlos Williams’ “Portrait of a Lady” along with Eliot’s poem draw upon the title of Henry James’s novel. This suggests the curiosity and ardor with which modernists viewed the work of their predecessors. Like most of Eliot’s poems, *Portrait of a Lady* starts with an epigraph: “Thou hast committed – Fornication: but that was in another country, And besides, the

wench is dead.” The epigraph is extracted from Christopher Marlowe’s *The Jew of Malta*, Act IV, scene i<sup>72</sup>. This epigraph is particularly brilliant for it provides a fine irony that allows a lucid perception of the entire poem. In the scene from which the epigraph was taken, Barabas, the hero of the play, defeats the friars who attempt to condemn his crimes. Whenever they accuse him of a crime, he interrupts to prove himself clean of it. He is accused of committing fornication but he replies that it was in another country and that the “wench” is dead. His callousness and vulgarity is paralleled with the speaker’s own apathy and affected genteelism in *Portrait of a Lady*. The man in Eliot’s poem also contemplates the possibility of the lady’s death while he is in another country. He believes that he cannot take her death lightly although he ignored her uneasy and timid advances. The only sharp contrast between the man in the epigraph and the speaker in the poem lies in language. While Barabas is a vulgar man who refers to the woman he committed fornication with as “wench”, the narrator of *Portrait of a Lady* uses refined terms.

Eliot’s poem, composed in November, 1911, is an elaborated exploration of a relationship between a man and an older upper middle class woman. The poem is divided tentatively into three parts. The division of the poem suggests the course of the supposed friendship to start by winter: “Among the smoke and fog of a December afternoon”(l. 1) to spring: “Now that lilacs are in bloom” (l. 41) and ending in autumn: “The October night comes down” (l. 84) The narrator and his female companion discuss various topics like music, friendship and youth. Notably, it is only the lady that talks;

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<sup>72</sup> Jane Worthington, op. cit., p. 3.

the male speaker keeps drifting into careless reveries and only smiles at her. The opening of the poem refers to a foggy “December afternoon” with a scene resembling “Juliet’s tomb”. Interestingly, the poem starts with a dead “wench” and the tomb of a star-crossed young woman and ends with the possibility of the lady’s death. The woman’s first talk is about how Chopin’s music is intimate. She talks about her dear friends and how lucky she feels that they understand her. Her discussion moves from a topic to another. She speaks about life, stressing that her companion – the speaker – must hold it in his hands. She speaks about the delight and “cruelty of youth”. The man does not respond to her talk. He “only smile[s] and go[es] on drinking tea.” One can speculate the man’s boredom as he listened to the lady’s old-fashioned advice. He, however, assumes the attitude appropriate to the lady’s class and to his own; he replies to her talks with a smile.

The lady is melancholic, frustrated by her banal, uninteresting life: “a life composed so much of odds and ends”(l. 21). She eases the banality of her life through engaging in social events; she goes to concerts and surrounds herself with “friends” that she serves tea to. She even admits to the narrator that her life is a nightmare without their presence: “life, what *cauchemar!*” The lady seems to desire a closer relationship with her companion but he coldly manages to avoid her. Unlike the forlorn lady, the narrator seems quite content with his unromantic life style:

You will see me any morning in the park  
Reading the comics and the sporting page.  
Particularly I remark  
An English countess goes upon the stage.  
A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance,  
Another bank defaulter has confessed. (ll. 71-77)

He is a typical modern man who does not concern himself with issues of youth and existence. He reads comics and superficial, miscellaneous news trying to avoid the intimacy created by the lady's questionings. The narrator's self-possession is positioned stiffly against the lady's earnest desire of making a deep connection with him. As she grows old, she realizes that she is condemned to a dull and shallow lifestyle: she only will "sit here, serving tea to friends". Her confession only makes him feel more uncomfortable. The faint hopes she had of making him a close friend of hers disappear as he announces his departure. His decision to leave the country appalls her. Yet, she manages to hide her distress, asking him to write to her while abroad. One can easily sense the intensity of her loneliness as she implores him to remain in contact with her. Noticeably, the narrator does not feel as sad as the lady feels with his departure, although he realizes that he might have torn down the woman's hopes of finding happiness. His last line, however, implies a certain degree of pity: "If she dies... And should I have the right to smile?"(l. 124)

Evidently, the woman's attempts to emotionally bond with the narrator are often accompanied with the motif of music. It is a prominent feature in the poem. Music represents intimacy and the joy of sharing aesthetic beauty. After attending a musical concert together, the lady points out:

"So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul  
Should be resurrected only among friends  
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom  
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room." (ll. 10- 13)

She believes that the intimacy created by Chopin's music should be shared only among good friends. Her emotional remark goes unheeded; the man listens to her as

she speaks but he is not as engaged emotionally as she is. Her talk is merely about “velleities and carefully caught regrets”, accentuated by the fainting sounds of violins and cornets. She begins again to talk about her “friends”:

“You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,  
And how, how rare and strange it is, to find  
...  
To find a friend who has these qualities,  
Who has, and gives  
Those qualities upon which friendship lives.  
How much it means that I say this to you —  
Without these friendships — life, what *cauchemar!*” (ll. 19- 28)

She starts another sentimental conversation about the preciousness of friendships, affirming that without them life would be a nightmare. Ariettes and cornets reappear a few lines later:

Among the windings of the violins  
And the ariettes  
Of cracked cornets  
Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins  
Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own,  
Capricious monotone  
That is at least one definite “false note.”(ll. 29-35).

The melancholic talk of the lady agitates the narrator. A dull drum starts an absurd “prelude of its own” with a “capricious monotone”. The monotony of the drum within his head is an unsympathetic reaction to what he thinks of as a tedious talk. The tom-tom evokes a primitive, impulsive sound that contrasts the liveliness and rhythmicity of Chopin’s piano pieces. It is also a contrast between the lady’s character and the man’s own. Tom-toms usually call to mind unsophisticated war-cries and wild dances which oppose the refined pieces Chopin played to courteous nineteenth century listeners. The narrator unmistakably wants the drinking of tea to continue in silence and avoid an unnecessary heart-felt relationship. The fact that the man does not wish the same kind of deep emotional connection that the lady desires is established early in



the poem. The male speaker is most probably struck by his female companion's social status and the authority that stems from that. The fear of the feminine/ female is also related to its seemingly apparent emotional vulnerability. The man does not seem capable of handling the lady's emotional dependence. When he distracts himself with thoughts of miscellaneous news, the sound of a piano interrupts him:

Except when a street-piano, mechanical and tired  
Reiterates some worn-out common song  
With the smell of hyacinths across the garden  
Recalling things that other people have desired.(ll. 79 – 82)

The sound of the piano possibly reminds him of the Chopin concert and the lady's desire for friendship. He refers to her merely as "other people", suggesting that the friendship she wished for was never accomplished. Noticeably, it is only the lady that talks while the man only smiles, caught in few reveries throughout the poem. One-sided conversations evoke the difficulty of communication, the failure of modern human relationships and reinforce the male and the female as distinct worlds. Such notions appear for instance in *The Waste Land* as we shall see.

One may note that sometimes the male unease with the female presence stems not from the woman's corporeality only but from her social status as well. In *Portrait of a Lady* the male speaker seems to be preoccupied with the woman's higher social standing. The poem seems social class-oriented rather than misogynist. The lady is a hostess of the beau monde to which the male speaker does not belong. Hence, the male speaker is more concerned with her class than her corporeality. But he resembles Prufrock in many ways. The male speaker's "Prufrockian" uncertainty and timidity is coupled with an introverted "Sweeneyish" grossness.

The lady speaks about serving tea to friends and asks the man to write to her while abroad. She is portrayed as naïve and clingy. The man tries to remain self-possessed but her attitude makes it difficult. He tries to distract himself by thinking of the miscellaneous newspapers that often bring odds together: “A Greek was murdered at a Polish dance”. He is, despite his attempts, shaken and unnerved by her presence: “My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark” (l. 101). Different from the Sweeney poems’ degenerate images of prostitution and squalid sexuality, the lady in the poem is still far from satisfying women’s aspiration of fair depiction. She is an intellectual woman who knows Chopin, and talks about life and youth yet her social standing is more appealing to the man than her mind.

*Portrait of a Lady* along with *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* is exemplary of Eliot’s early poetry preoccupied with bourgeoisie and the social life of the city. While the *Portrait* is centered on a woman’s advances towards an unemotional man, the *Love Song* focuses on a timid man’s fear of approaching a woman. The two poems play upon the difficulty of communication and the fear of rejection. The representation of women in the two poems is interesting to compare. Prufrock’s women are portrayed as threatening and capable of emotionally emasculating a man. They can easily rebuff his advances and ridicule him. The lady in the *Portrait*, however, is quite the reverse. She is portrayed as naïve, shy, clingy and emotional. She is a woman that attends music concerts, just like Prufrock’s women who attend art galleries. She, however, lacks the self-confidence and glamour of youth. She is portrayed as melancholic and lonesome. One may sense how gloomy it is if her “friends” are as apathetic and insensitive as the narrator. The lady induces pity. *Portrait of a Lady* focuses on the

portrayal of a female character and the effects that she has upon her male companion. Her social status contributes to the authority and pity she prompts. *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* portrays a male character and his relationship with women. The gruesome feminine is a two-fold concept here.

In the poems analyzed above, Eliot may appear like a hateful misogynist to whom female sexuality is disgusting and the mere female presence is daunting, irritating and scorn-worthy. Female sexuality in Eliot's poetry is often undesired even if not repulsive. Sweeney simply ignores the women around him and Prufrock is intimidated by the mere brown hair on their arms. The stereotypical representation of women in Eliot's poems attests to the andro-centeredness of an entire culture. The poems treated in this section share the notion of sordid female body. Women's extra-linguistic communications, particularly the images of prostitution, chatter and monstrous genitalia threaten the patriarchal imagination. The male-dominated cultural mindset sanctions the female body as the phallus' object of desire. Indeed, in a hetero-normative social setting, the female body is the object of male craving. Thus, Eliot's depiction of it as morbid, unclean and threatening endangers the patriarchal imagery. Eliot's early poetry speaks to the simultaneous desire for and fears of heterosexual intimacy. The malaise of heterosexual relationships is intensified by sexualizing the female body and refuting its appeal at the same time. Sexuality in all its forms is dissatisfactory in Eliot's poems as shall be demonstrated throughout this work. Sweeney in "Sweeney Erect", for instance, dominates the epileptic prostitute sexually and leaves her writhing in pain while he shaves. The act of coitus itself may be considered symbolic of phallic dominance. He is also economically dominating since

he pays the prostitute for her services. This payment grants him the right to escape the courtesies that usually precede sexual intercourse. Hence, the woman is turned into a mere sexual object that has no further rights beyond the money that she is given.

The fallen woman is the common archetype for the poems analyzed in this chapter. It refers with keen subtlety to the sexually active yet sterile female. Women in Eliot's early poetry never conceive nor give birth despite their innumerable fornications. Women have long been considered responsible for decay in the western cultures. In Christian mythology, for example, she is responsible for expelling mankind from Paradise. The Original Sin claims that Eve persuaded Adam to eat the forbidden apple after she did. Hence, she caused the descent of mankind to earth to suffer the miseries of wars, diseases and famine. Women representation in Eliot's poetry is fraught with gender stereotypes. The assumption that patriarchy is inherent in human societies is sought to be explained and maintained through the eight bases mentioned by Millett as we have already seen. For example, men are biologically more muscular than women, which gives them the upper hand in fights. Early men were responsible of protecting their families. Early agricultural societies determined the provider of food as ruler. In Eliot's early poems, the male supposed superiority is manifested at three main levels: sexual, cultural and economic. Culturally, men are thought superior to women by default. As we have already seen, men and women are raised in different manners since childhood. The assigned social role for each gender establishes a major sphere of action for men and a marginal one for women. The Western culture sets men on top, disregarding women's abilities and cultural level. Sexually, Sweeney's condescending treatment to his female companions is but an

attempt to assert male dominance. In “Hysteria” for instance, the woman is portrayed as threatening to the man’s ego. Her sheer laughter is a dangerous to the man’s self-possession.

So far, women are categorized into prostitutes, artificial middle class art lovers and overly-attached upper middle-class bourgeois. Gender and class stereotypes are mingled. Women representation in Eliot’s early poetry is multilayered. The three categories of women share an impression of decadence. The prostitute is a culturally defined as a fallen woman. The lady of the *Portrait* issues what appears like an emotional prostitution. She offers her friendship, time and sociability and expects the man to care in return. The art lovers seem to exchange the ethical with the aesthetic. They are aware of cultural matters, and discuss them eloquently but are represented as void within. They resemble Pound’s lady in “Portrait d’une Femme” in their high refinement, the diversity of their knowledge and their supposed moral barrenness.

Throughout the poems, the various forms taken by the feminine seem at best unfair. Women are not endowed with voices –and even when they are, their voices are ignored. They represent the negative sides of all issues compared to men and they are not in the right position to define or defend themselves. Women in Eliot’s early poetry often incite a threatening gruesomeness although it is often implicit. They are fallen, emotionally unstable and morally frail that they can offer men neither consolation nor a sense of redemption. Women, in addition, seem to threaten men’s egos. Thus, even insensitive, coarse men like Sweeney seem to dread their nature. One thinks of the conspiring women in “Sweeney Among the Nightingales” and the unease they provoked within him. Gender stereotypes in Eliot’s poetry are applicable to both men

and women. For instance, men are mostly portrayed either as indifferent, unemotional and sometimes even lethargic like the narrator in *Portrait of a Lady* or merely preoccupied with sex like Sweeney. Female characters in T.S. Eliot's poetry seem bereft of individuality at a first glance. They do not possess an identity as they are depersonalized into objects of desire. Their corporeality is both alluring and repulsive. A careful look into women's choices will reveal a tacit anti-patriarchal revolt. Women in Eliot's poetry subvert the patriarchal norms of society and establish a new ground for women resistance. Although they are scarcely allowed to undermine the actions of men with their language, they challenge male supremacy with their acts. In the Sweeney poems, the prostitutes defy male dominance. As submissive as they seem, prostitution is their medium of struggle. Although mostly forced by circumstances, prostitution remains a choice. They offer their services in exchange of material gain. They also deny men any sense of achievement by not enjoying the intercourse. Moreover, by turning coitus into a mere mechanical act, prostitutes remove any sense of being emotionally bound to men. The act itself embodies a form of personal freedom. The poems analyzed so far share a stereotypical representation of women that adheres to the patriarchal imagination. Women are fallen, dangerous and uninteresting. Men are threatened by the mere female presence. There is also a sense of misunderstanding between men and women; they seem to belong to different worlds. The gap between them is bridged in *The Waste Land*, as shall be illustrated in the next chapter. Their lack of communication only attests to their common torment.

**CHAPTER III:**

***THE WASTE LAND: A PLIGHT TRENSCENDING GENDER***

*The Waste Land* is considered as one of the most canonical modernist works as it treated the social, economic and political anomies of the twentieth century, making an extensive use of modernist innovative literary elements. The variety of characters in *The Waste Land* is perhaps its most conspicuous characteristic. The poem is fraught with voices; male and female, formal and colloquial, serene and restless, refined and vulgar. Eliot's original title for *The Waste Land* was "He do the Police in Different Voices"; inspired by Charles Dickens' novel "Our Mutual Friend". The diversity of voices suggests the multiplicity and the complexity of lives in modern society.

Eliot, in particular, is aware of the fact that "history has many cunning passages"<sup>73</sup>. *The Waste Land* epitomizes Eliot's engagement with the past; its very form reflects the chaotic state of post-World War Europe. The position of the poem in the third chapter is a reinforcement of modernism's obsession with history. Modernists are often in a position to mourn, venerate or criticize history. The plight of humanity in *The Waste Land* is that of disarticulation. Individuals seem dislocated and unable to fit within their spheres of action. They equally seem to undergo a sudden break with the norms, which is difficult to encounter. Men and women are subjected to a modern social dilemma. Although they suffer different kinds of trauma, they are quite similar in the scars it leaves on them. The plight of modern society transcends gender. Male or female, the characters of *The Waste Land* share a sense of physical restlessness, anomie and despair.

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<sup>73</sup> T.S. Eliot, op. cit. *Gerontion*, line 34.



### 3.1. Women in *The Waste Land*: “I wish to die”

As in many of Eliot’s poems, *The Waste Land* starts with an epigraph that parallels the ancient Western culture with the modern one. It intensifies his profound sense of dependency upon tradition. Women in *The Waste Land* appear as early as the epigraph which is extracted from Petronius’s *Satyricon*. At a dinner party the host asks in an ignorant, uncouth manner for a story out of Homer. Mention of Homeric extraordinary people reminds him that he himself saw a remarkable person. The host prides himself on having seen the Cumaean Sibyl with his own eyes. As she hang in a cage, children called to her “Sibyl, what do you want?” She replied “I want to die”. The conversation of the host and his guests is interrupted by the arrival of a pig, which was immediately slaughtered, cooked and stuffed with sausages and pudding<sup>74</sup>. The scene centered on flesh – as opposed to the spirit – is a preamble to the poem’s savagery, which is manifested in the unease of social relationships and cultural disintegration. Eliot’s epigraph establishes a link between the society of the *Satyricon* and that of *The Waste Land*. They are both callous and unspiritual societies where monstrosities are not uncommon. Both societies display a lack of the distinction between good and evil, between the sensible and the utterly insane. It is a world where the words of seers and prophets are reduced to mere gibberish. Indeed, in a world so infected with fake progress, where spiritual guidance is lost and sages are only fit to be hung in cages and taunted by children, there is very little chance for redemption. An understandable kinship seems to exist between Sibyl and Tiresias, the poem’s most

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<sup>74</sup> Jane Worthington, op. cit. pp. 13 – 14.

distinctive speaker as shall be noted. They both have been granted immortality without youth and both have “foresuffered all”. Sibyl expresses the natural desire to end her suffering by death. The Cumaean Sibyl does in many ways adumbrate the general eerie mood of the poem. Her very name means the prophetess. Her longing for endless life and her tragic perpetual torment symbolize the Western civilization. She had beauty and asked for eternal life. Apollo granted her immortality but without eternal youth. Thus, she grew too old, sick and weak that she yearned for death. In *The Waste Land* she embodies modern Europe. Accordingly, it is very significant that she wishes to die. The Western world aspired for progress but was traumatized by the destruction of the First World War, and was left in a moribund state. The reference to the Cumaean Sibyl is, in fact, a reference to the pain of living, the futility of existence, and the desperate longing for death – feelings that were not uncommon in the post-World War period. *The Waste Land* is primarily a poem about the anguish of Western civilization in its time of crisis. Sybil’s suffering, on the other hand, is a preface to the treatment of the female body in the poem. The fact that she longs for death is quite significant. The representation of women in *The Waste Land* is established upon Sybil’s suffering. As one reads the poem one easily notices that the different female characters in *The Waste Land* are haunted by the past, tormented by the present and trying to glance into a bleak future. Marie the first female speaker is the aristocratic cousin of the archduke. She is nostalgic to childhood, when she was comforted by the presence of her cousin and the simple joy of childish amusement:

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke’s,  
My cousin’s, he took me out on a sled,  
And I was frightened. He said, Marie,  
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.  
I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (ll. 13 – 18)

Caught in nostalgia, she recalls how he took her out on a sled, bidding her to hold on tightly as they went down. She recalls the feelings of freedom in the mountains. She, then, declares that she “read[s] much of the night and go [es] south in winter”. She is obviously an anxious woman who cannot sleep properly and spends her insomniac nights reading instead of talking to someone else. Her reading a book also suggests that as she grew old she preferred the company of books over adventures in the snowy mountain. Her wistful speech is interrupted by a solemn voice asking: “What are the roots that clutch/ what branches grow out of this stony rubbish” then answers that human knowledge is fragmented and incomplete: “a heap of broken images, where the sun beats”. It suggests that Marie’s memories –and equally all the remembrances of the humankind– are nothing but a pile of broken images and questions their reliability. Despite the riches she enjoys as an aristocratic woman, Marie seems torn and broken-hearted. She is pressured by her class as well as her femininity. She seems forsaken yet she longs for no companionship. The only memory she has of a companion is that of her young cousin in their childhood, a memory that would ultimately fade. Remarkably, Marie sense of loss and suppressed pain is present in almost all female characters in the poem.

The following lines in German are extracted from Wagner’s *Tristan and Isolde*, which tells the story of two ill-fated lovers. The lines are spoken by a sailor who mourns the love of a girl that he left behind during his travels. Immediately, a young woman mourns her own lost love life. The hyacinth girl seems quite a younger version

of Marie; a continuation to her. They both recall incidents from a happier past. It is a description of adolescent love as remembered later by the woman and man who experienced it. The girl addresses her beloved who recalls incidents from the same day:

“You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;  
“They called me the hyacinth girl.”  
—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,  
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not  
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither  
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,  
Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (ll. 35 – 41)

She remembers how he offered her hyacinths while he remembers when they came back from the garden “[her] arms full and [her] hair wet”. Hyacinths are a recurrent motif in Eliot’s poetry; they also appear in *Portrait of a Lady*, representing grief, resurrection and loss. In Greek mythology, the unmatched beauty of young Hyacinthus attracted the attentions of Apollo who accidentally killed him while training him to throw the discus<sup>75</sup>. Hyacinths, then, grew out of the young man’s blood. They became the symbol of mourning and loss. These fervent “hyacinth girl” lines reveal the effect of passion upon delicate young individuals. Both men and women can relate to the speaker’s state of mind: “my eyes failed/ and I knew nothing” (ll. 39 – 40). Passion sometimes cannot find expression in word that even the eyes fail. The emotionally-charged episode describes the scene with a fascinating vividness. The girl and the boy seem captivated by the moment; they look into “the heart of light”. The description of the hyacinth girl resembles that of the young woman

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<sup>75</sup> “Hyacinthus”. Encyclopaedia Britannica. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/277923/Hyacinthus>. Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015. Accessed in 24- 08- 2014.

in “La Figlia Che Piange”<sup>76</sup>, an earlier poem describing the parting of two lovers. She is veiled in tenderness, sorrow and youthful hope. Her sad recollection suggests a less happy present that leads her to escape to the brighter past. The image contrasts that of the prostitutes in the Sweeney poems as noted in the previous chapter. The shy young woman in these lines seems to dwell in a world different from that of the audacious prostitute who attempts to “sit on Sweeney’s knees” and indifferently yawns as she falls to the floor. She is, however, burdened with silent pain which make her another tortured woman in *The Waste Land*, in which the plight outdoes gender issues.

The next woman to appear in the poem is Madame Sosostriis the “famous clairvoyante”. She is a modern time Sibyl. However, unlike the Sibyl, she does not suffer immortality but is caught in the social and economic trap that forces her to seek financial security through exploiting her prophetic powers. She illustrates the contrasts of modern Europe; she is the “wisest woman in Europe/ with a *wicked*”<sup>77</sup> pack of cards” (l. 46). The lines draw a sharp irony between wisdom and wickedness in decadent modern society. In her card-reading, she reveals dark omens to her visitor. She sees “crowds of people walking around in a ring” (l. 56); it is a modern hell where people walk endlessly in meaningless circular movements. The plight of the modern society is clearly unrelated to one single gender; people with indistinct gender walk aimlessly. They are identified neither as women nor men; they are “crowds” walking around but not aspiring for anything. Indeed, Madame Sosostriis personifies cultural disintegration through her card-reading. One of the most interesting cards she

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<sup>76</sup> The poem first appeared in 1917 *Prufrock and Other Observations*. The title translates as “The Weeping Girl”. It is fraught with tenderness in its description of the girl’s sadness.

<sup>77</sup> Italics here are mine.

mentions is the belladonna. The name is fraught with contradicted meanings. Literally, “belladonna” means “the beautiful lady” in Italian. But the name also refers to a poisonous plant the juice of which was used by women cosmetically to dilate the pupils. There is no card with this name in the traditional tarot, but it is likely to be the Queen of Cups. She is the “lady of the rocks” in a reference to da Vinci’s painting “Virgin of the Rocks” while “the lady of situations” refers probably to prostitution, making Belladonna a character full of contrasts. Women characters do, indeed, illustrate and reinforce the dark atmosphere of the poem at different levels.

The second section of the poem, “A Game of Chess” features a number of women. Interestingly, the title is inspired by Thomas Middleton’s tragedy *Women Beware Women* as Eliot informs the readers. Middleton’s play tells the story of Bianca’s love to Leantio and how the Duke of Florence attempts to woo her. The Duke’s steps to seduce Bianca are synchronized with the game of chess played by Bianca’s mother-in-law and Livia, the duke’s accomplice. The section starts with an exquisite description of a woman’s luxurious boudoir:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,  
Glowed on the marble, where the glass  
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines  
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out  
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing)  
Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra  
Reflecting light upon the table as  
The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,  
From satin cases poured in rich profusion; (ll. 77 – 85)

The “burnished throne” refers to Shakespeare’s Antony and Cleopatra. The reference creates a parallel between passionate ancient love relationships and modern ones. It also suggests the majesty of the woman and adds to the grandeur of the scene.

The diction is carefully chosen to reflect the splendor of the setting. Words like “burnished throne”, “fruited vines”, “seven-branched candelabra”, “laqueria” suggest a queen-like room compared to the ghastly nature of its inhabitants as illustrated by the scene that follows.

In vials of ivory and coloured glass  
Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,  
Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused  
And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air  
That freshened from the window, these ascended  
In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,  
Flung their smoke into the laquearia,  
Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.  
Huge sea-wood fed with copper  
Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured stone,  
In which sad light a carved dolphin swam. (ll. 86 – 96)

There is a particular emphasis on scents in the eighty-fifth to the ninety-third lines that is closely related to modern woman’s life. There is a hint at the woman’s fascination with artificial odors. The woman’s “strange synthetic perfumes” lurk in ivory and glass containers and fill the entire room with a sense of fakery and tawdriness. The perfumes “drowned the sense in odours” suggesting the overwhelming power of the artificial over the natural. In the same room, a painting describing Philomela’s “change” is hung upon the wall. It has a darkening effect upon the already ominous room:

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. (ll. 97 – 103)

Philomela’s famous myth of rape, enchantment as a nightingale and her crying “jug jug to dirty ears” is close to the neurotic woman’s desperate conversation. In the

following lines, the lady seems also to cry incomprehensible language to her indifferent husband. Philomela is essential in the poem as shall be noted later. The neurotic woman's hair "spread[s] out in fiery points" as she brushes it, in a surreal image that underpins the idea of women's power. T.S. Eliot appears to be well aware of women's newly acquired ability to express their minds; their very hair "glow[s] into words". The glowing hair recalls the image of a goddess, which is ironic regarding the desperate state of the neurotic woman. The woman's hair spreads into fire but then "would be savagely still". One would wonder whether it would be "savagely still" or "stilled". While it suggests women's inarticulateness, it suggests also the silencing process that women confront. Curiously, the woman's hair in the hyacinth lines is wet as though passion waters it while the neurotic woman's hair is in flames. The latter's life is deprived of the ardor that she strives for.

The neurotic woman is one of the most significant female characters in the poem. She is a modern Cleopatra, described with high-flown words. She is sat in a chair that resembles "a burnished throne". The woman's exquisite surroundings do not make her desolation any milder. She suffers an instable psychological state along with her husband's indifference. Indeed, the one-sided conversation is the core of "A game of Chess". The relationship is paralleled to a game of chess, suggesting a play upon power. The woman declares to her husband:

"My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.  
"Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak.  
"What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?  
"I never know what you are thinking. Think." (ll. 111- 114)



The scene starts with a setting that empowers the woman as queen, and then portrays the bleak conversation that she has with her husband. The latter, through his silence and apathy usurps the woman's power and makes her look helpless. The shift of power reoccurs throughout the poem. The neurotic woman is obviously troubled and powerless. She begs her husband to stay with her and speak to her but he does not show the least sign of care. The woman talks anxiously about her uncertainties, beseeching him to reveal his thoughts but he remains silent, flirting with his grim ideas within his own mind: I think we are in rats' alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones. The man's mind is filled with nothing except rat alleys and lost bones, and in his memory nothing lingers but a Shakespearean rag. As the woman carries on asking her questions about the future: "what shall we do tomorrow?/ what shall we ever do?", the man's thoughts are sordidly attached to the mundane: "hot water at ten / And if it rains, a closed car at four/ and we shall play a game of chess" (ll. 136 – 137). The woman pitifully suffers the neglect of her husband along with bad nerves. This is the first instance of a female character tormented by her position as wife, her bourgeois life as well as her femininity. By the end of the conversation, the woman suggests that she shall "rush out as [she is] and walk the street with [her] hair down, so". She actually threatens her husband with leaving him. Still, he does not reply. Her despair is contrasted by her husband's indifference. But despite his apparent apathy, the man seems to dwell in a hell of his own, quite similar to his wife's as we shall see in the next section. Philomela, the most important female character in the poem, appears in the lavish room of the neurotic woman, in a painting describing the former's rape:

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; (ll. 97 – 100)

Philomel is another tortured mythical character who actually personifies a play upon sexual politics. She represents men's oppression and women's resistance. The myth of Philomela's rape appears in Ovid's *The Metamorphoses*. King Tereus was married to Procne, an Athenian princess but lusted after her sister Philomela. Not requiting his attentions, the king one day raped her. To prevent her from revealing the truth, he cut her tongue. She, however, made a tapestry describing Tereus' savagery and showed it to Procne. Then the two women conspired against the king and served him his son Itys in a stew. When the king discovered what they did he chased them with an axe, but the gods turned Philomela into a nightingale and Procne into a swallow<sup>78</sup>. One notes that Greek mythology is fraught with violence against women and is used wittily by Eliot to reinforce his pessimistic ideas about modern society. Philomela is alluded to twice in the poem. Philomela's suffering is three-fold; she endures rape – which is the ultimate sexual trauma, the cruelty of physical mutilation and the oppression of being unable to talk. Men's supposed superiority is underpinned through their ability to enforce their own laws however unfair. The king's savage act of rape may be taken as a reaction to a resistant woman who is considered threatening to the male-dominated community. Philomela's voice is not necessarily understood as all that people hear is “jug jug”. Violated as she is, she fills the entire desert with an “inviolable voice”. Despite the physical trauma and the sexual subjugation, the woman's voice is heard. She is resistant to all types of oppression. Philomela is the

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<sup>78</sup> Stephen Coote, op. cit. p. 131.

archetypal female in *The Waste Land*. Several modern women are implicitly modeled after her, like Lil and the neurotic woman, for instance. She is also an example of a resisting woman in a male-dominated world.

In the next a few lines, a female speaker seems to have a conversation with other women at a bar. She discusses the private life of Lil, a friend of theirs. The speaker criticizes her for looking so old while she is only thirty-one, assuring the women that the woman's husband will easily find another woman if she fails to fulfill her duties. Contrary to the sympathy one feels toward the neurotic woman in the previous passage, these lines evoke sarcasm. Lil is described as a pale, feeble-looking working class woman. She is a mother of five who has to take contraceptive pills. After giving birth to five children and almost dying upon "young George", she is too tired. She takes pills that endanger her health in order to "bring it off". The synthetic perfumes lurking in the neurotic lady's room are replaced by pills for abortion. This action is multidimensional. First, Lil seems quite unhappy in her marriage that her husband's absence seems of a very little significance to her. She is burdened by her offspring, whom she must support financially during their father's engagement in the warfare. Moreover, Lil's sexuality does not seem to bring her any joy; it is merely a biological act made compulsory by marriage: "what you get married for if you don't want children [sic]" (l. 165) Lil's friend asks. Indeed, Lil does not seem to want more children especially after her near-death experience during George's delivery. Lil's friend also bids her to "think of poor Albert" who was in the army for four years and he would obviously want "a good time". She adds in a matter-of-fact tone that if Lil fails to satisfy him, other women will – in reference of prostitutes. Sexual politics are

highlighted in these lines, suggesting that in the game of power, men have the upper hand. Albert has this privilege merely because he is male. In a male-dominated society, a woman has “to make herself a bit smart” in order to appeal to her husband, who may very well “replace” her. Albert gave his wife money to “get [herself] some teeth”. Men’s financial support to women is highlighted as another facet of male-supremacy. The poem refers to patriarchal-minded women: Lil’s friend talks in a matter-of-fact tone about the necessity of attending to Albert’s needs. They are women who internalize the male-dominated order; they assume the perfection of men and the flawed nature of women. As Lil’s friends talk about her relationship with her husband, they reveal their androcentric thinking. Indeed, while some women in the poem resist male dominance – like Philomela – some others are accomplices in the enactment of the androcentric scheme, or at best mere spectators. Although Albert’s demobilization is most probably caused by his physical or mental defects, his wife must do her best to please him when he comes back. Men’s needs are emphasized and regarded with sympathy while women’s are disregarded. Moreover, men’s flaws are over-looked in a patriarchal society but women’s are scrutinized. A sense of urgency, immediacy and anxiety to the conversation as the bartender announces the closing of the bar: “HURRY UP PLEASE IT’S TIME” (ll. 141- 153- 167- 168- 169). It interrupts the woman and suggests that little time is left for change.

The next section “The Fire Sermon” starts with the sad image of leaves sinking into the wet banks of the Thames and the wind blowing silently over the empty land:

The river’s tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf  
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind  
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.

Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.  
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,  
Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends  
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.  
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;  
Departed, have left no addresses. (ll. 173 – 181)

The nymphs that once “combed the white hair of the waves” in *Prufrock* are now departed; they left the river to which they belong. The spiritual draught is reflected by the Thames River which represents both history and myth. The departure of nymphs is a metaphor for the collapse of all the enchantment of the past as opposed to the modern emptiness and obsession with the material over the spiritual. They may also signify the loss of the sense of belonging. The next line talks about “the loitering heirs of city directors” who are somehow friends to the nymphs. In fact, the heirs departed too and left no addresses; so, neither myth nor modern civilization are present in the modern society. The lines allude to Spenser’s *Prothalamion*<sup>79</sup> where the speaker walks along the Thames and sees nymphs jovially preparing for a royal wedding. In Eliot’s poem, nymphs are departed and garbage is scattered along the banks. The luster of the past is faded. The title of the section is suggested by the title of an ancient sermon delivered by Buddha in which the obsession with the sensual can only be healed by asceticism. This explains the reference to fire which is supposed to cleanse inappropriate desire: “burning, burning, burning”. It also suggests that *The Waste Land* is not a mere mourning of the state to which modern civilization has sunk, but also an imagination of the possible ways to reach wholeness. A few lines later we read:

But at my back from time to time I hear  
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring

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<sup>79</sup> T.S. Eliot, Notes to *The Waste Land*, p. 42.

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 (ll. 196 – 201)

The lines are a modern parody of “To his Coy Mistress”. The modern city replaces graceful chariots with automobiles and noisy horns. Mrs. Porter is a prostitute and the proprietor of a brothel that Sweeney visits. Sweeney goes to the brothel in the spring which is also the coupling season of most mammals, highlighting his animal-like nature. The moon, which traditionally associated with chastity, “[shines] bright on Mrs. Porter and on her daughter”. The owner of the brothel and her daughter, who is probably the outcome of fornication, “wash their feet in soda water”. It ironically signifies an artificial purification act. Soda water is not suitable for washing; it is in fact more soiled than hygienic. The lines are an ironic reference to the fallen woman archetype; the woman who engages in “lowly” sexual intercourses yet conceives no children. It also suggests the city as a place where sexuality and economics are controlled by a subtle kind of sexual politics. The subsequent lines evoke Philomela, again:

Twit twit twit  
Jug jug jug jug jug jug  
So rudely forc’d.  
Tereu (ll. 203 – 206)

“Twit” refers to the nightingale’s singing voice while “jug” is a British slang form for sexual intercourse. The words that the nightingale cries suggest the inarticulateness of Philomela as a woman burdened with a man’s injustice. The line from “A Game of Chess” is repeated: “so rudely forc’d” as a reinforcement of the gross nature of the king’s act whose name she continually cries accusingly: “Tereu”.

They also accentuate the forceful nature of the act and its vulgarity. The repetition of the line above proves the degree to which Philomela is essential to the poem. As the female archetype in *The Waste Land*, she is representative of the oppressed yet resistant female. Hence, she is not merely a character within the poem; she is the essence of *The Waste Land* quite like Tiresias as we shall see.

Another interesting instance of women representation is the female typist. She appears in one of the most significant scenes in “The Fire Sermon”. The woman, coming late from work, puts her clothes to be touched by the sun’s last rays and prepares food in tins:

Out of the window perilously spread  
Her drying combinations touched by the sun’s last rays,  
On the divan are piled (at night her bed)  
Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays. (ll. 224- 228)

The typist’s “stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays” are piled upon a divan that she turns into a bed at night. This working class woman does not possess a bed. In her fast-pacing yet boring life, sleep does not quite matter to her neither does the intimacy of having a bed of one’s own. She is, nonetheless, awaiting someone. Tiresias, the most prominent of the several voices in the poem, expects the guest to be the woman’s lover who shortly afterwards comes in: “He, the young man carbuncular arrives,/ A small house agent’s clerk” (ll. 231- 232). After the meal is ended, the man believes time to be favorable for coitus. He puts efforts to engage in some sort of foreplay but his endeavor, although undesired, is not rebuffed:

The time is now propitious, as he guesses,  
The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,  
Endeavours to engage her in caresses  
Which still are unrequited, 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. (ll. 235- 242)

The woman cares very little about physical contact with him and apparently much less about emotional bonding. As he becomes very desirous of her, her indifference does not bother him: “he assaults at once”. The sexual intercourse which is supposed to bring pleasure to both partners brings nothing but disgust to the woman. The woman thinks: “Well now that’s done and I’m glad it’s over” (l. 252). Indeed, the action looks more like a rape than any sort of “civilized” love-making. The woman’s apathy suggests the same kind of anxiety evoked by Marie in the first section of “Burial of the Dead”; she would rather read a book than engage in this sort of veiled rape. The female typist, however, does not induce pity. She is a forbearing woman who accepts the rape-like act with fatalist stillness. It is merely an emotionless act required by social standards. In her stoicism, she is quite a continuation to Philomela although the latter seeks and achieves vengeance. In fact, Philomela as described in “A Game of Chess” foretells – to use Tiresias’ words – the state of loveless intercourse in the modern world. She was raped by king Tereu very much like the female typist is “assaulted at once”. It also suggests the barrenness and futility of sex suggested later on by the female typist and the carbuncular clerk who would not have children. Accordingly, Philomela in her mute fury slays her nephew and feeds him to his father.

By the end of the scene, the carbuncular clerk “bestows one final patronizing kiss” and searches his way out in the dark. The word “patronizing” carefully carries the sense of dominance of the man over the woman. Indeed, the carbuncular clerk and the female typist are most exemplary of sexual politics. The man’s gender allows him



to sexually dominate the woman in a society where patriarchy is the norm. As he leaves the woman looks in the mirror in an act of vanity. Appearances are all that matters in a shallow, spiritually-drained society. She has to keep herself good-looking for future encounters, which are probably seldom desired but never rebuked. The obsession with appearances marks the modern society; the neurotic woman carefully brushes her hair while Lil has to beautify her teeth. She is barely aware of her companion's departure, although she is very well aware that she is "glad it's over". This line is very significant because it shows the degree to which coitus, a means of regeneration, has become unwanted. *The Waste Land* most pessimistically portrays a morally-exhausted society where regeneration is at best difficult. The poem evokes a sense of sterility and hysteria in sexual relationships<sup>80</sup>. Coitus generates no offspring; it is merely a mechanical act completely devoid of emotional bonding. The following lines compares the female typist to the woman in Oliver Goldsmith's poem *The Vicar of Wakefield*<sup>81</sup> in which the woman's guilt after being betrayed by a man can only be redeemed by her death. The modern woman, however, is much less dramatic; she merely smooths her hair with the same automatic hand that uses the typing machine and listens to music:

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. (ll. 253- 256)

The female typist is, undoubtedly, the modern incarnation of Philomela. While the latter was raped, the former is violated under a smoother pretext. Both women did

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<sup>80</sup> G. S. Frazer, *The Modern Writer and his World*, (Middlesex, Penguin Books: 1972) p. 269.

<sup>81</sup> Eliot, op. cit., p. 53.

not want the sexual encounter and seem miserable – or at least weary – afterwards. The scene comes as a critique to modern society and modern relationships, which explains its closing lines. “The Fire Sermon” ends with the repentant voice of Saint Augustine and the passionate sermon of Buddha that condemns lust as the cause of human fall. It hints at the fourth section as the beginning of a long healing process. The third section of the poem is fraught with images of women that are ill-treated by men. More references to tormented women can easily be found in the poem. Their torment, however, is not coupled with disgust but with pity.

Although the fourth section of the poem does not mention any woman, it is significant for it is a reminder of one of the most important themes in the poem: the mortality of humans. It is also a purification rite that suggests the possibility of redemption. Earlier in the first session Madame Sosostris bids her visitor to “fear death by water”. Death by water is paradoxical because the very element that cleanse is the one that causes death. It is significant also as a completion to the previous section. “The Fire Sermon” condemns desire while “Death by Water” extinguishes its flames with water. The following lines are almost lyrical as the speaker refers to the Thames again, but the river now “sweats oil and tar”. It is polluted and as repugnant as the scene that preceded it. Images of litter and squander reoccur throughout the poem in order to reinforce the sense of spiritual waste and moral corruption. The speaker testifies: “On Margate sands/ I can connect/ nothing with nothing” (ll. 300- 302), which is a metaphor to moribund Europe and its spiritual “nothingness”. This latter, lost among the overwhelming events of early twentieth century, could no longer fathom its own state.

The final section of the poem includes several women although not necessarily as main characters. In “What the Thunder Said” there is a reference to “maternal lamentation”. The murmuring sound of maternal weeping could be the voice of the Virgin Mary crying over her son Jesus Christ and perhaps over all mankind. It is one of the earliest instances of the motherly in Eliot’s poetry. This image will appear in a more elaborate form in middle poetry as we shall see. A few lines later another feminine image appears. The mysterious woman who “drew her long black hair out tight/ and fiddled whisper music” (ll. 378- 379) is a surreal image followed immediately by the disturbing image of “bats with baby faces” (l. 380). The woman using her own hair to play music can be related to the neurotic woman whose hair “glow[s] into words”. The woman’s body is again her language, whether spoken or in the form of an art.

The lines below were removed after Pound’s editing. *Il miglior fabbro*, in Eliot’s words, found the lines inadequate and futile as they do not add much to the value of the work. He believed that Eliot already wrote “the longest poem in the English langwidge [sic]” and suggested that he should not try to “bust all records by prolonging it three pages further”. The lines are likely to shock readers as they portray Fresca’s most personal, brutally mundane actions: <sup>82</sup>

The white-armed Fresca blinks, and yawns, and gapes,  
Aroused from dreams of love and pleasant rapes.  
Electric summons of the busy bell  
Brings brisk Amanda to destroy the spell  
Leaving the bubbling beverage to cool,  
Fresca slips softly to the needful stool,

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<sup>82</sup> Fresca appears in a passage of some eighty lines which originally stood at the beginning to part III of *The Waste Land*, but was removed at the suggestion of Ezra Pound in January 1922.

Where the pathetic tale of Richardson  
Eases her labour till the deed is done . . .  
This ended, to the steaming bath she moves,  
Her tresses fanned by little flutt'ring Loves;  
Odours, confectioned by the cunning French,  
Disguise the good old hearty female stench.<sup>83</sup>

Fresca is presented in the lavatory after a sexual encounter. She, then, pampers herself in the bathroom where she uses French perfumes to hide the reeking unpleasant “female” smells. The woman is an intellectual; she is a poet. Her portrayal in such an intimate, vulgar setting reinforces the uncanny commonplace nature of modern society. The long episode was removed upon Pound’s advice along with some other lines from “The Fire Sermon” section that further detail the coitus and the parting scenes.

As have been illustrated, the diverse female characters in *The Waste Land* share some aspects. The female body and psyche are represented as unwholesome, attesting to the dehumanized society in which they exist. Women iconize the deteriorated state of modern relationships. They are represented either as victims of patriarchy like Lil or mistreated by men like the typist. The female characters are subtly modeled after Philomela who occurs twice throughout the poem. She represents all the tortured women of the modern world as she suffers rape, mutilation and emotional oppression. All female characters in *The Waste Land* endure at least one of the torments that Philomela underwent. The neurotic woman, for instance, suffers emotional oppression while the female typist endures what resembles a rape, and Lil is almost mutilated as

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<sup>83</sup> Richard Ellman, *The Waste Land Fascimile*,  
[http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/eliot/composition.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/eliot/composition.htm). 22/11/2014. Retrieved in 22/11/2014.,  
"The First *Waste Land*." In *Eliot in His Time: Essays on the Occasion of the Fiftieth Anniversary of The Waste Land*." Princeton, Princeton UP, 1973.

she takes birth-control pills that endanger her health. Thus, the representation of women in *The Waste Land* establishes Philomela as the female archetype. She is yet exemplary in her resistance and triumph – however relative – against unfair patriarchy.

### **3.2. Women’s counterparts: Men in a Waste Land of Their own**

*The Waste Land*, most critics agree, is a poem with a large scope. The primary concern of the poem is universal ruin as a result of political instability and cultural disintegration. Thus, men’s representation in *The Waste Land* is not very different from that of women. Although sexual politics look upon men as the domineering gender, men and women seem equally tormented and disintegrated in the poem. Men are portrayed as mutilated, unable to speak their minds and dehumanized. They are scarred by their past, gender and unpromising future. Tiresias, for instance, an essential character in the poem, is burdened by his long life. He is the blind Theban seer, famous for his prophetic powers along with augury. He also, according to the legend, lived for six to nine generations. Many conflicting stories are told about the reason of Tiresias' blindness. According to one myth, Tiresias was blinded by the gods, because he spread among the human race what the gods wanted to keep secret. Another myth states that he was blinded by goddess Athena because he happened to see her naked. One of the most important aspects of Tiresias’ life is his hermaphroditism; he lived as a woman for some time as a punishment for killing the female of two coupling snakes. He regained his sex upon killing the male<sup>84</sup>. Tiresias is

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<sup>84</sup> “Tiresias”. Encyclopaedia Britannica Ultimate Reference Suite. <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/596811/Tiresias>. Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2015. Accessed in 06-09-2014.

of a primary importance in *The Waste Land*. He is both a speaker and a spectator in the poem. His hermaphroditism allows him to better understand each incident. In Eliot's notes attached to *The Waste Land*, he acknowledges his importance:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.(p.52)

Indeed, the search for wholeness requires overlooking status, class and gender. In the very first time Tiresias confesses his identity and declares that he has "foresuffered all", he in fact watches the scene in which the carbuncular clerk has a sexual intercourse with the female typist. He witnesses the modern emotional emptiness and sexuality's failure to bring joy to individuals, which are virtually the essence of the poem. His suffering mirrors the suffering of all the ages he lived through. His position as the most important male character in the poem – in Eliot's view – suggests that other male characters will be as weary. Indeed, no other character can replace him. He can understand both men and women. His sense of seeing exceeds the mere sight of eyes to reach insight and prophecy. Tiresias witnesses a degraded scene of loveless sex. The romantic, emotional love-making of Anthony and Cleopatra is reworked into an utterly mechanized act that does not result in regeneration but in boredom.

The emotional emptiness of *The Waste Land* society is coupled with physical unproductiveness; the Fisher King is exemplary of that. He is the protagonist of the Holy Grail legend explored in Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*. Eliot stated in the

attached notes that *The Waste Land* is framed upon the book along with Frazer's *The Golden Bough*. The Fisher King suffers a groin injury that rendered him sterile. It is a punishment for his sins<sup>85</sup>. The king was once "ensnared by the beauty of the daughter of the Pagan King of Norway, whom he has slain, he baptizes her, though she is still an unbeliever at heart, and makes her his wife, thus drawing the wrath of Heaven upon himself." God castigates him for his sin with a sickness that is reflected on his kingdom as well. His land is laid waste before his eye; punished by drought. He is thus in utter pain as he helplessly sits fishing, wishing to set his land in order. His sexual impotence is significant in the poem; it reinforces the on-going pattern of a modern world deprived of active, meaningful sexuality. He is the archetypal male in *The Waste Land*; a maimed and helpless man who has no control over his surroundings:

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. (ll. 189- 192)

In fact, there is an entire lineage doomed to infertility and death; the king's brother and father perished, as well. The latter was the original Keeper of the Holy Grail, which presumably healed anyone who drank from it. The Fisher King, however, was unable to take the Grail by himself; hence, he was never healed. Modern civilization is projected upon him. In a pessimistic imagination, Western civilization would never regain its potency.

Alongside the various characters explored in the poem, Mr. Eugenides is an observable instance of the gender issues that we examined in the first chapter. The

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<sup>85</sup> Jessie. L. Weston, From Ritual to Romance, Chapter IX, (Paris: 1919), pp. 20.

character of Mr. Eugenides exemplifies Eliot's understanding of gender matter in the modern society. Heterosexuality is no longer normative; it is challenged by different kinds of relationships:

Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant  
Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants  
C.i.f. London: documents at sight,  
Asked me in demotic French  
To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel  
Followed by a weekend at the Metropole. (ll. 209 – 214)

Mr. Eugenides who lives in the unreal city asks the speaker to have lunch. The places that he mentions are known to be common places for homosexuals to meet. He can be imagined as a wealthy man with some crude knowledge of French and unashamed audacity. He is also one of the citizens in the “unreal city”; one of those who “flowed over London Bridge” (l. 62).

The man at the beginning of “A game of Chess” is a part of a “bad nerves” conversation. He, however, does not really take part in it. As the neurotic woman talks restlessly about her uncertainties, beseeching him to reveal his thought, he remains silent. He knows the answers but he declines to reply perhaps out of weariness or sheer condescension. His mind is filled with nothing except rats and lost bones; he believes “we’re in rats’ alley/ where the dead men lost their bones” (ll. 115- 116). It is a reference to the trenches dug during the First World War where young soldiers were slaughtered. He is an older version of Lil’s husband. In his memory nothing lingers but a Shakespearean rag; reminding the reader of the famous *Tempest* line “Those are pearls that were his eyes”. He is helplessly trying to believe that death is a transforming force. Although he seems to purposefully ignore his wife, his very sanity



is questionable. He suffered during the war and can scarcely bear his wife's weary complaints.

Lil's husband is a minor character in "A Game of Chess" yet he contributes to the overall design of male characters. He seems like a younger lower-class version of the precedent character. He, however, does not possess his wealth. Lil's husband is a father of five children who left them to join the battlefield. He was demobilized after spending four years in the army. His discharge of active service is most likely the result of a mutilation. He witnessed the horrors of the war and is prone to traumatization. He will be a dysfunctional member of society and in his own family, quite like the neurotic woman's husband in the previous passage. In this respect, he bears a resemblance to the archetypal male of *The Waste Land*; the Fisher King.

The carbuncular clerk who appears in "The Fire Sermon" is a stereotypical modern working class man. He is the guest awaited by the female typist – his lover – and Tiresias: "he, the young man carbuncular arrives,/ A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare" (ll. 231 – 232). The adjective "small" is clearly diminutive and carries much contempt. He is a man with "one bold stare". He is "one of the low on whom assurance sit/As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire" (ll. 233 - 234). The character of the clerk is flatly tedious. His lifestyle seems governed by an unchanging monotone. The very first sign of individuality is having a name of one's own; he is, however, deprived from this privilege. The man possesses no sense of identity as he is named after his job. He is presented in a caricatural description that highlights the grotesque nature of his subsequent act. A sense of "Sweeneyish" savagery is unmistakable in his act. Although the carbuncular clerk does not appear in a brothel

like Sweeney, he is quite a continuation to his image; he is the modern archetype of a brute, insensitive man. The working class man distastefully engages in a clearly unwanted sexual intercourse. He only wants satisfy his needs without any regard to his partner. In an ironic contrast, the caricature-like man is sufficiently self-confident to ignore his partner's frozen irresponsiveness: "his vanity requires no response" (l. 241). To intensify the sense of emotional barrenness, he "Bestows one final patronizing kiss"(l. 247). The verb used; "to bestow" means to confer an honor or a gift, suggesting a further disdainful action. As if the kiss is a privilege that he offered to his lover. It aims at demeaning his partner instead of illustrating love. The sexual act itself becomes a means to "patronize"; to demonstrate the patriarchal condescending view of women. Having finished his loveless, mechanical act, the man leaves the room fumbling his way out in the unlit stairs. He walks but he barely sees his way out; he is as sightless as his society.

The forth section features Phlebas the Phoenician, who is alluded to in the first section by Madame Sosostri; "the drowned Phoenician sailor". He fulfills her eerie prophecy. She dreadfully bids her visitor to "fear death by water". The idea of a mariner that drowns seems quite distressing. The sea is the very life and blood of a sailor. Water is supposed to be the source of life. His death, however, can be interpreted as an act of purification. Phlebas is also another broken male in *The Waste Land* but unlike the Fisher King and Tiresias, his anguish is not eternal because he is already dead. His bones are picked up and he enters the whirlpool in a final attempt at redemption:

A current under sea  
Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell  
He passed the stages of his age and youth  
Entering the whirlpool (ll. 315- 318)

“Death by Water” is particularly solemn in its tone, almost didactic. The speaker bids those who turn windward to “consider Phlebas who was once handsome and tall as you” (l. 320). The fourth section of the poem calls for modesty while the last one is a surreal journey into salvation.

The last section of *The Waste Land* is almost dreamlike, unlike the society-mimicking episodes that precede it. “What the Thunder Said” starts with a languid and lugubrious description of a parched wasteland and a wistful plea for water. The speaker illustrates the need for purification. Humanity walks an empty road with no water to quench one’s thirst. The line “who is the third that walks always beside you?” (l. 360) suggests a mysterious companion who will perhaps offer relief in such a journey. The stranger is not identified as a man or a woman, although he could very well be Jesus Christ. The poem continues among empty cisterns and exhausted wells until the thunder speaks and sets the keys to deliverance.

Male characters are used to reinforce the sense of boredom, futility and disdain that accompany modern society. Eliot’s characters are projections of a morally barren society. Eliot does not criticize an actual world but creates a unique “phantasmal” world of lust, cowardice, boredom, and malice on which he gazes in fascinating horror<sup>86</sup>. Indeed, men are as abused as women in the poem. They are “trapped in hysteria and neurotic repetition”<sup>87</sup> which proves that the plight in *The Waste Land*

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<sup>86</sup> Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot’s Early Years*, (Oxford, Oxford University Press: 1977), p. 106.

<sup>87</sup> Stephen Coote, *op. cit.*, p. 87.

transcends gender. Masculinity and femininity issues subside as the horrors of modern society take over. The archetypal male in the poem is as mutilated and emotionally-exhausted as much as the female. Both Philomela and the Fisher King attest to individuals devoid of spirituality and drained of the power to regenerate.

### **3.3. Women, Myth and Saving Civilization<sup>88</sup>:**

This section is a synthesis of the possibility of regeneration provided by *The Waste Land* and women's role in it. One may note that pervading element of historicity in the poem. Immersed in the Western culture, Eliot's works reflect his understanding of modern history. The modern epistemological break with old Europe is implied within his work. Eliot's desperate depiction of moribund Europe is emphasized through characters. Although he denies being a social reformer, his critiques of modern society seem quite like an attempt to set the world in order. Indeed, Eliot's poetry is the poetry of an entire civilization in crisis<sup>89</sup>. Cultural and spiritual crises are a fundamental motif in Eliot's poetry. At first sight, *The Waste Land* does seem like the epitome of pessimism. Death, sterility and the collapse of civilization seem to dominate it. The dark atmosphere of fragmented human experience, the repetition of disturbing sounds, allusions to violent myths and sometimes contrasting rich past with the unpleasant realities of the present world, are all but means to reinforce the idea of a decadent world, devoid of any hope for a brighter future.

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<sup>88</sup> The title is borrowed from Lucy McDiarmid's *Saving Civilization: Yeats, Eliot and Auden between the Wars*.

<sup>89</sup> Sona Raiziss, *La Poésie Américaine Moderniste 1910 – 1940*, (Paris, Mercèvre de France : 1948), p. 47. Raizis says: "Car Eliot est avant tout un représentant de l'époque moderne à une période de crise".

*The Waste Land* evokes the ruined landscape left after the historically unprecedented devastation of the First World War. The emphasis in *The Waste Land* is put on the state of devastation of the modern world. The dilemma is not gender-bound. *The Waste Land* attests to a hopeless post First World War Europe. The apocalyptic aspect of the cultural collapse is dramatized through:

Falling towers Jerusalem,  
Athens, Alexandria, Vienna,  
Unreal (ll. 374- 377)

Analyzing *The Waste Land* allowed us into some understanding of its fragmentariness. There are yet clearer confessions of fragmentariness in the poem. Early in “*The Burial of the Dead*” a solemn and prophetic voice admits that man has a limited knowledge that does not allow him to understand his world: “Son of man you cannot say, or guess, for you know only/ a heap of broken images, where the sun beats,”(l. 22). This is what the humankind knows about existence: a pile of incoherent images. This is, also, one may dare to argue, the state to which Western Civilization is reduced. By the end of the poem another voice less solemn and more human speaks of “These fragments I have shored against my ruins” (l. 431). A second important reference is that to God and Jesus Christ in “*The Fire Sermon*” which goes: “O Lord Thou pluckest me out / O Lord Thou pluckest” (ll.309- 310). It suggests that only divinity can save humankind. A more subtle and more striking allusion is in “*What the Thunder Said*”: “who is the third who walks always beside you”. This reference suggests spirituality as the one and only redeeming feature of the world. The universal need for spirituality is emphasized through the allusion to non-western religions with reference to Buddha and Ganga.

*The Waste Land* is a poem that represents a culture frightened by the narrow possibilities of regeneration. Eliot's use of allusion and fragmentation suggests a commitment to the modernist awareness of history and literary tradition. Thus, the wide-spread desolation can only be understood by a hermaphrodite that transcends gender, age and place. He brings humanity to a state of comprehension that leads to wholeness. Tiresias fits this role because of all the contrasts in his character. The latter, along with Sybil and Philomela demonstrate the mythical background of the work. Each of these characters is a representative of a certain suffering. Modern relationships are desiccated, spiritually drained, reflecting the essence of modern characters.

Women in *The Waste Land* are like men, oppressed. Their oppression, however, is more intense because of the fragile roles they play. Women characters in the poem are of various social standings, different ages, and different eras. Yet, Eliot claims that all characters, female and male, are fused into one single character; Tiresias. The female body is often mistreated in this poem. They are nervous, tired and violated. All the characters mentioned in this section seem fit to be a part of the "unreal city". They are all a part of the "crowd [that] flowed over London Bridge".

In his 1918 essay *Tradition and the Individual Talent* Eliot affirms that "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality". Speaking of an artist's "continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable,"<sup>90</sup> Indeed, art and history supersede the artist's own personality. Eliot firmly believes in the impersonality of art. While some critics

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<sup>90</sup> Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, op. cit., p. 52.

see this endeavor as a kind of elitist erudition, it is more likely to be his way of avoiding to indulge in self-centeredness. The poet should be a trumpet through which the age speaks. Despite his claims, Eliot's poem is sometimes an account of his own emotional and physical trauma. In his account of Post World War Europe, Eliot's technique of fragmentation allows him to visibly reflect the chaotic state of culture: "...this breaking up of the more usual modes of discourse is intended to reflect the chaos of modern civilization."<sup>91</sup>

The concept of fragmentation is tightly related to the state of human experience. The shattered dream of a coherent, solid civilization projected itself into the seemingly chaotic world of *The Waste Land*. This is evidenced in the very form of the poem. *The Waste Land*, although treated as a whole, is divided into five parts: *The Burial of the Dead*, *A Game of Chess*, *The Fire Sermon*, *Death by Water* and *What the Thunder Said*. Moreover, at first sight, the poem seems absolutely incoherent. It is not until one reads it several times that one comes to understand some of its aspects. What seems like an utterly confused juxtaposition of ancient civilization and decadent modern life is in fact the order substituted by a different sense of order. T.S. Eliot succeeds in presenting post World-War Europe in *The Waste Land* through fragmentation and myth. Indeed, no other method could have suited the spirit of the age better than the mythical method. Fragmentation is not a meaningless juxtaposition of words; it is a highly organized design that serves a larger purpose than merely accounting for the author's private life or the world's desolation. It is a continuous longing for wholeness

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<sup>91</sup> R. J. Owens. "T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land"" Source: Caribbean Quarterly, Vol. 9, No. 1/2 (March/June 1963), pp. 3-10 Published by: University of the West Indies and Caribbean Quarterly Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40652841>, accessed in 21/11/2012,

and peace. As previously noted, the use of myth is meant to deepen the sense of a decadent, barren and sterile reality in comparison to a richer past. *The Waste Land* allows the reader to glance at bits of myth and modern life. Constant transitions and change of speakers make it difficult to comprehend. But its tone is sufficiently grim to invoke the anxiety of broken humanity, lost spirituality and collapsing civilization.

Although *The Waste Land* seems devoid of hope, careful reading, however, will prove that life, fertility and the rebuilding of civilization are possible. The reconciliation between the present and the past is achieved through contemplating all possibilities of redemption, making regeneration a fact. It is not difficult to trace the binary opposition of meaning in his work. Each passage loaded with despair is fraught with hope as well. “London bridge is falling down” may suggest the possibility and the necessity of rebuilding it. As a Modernist poem, *The Waste Land* has multiple layers of meaning. Any attempt at establishing a one dimensional point of view about its essence would decrease its scope. One may enjoy the multiplicity of meanings in the poem, for each line evoking despair is at the same time loaded with hope. In the earliest lines about spring, for instance, there is a difficulty of regeneration but still it is not impossible. In “A Game of Chess” the line remembered by the neurotic woman’s husband is “Those are pearls that were his eyes”. It is from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* which goes:

Full fadom five thy Father lies,  
Of his bones are Corall made:  
Those are pearles that were his eyes  
Nothing of him that doth fade  
But doth suffer a Sea-change



Into something rich, and strange<sup>92</sup>

This beautiful passage refers to death as a transforming force not a decaying one. Eliot, through this fragment, evokes the innumerable possibilities of redemption for humanity. Death does not cause one to fade but changes one into a richer and stranger being. In “*The Fire Sermon*” there is yet another possibility for wholeness. The passion that led to degradation maybe transmuted into a passion coupled with true love. As long as there is passion, hope for regeneration and reproduction remains alive. In the fourth section “*Death by Water*” Phlebas’ very drowning suggests redemption. Water, all religions and spiritual philosophies agree, is the most purifying element in nature. In “*What the Thunder Said*” after references to wastelands, there is a beautiful reference to rain: “In a flash of lightening. Then a dump gust/ bringing rain”. The wasteland of the Fisher King has a chance to banish barrenness and bring back fertility. The poem closes with “Shantih Shantih Shantih” which Eliot translates as “the peace which passeth understanding.” Thus despite the pain of living and unease life continues and there is always a possibility for wholeness. It is however the role of the reader to forge such positive meanings. *The Waste Land* most powerfully suggests the possibility of regeneration and wholeness. Eliot noted that Jessie L. Weston’s book on the Holy Grail *From Ritual to Romance* suggested the title, the plan and a large part of the incidental symbolism in *The Waste Land*. He also gives credit to the work of Sir James Frazer; *The Golden Bough*. The latter explores magic and ritual in pagan religions with reference to the Babylonian god Adonis, the Roman Attis and the Egyptian Osiris. The mortal gods were lovers to Ishtar, Cybele and Isis, respectively.

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<sup>92</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, quoted in Stephen Coote, op. cit., p. 139.

Each was maimed and killed and then searched for by his goddess-lover in order to restore the fertility of the land. Women are essential in the restoration of the fecund land. In *The Waste Land*, saving civilization can only be attained through women's alliance with men. Although western civilization is usually gendered male, its wellbeing depends on women. After *The Waste Land* Eliot's representation of women permanently departs from the sordidness and squalid sexualization. The next chapter illustrates the fact that women take part in the making of civilization instead of being helplessly attached to the mundane.

**CHAPTER IV:**

**T.S. ELIOT'S MIDDLE POETRY: THE SAFE FEMININE**

The poetry composed after *The Waste Land* is different in terms of style and content from the one composed before. The sordid, Baudelaire-like critiques of the modern society were slowly replaced by more all-encompassing poems which are more concerned with the loss of spirituality than the mere portrayal of a depraved civilization. Of course, being the descendent of a Unitarian family, Eliot accumulated the ideals of his grandfather, the strongest patriarch in the family. The influence that William Greenleaf Eliot had upon his grandson's literary career is undeniable. The morally strict social reformer viewed public service as a holy mission which is the reason behind Eliot's concern with the Western civilization and his immersion into the European society in particular. Hence, his concern with faith and spirituality is purely an extension to his socio-cultural consciousness.

Eliot's baptism in the Church of England was on June 29<sup>th</sup>, 1927. His re-discovered religiousness marked a new orientation for his poetry characterized by a constant search for faith. Indeed, after Eliot's conversion to the Anglican Church, his poetry witnessed a drastic change. *Ash-Wednesday* and "Marina" indicate a shift from the predicament of a sordid modern society to an elevated religious and divine quest. *Ash-Wednesday* marks Eliot's spiritual progress; he moves from despair to the desire for redemption. "Marina" follows in the same vein but under a secular veil. The post-conversion change is marked by less characters and a more urgent concern with faith and spiritual issues as shall be pointed out.

#### 4. 1. *Ash-Wednesday*: The Pristine Woman

*Ash-Wednesday*'s title refers to a custom held by some Christians. Ash Wednesday, in Christian tradition, is the first day of Lent. It commences a period of spiritual discipline; of abstinence, fasting, and the forsaking of sinful activities and habits. The Bible itself neither condemns nor commands the observation of Ash Wednesday. It is observed, however, by most Catholics and some Protestant denominations. Pastors apply ashes in the form of a cross on the forehead of the repentant, which is how it acquired its name<sup>93</sup>. The moral austerity of the day relates to the poem's attempt at re-discovering faith while denying gratification. The poem *Ash-Wednesday* was finished in 1930 and is usually referred to as Eliot's conversion poem. The religious atmosphere of the poem is quite suitable to the spiritual mission in which the speaker forsakes earthly pleasures in an attempt to find peace in faith. The primary focus of the poem is not women, obviously, yet salvation comes in the form of a woman. The lady portrayed in the poem is pristine; she takes the form of a mother, sister and beloved.

*Ash-Wednesday* was dedicated to Vivienne Haigh-Wood in its first publication, but he removed "to my wife" in its 1936 edition. Eliot's first wife had an enormous influence on his work as much as on his personal life. Their unhappy marriage is said to be the motive behind most of his "depressive" poetry. Her mental break-down had a bad impact on Eliot who had himself a melancholic tendency. She is even said to have contributed to the bad-nerve conversation in *The Waste Land*. The dedication of

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<sup>93</sup> Richard P. Bucher, The History and Meaning of Ash Wednesday, <http://www.orldutheran.com/html/ash.html>. accessed in 13-12-2014.

the poem to her suggests that she was – at a certain period – Eliot’s Beatrice. She was the ultimate feminine image upon which all other “ideal female” images are drawn. In fact, the woman in the poem adheres to a portrayal that distinguishes her from earthly women. Unlike earlier poetry, the image of the feminine in this poem as well as in “Marina” is presented as safe.

Deeply dedicated to a religious quest, *Ash-Wednesday* starts with “because” as if the speaker is obliged to justify his thoughts. Although the poem deals with the aspiration to move from spiritual waste to the hope for salvation, the speaker is passive and his contemplations do not result in action. The poem is characterized by a ratiocinative submission<sup>94</sup>. The speaker in the poem seems to doubt his own attempts at regaining faith. The poem, nonetheless, starts with an answer rather than a “Prufrockian” invitation that awaits a response: “Because I do not hope to turn again” (l. 1). The voice is solemn even in its most pitiable pleading. The speaker in *Ash-Wednesday* renounces worldly pleasures from the very first line of the poem. He does not wish to obtain what others have neither does he “strive to strive towards such things” (l. 5). Earthly pleasures that are acquired by other men – wealth, power and probably women, too – no longer attract the speaker; his aspirations are higher. Few lines later, a line invoking liturgy is placed: “And pray God to have mercy upon us” (l. 26). What the speaker wants is God’s mercy. Two stanzas later, two lines from “Hail Mary” appear: “Pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death/ pray for us now and at the hour of our death” (ll. 40 – 41). God’s forgiveness and mercy is granted

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<sup>94</sup> Hugh Kenner, *T. S. Eliot: The Invisible Poet*, (London, Methuen & Co. LTD: 1960), p. 226.

through the Virgin Mary's prayer. *Ave Maria*, as it is also known, is one of the Catholic prayers incorporated into the Anglican liturgy. The lines invoke the Virgin Mary who represents the ultimate pristine feminine image in the Western mindset. It is note-worthy that Anglicans do not dogmatize Marian Veneration, claiming that she is barely mentioned in the Bible. Contrariwise, Catholicism views her as superior to all other saints. Hence, they reserve adoration or latria to God, veneration or dulia to saints and angels, while hyperdulia to the Virgin Mary who is even believed to be free from the Original Sin<sup>95</sup>. Despite Eliot's baptism in the Anglican Church, he stated that he is stated that he is "an Anglo-Catholic in religion, a classicist in literature and a Royalist in politics". This controversial statement applies to Eliot's relatively religious poems. In *Ash-Wednesday* he is particularly closer to Catholicism than Anglicanism in his veneration to the Virgin Mary. While the Holy Mother occupies a marginal spot in the Anglican faith, Catholicism places her in a more recognizable position. It is this position of holiness that Eliot reserves for the safe feminine.

The second section of the poem starts with "Lady" as if in an attempt to address a lofty being:

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. (ll. 42- 45)

Given the reference to the Virgin Mary in the previous section one may judge that the lady is Mary herself. A few lines later, however, the reader knows that she "honours the Virgin in meditation", which suggests that this pristine image is that of

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<sup>95</sup> The notion of Immaculate Conception in Catholicism views Mary as essentially pure and sinless.

Dante's Beatrice, another variation of the safe feminine. The three leopards – that may connote the trinity – feed upon the speaker's legs, heart, liver and brain. Each of the organs eaten may refer to human indulgence which means that the leopards relieve the speaker of his sin. The leopards, then, reject "the indigestible parts". As the speaker's bones lay dry, God asks: "shall these bones live?" The bones reply:

Because of the goodness of this Lady  
And because of her loveliness, and because  
She honours the Virgin in meditation,  
We shine with brightness. (ll. 49- 52)

The goodness of the lady and her pristine nature surpass the morbidity of death. It is only because of her kindness that the bones shine. The bones here are a grim reminder of the bones in *The Waste Land*, which were hopeless, rattling and dry. Occurring five times in the poem, they are associated with death, failure and despair like "bones cast in a little low garret"<sup>96</sup>. The three leopards, presumably accompanying the lady, devour the speaker and reject the "indigestible portions". The image, carefully placed among lines of liturgy, causes horror through its speaker's calm stoicism. The speaker is almost pleased while the animals feast upon his body. Indeed, this proves that he truly renounces worldly gratification including the instinctive, animal-like self-preservation. Pain, nonetheless, is cleansing. It is a trait of sainthood in Christian mythology. Jesus Christ's Passion marks his consecration. All saints endure a certain type of pain through which they qualify for sainthood. Moreover, it is very significant that one of the famous names of the Virgin Mary is "Our Lady of Sorrows". Piety is often coupled with an inclination towards melancholy. This

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<sup>96</sup> *The Waste Land*, lines 116- 194.



inclination is comprehensible as it is associated with modesty. The reference to “eternal dolor” in the poem is also a reminder of the Seven Dolors of Mary. The Virgin Mary is celebrated for her patience despite the anguish she endured. She is venerated in Christian mythology for withstanding seven torments including Jesus’ crucifixion and his burial. Strangely comes accompanied with white leopards, the lady makes the bones that where once “lost” and “rattled” in *The Waste Land*, shine with brightness. The power and goodness of the safe feminine is celebrated in a venerating tone. The lady’s kindness eases the pain of the speaker. After being devoured by the leopards, his dry bones announce happily that they shine with brightness. This relieving image contrasts the images of gruesomeness and vulgarity that characterize Eliot’s representation of women in early poetry. Then “The lady is withdrawn/ in a white gown, to contemplation in a white gown” (ll. 57- 58). These are some of the most significant lines in the poem in terms of women portrayal. Although the lady is powerful and good, she mysteriously leaves the scene to contemplate. She is never too close to the speaker who seems both sad and intrigued by her departure. Remarkably, the female vision in the poem is never a woman; she is dubbed a “lady”. She has a certain “class”, although not a social one. It is rather religious and moral. She has an assumed moral superiority; the speaker, thus, barely attempts to draw near her, being aware of his flawed nature that contrasts her wholesomeness. Indeed, even when the lady is a savior – an icon of the safe feminine – she is still lofty and unapproachable. She is like Dante’s Beatrice, who is adored by her beloved, but cannot be looked upon. The lady inspires awe rather than loveliness. She is majestic. She is an image of the pristine woman, yet he still doubts whether she will save him and pray for him. There

is a sense of lowliness in the speaker's words, which is accentuated much later by "Lord I am not worthy/ lord I am not worthy/ but speak the word only" (ll. 118- 120). The lady described in the second section of the poem is not Mary, because she "honours the virgin in meditation" (l. 51). The line is another reference to Marian Veneration. The lady is not only pious by nature but admires the qualities of the Virgin Mary, as well. This qualifies her as a "safe feminine"; a woman who does not spoil a man or cause him to lose composure. She is sublime in the peace she invokes and the relief she stirs within the male speaker. The famous lines starting with "Lady of silences" further describe the lady. They take the form of a prayer, comparable to the traditional Marian prayers:

Lady of silences  
Calm and distressed  
Torn and most whole  
Rose of memory  
Rose of forgetfulness  
Exhausted and life-giving  
Worried reposeful  
The single Rose  
Is now the Garden  
Where all loves end  
Terminate torment  
Of love unsatisfied  
The greater torment  
Of love satisfied  
End of the endless  
Journey to no end  
Conclusion of all that  
Is inconclusible  
Speech without word and  
Word of no speech  
Grace to the Mother  
For the Garden  
Where all love ends. (ll. 66- 88)

The lady described seems like a goddess in whom all opposites assemble. She is calm and distressed, exhausted yet life giving, torn and most whole. Her wholesomeness and generosity seem to create a safe zone in which the speaker finds

refuge. The woman is thus a goddess in her life-gift. The lady represents memory and forgetfulness. She is a single rose that turns into a whole garden, where love is complete. She is the end of love-sick torments. The lady's humanly qualities of love and satisfaction are followed by more goddess-like ones. The pristine lady is the "end of the endless/ a journey to no end". She provides, also, answers to all that is unanswerable. She offers conclusions to what have long been inconclusible. It is a conspicuous aspect of deities to have the proper answers to the wonderings of humankind. Again, like a divine being, the lady needs not speech to talk; her wisdom and goodness outdoes the human necessity to use words. The last lines proceed in what resembles a prayer, giving grace and praise to the mother Mary, who is herself a garden – an icon of paradise. This suggests that the lady of silences is not necessarily the Virgin Mary but Beatrice as we shall see. In the third section, the speaker climbs a stair surrounded by twisted shapes, devils and fetid air:

At the first turning of the second stair  
I turned and saw below  
The same shape twisted on the banister  
Under the vapour in the fetid air  
Struggling with the devil of the stairs who wears  
The deceitful face of hope and of despair. (ll. 96- 101)

He struggles on his way up as evident by the successive short and long sentences in the first and the second stanza, which resemble the heavy breathing of a man in activity. His ascendance is both moral and physical. The upward movement suggests an attempt at forsaking the world in order to reach God's mercy. The third stanza differs in terms of imagery as it pictures images of the fig's fruit and hawthorn blossom instead of the unknown twisted shapes. It suggests the commencement of a promising stage, contrasting the previous dreadful images. The form of a "broad-

backed” figure is seen through the slotted window: “The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green/ Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute” (ll. 110- 111). He is presumably Pan, the Greek god of shepherds and flocks, often portrayed with the hind legs of a goat and its horns, playing a flute. Pan is often associated with carnal desires; he is known for his lust. He is also related to lilacs as we shall see. A sensual image appears to decrease the religious intensity of the poem: “Brown hair is sweet, brown hair over the mouth blown,/ Lilac and brown hair.” (ll. 112- 113) The image of brown hair is associated with the worldly as opposed to the spiritual. It seems to function as a distracting power to the speaker’s intellectual and religious endeavor. It also suggests the renewed possibility of heterosexual relationships. The image of lilac evokes one of god Pan’s numerous amorous adventures. As the myth goes, Syringa was Pan’s object of desire and to escape his unwanted attention, she turned herself into a lilac bush. Lilacs symbolize the emotion of infatuation and poignant love loss, a recurrent motif in Eliot’s poetry. There is also a delicate relationship between women and distress that seem to be found in the poems. Women seem to be linked to both pain and its relief. Despite their pain, however, they are safe to be loved and venerated. The Virgin Mary for instance is associated with dolor and distress, which is finally alleviated through her goodness and connection with God. In contrast, Greek mythology is exploited in Eliot’s poetry to reinforce the women’s distress through its hostility particularly towards the feminine. Mythology is often used to implicitly suggest the misrepresentation of women. Philomela and Sibyl in *The Waste Land* are examples of the cruelty of mythology towards women.

The forth section of the poem begins with an interesting description of a woman:

Who walked between the violet and the violet  
Who walked between  
The various ranks of varied green  
Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour, (l. 121- 124)

Violets are associated with the Virgin Mary and with modesty. One of its species *Viola odorata* is translated as Our Lady's Modesty. Green is also a color associated with vegetation, growth and prosperity in the Bible<sup>97</sup>. It is the color of living plants, suggesting vitality and regeneration. The strong color symbolism reinforces the biblical setting. Hence, the lady is positioned in a lively green field and enhances its beauty as she walks in “blue of Mary’s colour”. Mary is often portrayed in blue robes in paintings; the natural color of the sky and sea. As the lady walked on, she is the one: “Who then made strong the fountains and made fresh the spring/ Made cool the dry rocks and made firm the sand”. She is like a priestess with the power to heal. The safe feminine is not only safe to be loved and venerated but has also healing abilities. In fact, she is described like a vegetation and fertility deity. Demeter, the Greek goddess of harvest, fertility and parenthood possesses mysterious powers of growth and resurrection. Her name translates to “mother earth”<sup>98</sup>. The lady’s mere presence, like Demeter’s, regenerates her surroundings. Then, walking between sleep and waking, she wears a folded white dress, attesting to her purity and kindness:

One who moves in the time between sleep and waking, wearing

White light folded, sheathed about her, folded.  
The new years walk, restoring  
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring  
With a new verse the ancient rhyme. Redeem  
The time. (ll. 134- 139)

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<sup>97</sup> “Color symbolism in the Bible”, Christ Centered Mall, <http://www.christcenteredmall.com/teachings/symbolism/colors.htm>, accessed in 4- 1- 2015.

<sup>98</sup> “Goddess Demeter”, Goddess Life Plan, <http://www.goddesslifestyleplan.com/demeter-greek-goddess-of-vegetation-fertility>. accessed in 18- 2- 2015.

The lady brings hope as she walks; she restores the lost years and the ancient rhyme. In other words, she re-establishes spirituality and the cultural system. She is the one whose tears bring redemption. The pristine woman is the representative of cultural restoration. The silent sister, then, sits: “Between the yews, behind the garden god,/ Whose flute is breathless, bent her head and signed but spoke no word”. She sits among yews that symbolize rebirth and transcendence. Transformation, reincarnation and immortality sum up the attributes of the Yew tree<sup>99</sup>. Thus, the lady strides the momentary and the eternal. She is equally far from the desires of the flesh since she is behind the garden god – presumable the lusty Pan. She is veiled as to evoke modesty and piousness.

There is an emphasis on the virtue of silence in the poem. In the fifth section, the virtue of silence is also high-lighted as the only condition for “finding” the “word”. The speaker wonders whether the “veiled sister” will pray for

those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee,  
Those who are torn on the horn between season and season, time and  
Time, between  
Hour and hour, word and word, between power and power, those who wait  
In darkness? (ll.170- 174)

He wonders whether she will pray for the children who cannot pray and for the people who offend her meaning disbelievers. The lines suggest the speaker’s doubt of the lady’s forgiveness and kindness. The last section commences with an echo of the very first lines of the poem: “although I do not hope to turn again” (l. 187). There is an image reminding of Phlebas the Phoenician “wavering between the profit and the loss”

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<sup>99</sup> “Yew tree”, Ancient Wisdom, <http://www.ancient-wisdom.co.uk/treelore.htm>, accessed in 9- 2- 2015.

in *The Waste Land*. The sailor is significant because the lines that follow are nautical in nature. The movement itself proclaims hope as opposed to desperate motionlessness. Imagery of hope begins to unfold starting with a wide window contrasting to the “slotted window” in the third section. “The white sails fly, seaward flying/unbroken wings” is another image of hope. The mere vans that beat the air in second section are now “unbroken wings”. Lines later, the speaker calls Mary:

Blessed sister, holy mother, spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden,  
Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood  
Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still  
Even among these rocks, (ll. 211- 215)

He bids her to teach “us” her virtues of care and tranquility, even in difficult situations. “Us” here suggests the speaker’s concern, not only with his own spirituality but with his entire “people”. Eliot’s anxiety for the entire Christian community is manifested along the poem. Although the end of the poem echoes its beginning, the voice is noticeably different. It is a voice that strives towards God instead of merely reiterating the voice that renounces worldly gratification.

The Christian values of honor, serenity and silence are highlighted in the poem. Notably, silence is a virtue for all Christians regardless of gender<sup>100</sup>. Fasting in early Christianity meant to abstain from food and speech as well. Silent meditation was a virtuous religious exercise. Spirituality, thus, can only be regained through silent contemplations. But in the world of *Ash-Wednesday*’s speaker, “there is not enough silence”. The pursuit for redemption is difficult, although not impossible. The lady may pray for the deliverance of sinners and relieve their aches.

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<sup>100</sup> Margaret Y. MacDonald, *Early Christian Women and Pagan Opinion: the Power of the Hysterical Woman*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press: 1996), pp. 144.

The portrayal of the feminine in this poem is a sharp rupture with the former archetypal models of “wenches” in the Sweeney poems or the tortured “Phelomelas” of *The Waste Land*. She does not laugh hysterically like the woman in “Hysteria” or cause discomfort to the male speaker like the lady in the *Portrait*. She is the relief to the male speaker. She is the one that redeems the time as we have seen. The “Lady” of *Ash-Wednesday* is lofty but without disdain. Although she seems quite distant from the speaker, her virtues pervade the atmosphere of the poem, rendering the spiritual recovery attainable. She is often portrayed walking, suggesting her religious progress, which is also the path that the speaker wants to follow.

Eliot’s view of desire and sexuality appeared to have changed after his conversion to Anglicanism. Indeed, as McIntire puts it: “The squalid eroticism of women in his early poetry was replaced by images of virginal, pristine and goddess-like women”<sup>101</sup>. *Ash-Wednesday*’s lady of silences best exemplifies it.

Raiziss says in her book on Modernist American poetry: “...la religion n’est pas, dans sa poésie [Eliot], la préoccupation dominante: c’est l’action humaine et l’interaction”. Indeed, despite Eliot’s depth and metaphysical references, his poetry is not primarily concerned with religion; what matters to him most is the human action and interaction, the search for spirituality being a part of it. He is an observer and a commentator on society, what Raiziss calls “a sort of contemporary Tiresias.”<sup>102</sup> The religious dimension, although undeniable, is only a part of the whole.

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<sup>101</sup> Gabrielle McIntire, op. cit. p 97.

<sup>102</sup> Sona Raisis, op. cit. pp. 42- 48.



Indeed, starting from *Ash-Wednesday*, the female figures were not erotic or dangerous. They were the personification of goodness. This is certainly related to Eliot's rediscovered religiousness. Despite the fact that he is not a strictly religious poet, his poetry reveals a spiritual awareness. Notably, the change in the portrayal of women in this poem is related in the change of the poet's rendering of their sexuality. When the image of the woman is perceived as a mother or a sister, she is "sexually undesirable". Only then, she is safe to be loved and venerated. Sexuality, which Eliot viewed as sinister, is rarely given a positive dimension. There is an unmistakable sense of lost love persistent with the motif of lilacs: "lilacs and brown hair". The lines also fuse the spiritual and the material. *Ash-Wednesday* is characterized by the intersection of the religious and the secular. The female body is not entirely desexualized; it is still cautiously desired. The image of holiness is coupled with an intriguing sensuality. The sordid female image in Eliot's early poetry is transfigured into the icons of the Madonna and Dante's Beatrice. The representation of the lady in the poem is a sharp rupture with the former archetypal model of prostitutes in the Sweeney poems, for instance. She is a comfort to the speaker framed on the Virgin Mary and on Beatrice. The representation, however, is still biased; women are only represented in relationship to men.

The Beatricean model is framed upon Dante's beloved Beatrice Partinari who inspired him to write *The Divine Comedy*. She guides him through his journey to *Paradiso*. In fact, Beatrice appeared in earlier poems, namely *The Hollow Men*: "Eyes

I dare not meet in dreams/ In death's dream kingdom<sup>103</sup>". The eyes in these lines refer to the scene where Dante, ashamed of his sins, cannot stare at his beloved in paradise. By the end, he decides to change his ways in order to meet her again in the afterlife. Beatrice is an icon of goodness and religious transcendence in Western tradition, along with the Virgin Mary. Eliot tends to relate women to Christian transcendence in an attempt to explore the hopes for redemption in an unsure, secular world: "the Marian and Beatrician figures represent passivity, emotional release, and self sacrifice to the Absolute"<sup>104</sup>. Beatrice appears in *Ash-Wednesday*, she is the one that walks in "Mary's color"<sup>105</sup>. She follows the virtuous ways of the Virgin Mary who is often portrayed in paintings as a veiled woman in white and blue. Pious-looking and tender, Mary is considered the primary Christian icon of feminine goodness. The lady in the poem is the Madonna, used as an "icon of feminine perfection, built on the equivalence between goodness, motherhood, purity, gentleness, and submission"<sup>106</sup>. Indeed, it seems like an attempt to re-introduce the female model of the "True Woman" described by Victorian society as was explained in the first chapter: she is marked by modesty, submissiveness, moral and religious piety and dedication to her husband and home. In the poem, however, the lady is religious and pious but not submissive to a man. Her obedience is due to God. Still, the feminine is put into an image compatible with the patriarchal mindset. Women must adhere to the image created by man-focused society, which is used to put her under scrutiny. Women are subjected to

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<sup>103</sup> Eliot, *The Hollow Men*, lines 19- 20.

<sup>104</sup> Jacqueline Pollard, *The Gender of Belief: Women and Christianity in T.S. Eliot and Djuna Barnes*, (Oregon, Oregon University:2009), pp. 104.

<sup>105</sup> Hugh Kenner, op. cit., p 231.

<sup>106</sup> Pollard, op. cit., p. 3.

disapproval when they do not match the excessive requirements of society. In the poem, the woman's very virtue is silence – Lady of silences. She speaks no word yet causes the land around her to rejuvenate. The woman's voice seems implicitly denied under the veil of religious devoutness.

Alternatively, Elizabeth Däumer drew an interesting comparison between Charlotte Stearns Eliot and *Ash-Wednesday's* Lady of Silences<sup>107</sup>. Eliot's mother was a thwarted artist who channeled her relative frustration towards her gifted son. She was a poet and social reformist. After his father's death Eliot stated in a letter to Quinn<sup>108</sup> that he wished to publish his poetry because “[his] mother is still alive”. She became his *raison d'écrire* and a reliable critic to his work as he once wrote in a letter to Marianne Moore<sup>109</sup>. Moreover, when Eliot travelled to Europe, she remained a devoted and often critical guardian of her son's career. He regularly sent carbon copies of forthcoming works to her. Charlotte Stearns Eliot wrote article discriminating the idea of Victorian motherhood. She argues that “a woman's first duty is to her own household”. In 1926, Eliot arranged for the publication of his mother's last and most ambitious work, *Savonarola*. This stresses the importance of the motherly over the sexualized in Eliot's poetry, particularly in *Ash-Wednesday*.

Eliot attempts to rebuild civilization through spirituality. Religious transcendence is but a means to achieve a state of understanding that prepares for wholeness. It is very significant that Eliot relates spirituality and redemption to the feminine in his

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<sup>107</sup> Elisabeth Däumer, *Charlotte Stearns Eliot and "Ash-Wednesday"'s Lady of Silences*, (ELH, Vol. 65, No. 2 (Summer, 1998), pp. 479-501) Published by: The Johns Hopkins University Press. Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30030188> .Accessed: 15/04/2013 09:16.

<sup>108</sup> McIntire, op. cit., p. 33.

<sup>109</sup> Elizabeth Daumer, op. cit., p. 480.

middle poetry – the lady is the one who redeems the time – while his early poetry associated women with vulgarity and low sexuality.

#### 4.2. “Marina”: “O my daughter”

“Marina” is the fourth of the Ariel poems, along with “Journey of the Magi”, “A Song for Simeon” and “Animula”. The poem explores a different form of women’s representation although it is fundamentally quite the same as *Ash-Wednesday* lady of silences. But unlike *Ash-Wednesday*, “Marina” does not rely on heavy religious language and allusions. It makes reference to Shakespeare’s *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. To have a clearer view of Marina’s significance in the poem, a brief synopsis of the play’s plot is required. In Shakespeare’s play, Prince Pericles wants to marry Antiochus’s daughter but discovers their incestuous relationship and escapes in fear he might be murdered. He wins the hand of his wife Thaisa in a jousting contest. After Antiochus and his daughter are burnt by a fire from heaven, Pericles decides to go back to Tyre with his pregnant wife but she dies during child-birth and is cast into the sea in a chest. Thaisa is revived by a doctor and becomes a priestess in Diana’s Temple. In Tarsus, Pericles hands his daughter Marina to King Cleon and Queen Dionyza who take care of her until she grows into a more beautiful young woman than their own daughter. The queen decides to murder her out of jealousy but Marina is captured by pirates who sell her into prostitution in Myteline. In the brothel, Marina is pursued by many men but she refuses to give up her honor for money. She even convinces the men to seek virtue in their own lives. She starts, then, to work in a reputable house as an educator. Meanwhile, Pericles went to Tarsus to claim his daughter back but the king and queen tell him that she was dead. Distressed and

hopeless, Pericles sets to sea again, this time to Mytilene. Lycimachus, a noble man from the city wants to ease the old king's pain so he introduces him to a young woman who has equally suffered greatly: Marina. Unable to know each other, the daughter tells her painful life story and the king recognizes her as his own lost daughter. In his sleep, he dreams of goddess Diana asking him to visit her temple and tell his story. There, he meets his wife and the entire family is happily reunited<sup>110</sup>.

When King Pericles encounters his long-lost daughter aboard his ship, he asks her about her family and the origin of her name. She replies saying that the name was given to her “by one that had some power, [her] father, and a king.” He exclaims:

But are you flesh and blood?  
Have you a working pulse? and are no fairy?  
Motion! Well; speak on. Where were you born?  
And wherefore call'd Marina?

He believes that he is dreaming as she recalls facts that he very well knows of and says within himself:

This is the rarest dream that e'er dull sleep  
Did mock sad fools withal: this cannot be:  
My daughter's buried.

As it appears more like a dream to him, he affirms to himself that his daughter is already buried. After a short questioning, Marina's speech reveals that she is indeed Pericles' daughter. Although Pericles is the protagonist of the play, Marina still plays an active role in it. She is the one that saves him from depression when she reveals her story.

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<sup>110</sup> William Shakespeare, *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*, (London, Penguin Books Ltd: 2001). First published in 1609.

Notably, although the poem is framed upon the Jacobean play, it still retains its own virtue. It is valid even without the reference to the play. The old man calling through the fog and reflecting upon his past, his deteriorating memory and his offspring can easily be related to. The sense of standing in the thin line separating reality and illusion is also significant. It continues in the Eliotic fascination with aging which is recurrent from the earlier poems like *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*.

Like most of Eliot's poems, "Marina" starts with an epigraph. An unmistakable sense of bewilderment, loss and purposelessness is felt in it: "What place is this, what land, what quarter of the globe?" It is taken from Seneca's *Hercules Furens*<sup>111</sup>. The words are pronounced by Hercules after recovering from a fit of insanity in which he had slain his wife and children. It reflects Pericles own state of mind. But while Pericles' bewilderment is caused by extreme happiness to find his only daughter, Hercules' confusion is the result of utter madness and the loss of his children. Pericles, who is the speaker in the poem, continues with the same air of astonishment but with the tone of genuine elation instead of pain:

What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands  
What water lapping the bow  
And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog  
What images return  
O my daughter. (ll. 1- 5)

The images he reflects upon are familiar to him. They are both of a maritime and a non-nautical nature. The images of coasts, grey rocks and islands along with the scent of pine reminds him of his daughter, whom he calls by the end of the stanza.

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<sup>111</sup> Jane Worthington, op. cit., pp 15- 16.

Soon, death seems to make its way into the poem. It prevails, being repeated four times:

Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning  
Death  
Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning  
Death  
Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning  
Death  
Those who suffer the ecstasy of the animals, meaning  
Death (ll. 6 – 13)

The image of death, associated with the sins of gluttony, vanity, sloth and lust, triumphs before deliverance. Death is Pericles' enemy as he grows old and vulnerable, and realizes that his chances to meet his daughter again are narrow. The sins mentioned are related to people he met during his journey. Lust, for instance, is King Antiochus's sin; he is involved in an incestuous relationship with his daughter. Vanity is most probably associated with Dionyza whose vanity and greed lead her to attempt murder. A line later we read: "by grace dissolved in place" (l. 16): grace interfuses with the landscape itself<sup>112</sup>. The grace is evocative of the Virgin Mary. The presence of the daughter brings joy and relief. Pericles does not believe what he sees and thinks it was a trance. He questions the face he sees, presumably in his imagination, becoming "less clear" then "clearer". As he grew old, his daughter's face becomes remote. The poem is celebrated for the honest emotions it evokes. The father, unable to comprehend his vision, solicits answers in an almost pleading tone:

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<sup>112</sup> Ronald Tamplin, A preface to T.S. Eliot, (London, Longman Group Limited: 1988), p. 147.

What is this face, less clear and clearer  
The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—  
Given or lent? More distant than stars and nearer than the eye

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet  
Under sleep, where all the waters meet. (ll. 17 – 21)

Emotionally saturated, the speaker seems to doubt his visions. The daughter's pulse – if she is real – oscillates between weakness and strength, she is distant then becomes near. Tiny auditory memories of whispers and laughter give a sense of hallucinatory pleasure. The diminutive aspect of sounds is a reminder of a child playing. It suggests that Pericles remembers his daughter's childhood in a happier epoch, perhaps a dream, as well.

In "Marina" reality and fantasy are fused. What Pericles sees cannot be confirmed. It could be a mere illusion or an actual image of his long lost daughter. He is barely capable of remembering details: "I made this, I have forgotten/And remember"(l. 23). He remembers making the ship and remembers that he fathered a daughter; they are both his creation<sup>113</sup>. The king experiences a sense of recognition which is in fact introduced by the image of his daughter:

This form, this face, this life  
Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me  
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,  
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.(ll. 29- 42)

He perceives the image of his beloved daughter. He is keenly ready to leave his own life in favor of hers and willing to speak no more waiting for her undeclared words. Marina, with her lips parted as she begins to talk, stands for hope in her father's thoughts. She is like new ships to a sailor who has not any. Of course, although the

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<sup>113</sup> Hugh Kenner, op. cit., p. 234.



daughter is addressed, she does not reply. In fact, the reader sees her only through the slowly vanishing recollection of her father. Despite the important role that she plays in Shakespeare's play, Marina is almost absent in Eliot's poem. Nevertheless, she is identifiable through the title – most evidently – and the lines evoking the sea. Not only does the woman in this poem possess no voice, but she has no actual image either. Her corporeality is purposefully made absent. The focus is on the psychological torment that her father undergoes rather than her own experience. Hence, she is misrepresented. Despite her goddess-like form that she seems to take in the poem, she is still deprived of a woman's voice. One may wonder what she would say if she was to talk in the poem.

The image of daughter has a myriad of meanings. In a way, she is an extension to the parents, in this case to King Pericles. The father continues to live through his child. His dreams and expectations are – supposedly – realized by his offspring. It is as if the daughter's years are “new years” to her father. Moreover, the daughter symbolizes tenderness and innocence; she is the safe feminine. She is far from the sexuality usually associated in Eliot's poetry with disgust.

The curious rendering of the feminine in “Marina” lends itself to equivocalty. The transformation of women from sexually corrupted women dwelling in brothels to the image of a daughter whose mere presence seems to lighten up the entire place is a careful escape from the unpleasant sordidness of society to a divine sphere where memory, loss and time are redeemed. Eliot seems to yearn for an ethically correct standard for women in his middle poetry. His aim, however, is not plainly didactic, but aesthetic. Marina, hence, can also be viewed as relatable to the Virgin Mary. Her

chastity and nobility resembles that of the Virgin Mother who endured pain and remained faithful to God's orders. In the play, when Marina is abducted by pirates she is sold to a brothel but she does not engage in disgraceful acts. She convinces every client that he should not approach her. In the end a noble man falls in love with her and she is betrothed to him.

Moreover, one of the names of Mary is *Stella Maris* or Our Lady, Star of the Sea. This can be a veiled image of the Virgin Mary herself. Moreover, in some cultures the daughter is referred to as mother. The mother-daughter image falls in the same spectrum of the safe feminine. There is an intricate contrast between the image of Sweeney's yawning prostitute drawing a stocking up on the floor and Marina's stern self-protection which gives her a pristine dimension. There is a sense of holiness that envelops her; she rescues her father's memory. While the lady in *Ash-Wednesday* "redeem[s] the time, redeem[s] the dream", Marina redeems her father's reality. Pericles does not know whether the vision of his daughter is real or not yet she seems to make his fading memory more lucid.

The representation of women in the poem attests to the fact that women are never portrayed in terms of their femininity. They have to masquerade as relatable to men's imagination. Women seem to be barely seen beyond the patriarchal imagery of lovers, goddesses, witches, mothers or daughters. They give the impression of being mere catalysts to men's experience. Men are almost always the focus of literary works. Thus, if a woman tries to see her image reflected in man-authored books:

She finds a terror and a dream, she finds a beautiful pale face, she finds La Belle  
Dame Sans Merci, she finds Juliet or Tess or Salome, but precisely what she does not find

is that absorbed, drudging, puzzled, sometimes inspired creature, herself, who sits at a desk trying to put words together<sup>114</sup>.

Indeed, nearly no literary work strays from this pattern of women representation. Women in Eliot's poetry often maintain men's position. They are mere participators in an andro-centric work. They do not shape events. They may be prayed to, but they are not independent beings. In both *Ash-Wednesday* and "Marina" women's image is related to man. In the first poem the "lady" appears in order to facilitate the male speaker's path towards redemption. Glorious as she seems, she exists only as a dependent on the man's need. She is reduced to a medium. In the second poem, Marina exists only in relation to her father. Although they both seem like modernist works centered on a woman, it is a mere façade. Indeed, women seem to enhance men's experience while very little importance is given to their own experience.

The female archetype in the two poems is the mother-goddess. Jung's archetypal theory suggests the primordial image of the ultimate mother goddess in the collective conscious. The image is thus manifested in the two poems despite the difference in its demonstration. The two images share a certain level of spiritual grandeur. The women in *Ash-Wednesday* and "Marina" are both alluring and glorious. She is lovely yet inapproachable. The image of the goddess is most powerful in. One can imagine her as the Greek goddess Hera; mother of all gods, powerful, superb and authoritative. Hence, she is not a woman. The lady in *Ash-Wednesday* comes, like the daughter in "Marina", out of the past. She brings about happiness then leaves the scene, making

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<sup>114</sup> Adrienne Rich, "When We Dead Awaken: Reading as Revision", *College English*, Vol. 34, No. 1, *Women, Writing and Teaching* (Oct., 1972), pp. 18-30 Published by: National Council of Teachers of English, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/375215>. Accessed in 11/01/2015

the present and past safe for contemplation. Both women “bestow a transitory happiness which can transfigure the world”<sup>115</sup>. Indeed, when both women appear, they seem to illuminate the still unclear picture and even when they leave the scene, it is still better understood.

Although the portrayal of the feminine is far from the squalid, low sexuality and the brutally mundane of Eliot’s early poetry, it is still quite unsatisfying. The representation of women here seems governed by a tendency to keep them within an andro-centric structure. Women seem to be still silenced in order to fit in the patriarchal order in which only men must take leading roles. Remarkably, sexual politics is not manifested in *Ash-Wednesday* and “Marina” as clearly as in the earlier poems. The religious tone takes over the scenes. One may see the woman’s silence as a negative trait especially when the fact that a man is “appointed” to speak on her behalf/ about her is taken into account. In both *Ash-Wednesday* and “Marina” the female characters are deprived of a voice. The representation seems to create a prototype upon which all women must be modeled.

On the other hand, in regard of Eliot’s religious quest, it seems that it requires the presence of a divine woman. The holiness of the woman in *Ash-Wednesday* and the unquestionable goodness of the daughter in “Marina” make them the ultimate image of the safe feminine in Eliot’s poetry. The pristine woman is a savior in Eliot’s poetry. She serves as a medium between the sinful worshipper and God. Secular as it seems, “Marina” is her father’s savior as well. She appears and disappears in his imagination,

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<sup>115</sup> Hugh Kenner, op. cit., p. 234.

yet brings him to a certain degree of understanding with every vision he has of her. *Ash-Wednesday*'s lady restores the lost years and the ancient rhyme. In other words, she restores spirituality and the old cultural system. While *The Waste Land* attempts to give a credible order to civilization, *Ash-Wednesday* seems to find it in the form of a woman. After all, the role of poetry is to forge a better order, in an attempt to create a better reality. Eliot's representation of women is tightly associated with his view of civilization. It is a progress from the inability to comprehend the moribund state of Western civilization in early poetry to the attempt at understanding its predicament in the middle one, to an actual attempt at healing it through spirituality. Hence, Eliot's progress towards healing starts with the fallen woman's archetype, encompassing the torn female Philomela to reach the mother-goddess. The latter represents the regaining of civilization.

## **CONCLUSION**

Femininity can be looked at as marginality in a patriarchal society. Still, the woman represents the core of modern civilization in Eliot's poetry. It is safe to claim that the representation of women in T.S. Eliot's poetry is a metaphor for the state of Europe in the early twentieth century. In fact women in Eliot's poetry are representatives of the Western civilization. Women have represented modernism in its cradle, as has already been pointed out. The first attempt to defend modernism was through projecting it into a woman.

T.S. Eliot's early poetry is mainly associated with a sense of anomie, boredom and spiritual draught, with very little hope for redemption. "Hysteria" and "Sweeney Erect" for instance are exemplary of the degraded state of modern civilization. Women representation in early poetry is associated with such sense. Hence, the female archetype for early poetry is the fallen woman. *La belle dame sans merci* is a recurrent image in western fiction. She is both appealing because of her sexual promiscuity/appetite and intimidating as she threatens to cause the downfall of the man who approaches her. Men are thus drawn into her yet are frightened by her charms and power. Horrified fascination is equally what Prufrock feels towards the women he meets. They are a source of admiration and of dread. Fearing women is associated mainly with fearing the desires they provoke within men. Hence, the resentment and open misogyny exhibited by some men attests to their weakness facing women: "The fear of women, closely associated with a fear of the consuming desires within, reveals itself not only as impotence but as a boundless rage against the female sex"<sup>116</sup>.

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 346.

Sweeney exhibits this form of behavior, along with the speaker in “Hysteria”. Men’s unease with women seems to stem from their own weakness. When one looks closely at the three female archetypes in Eliot’s selected poems, one is surprised by the intensity of the feminine experience they represent. The feminine experience is a representative of modern civilization itself. The fallen woman – the earliest archetype – is for instance the prostitute in the Sweeney poem, who uses her body for material gain. She is sexually active yet sterile. She symbolizes modern civilization in its degraded state and her inability to regenerate. The woman, nonetheless, is the outcome of modern economics. Her social status and economic needs provide a justification for using her body as a commodity. She is, however, resistant to society. She does not seek to justify her acts, or to set an emotional bond with her client. She is exemplary of sexual politics. In *Portrait of a Lady*, the fallen woman is the image of a high social status woman, whose position as a lady allows her – seemingly – to disempower men. Indeed, Sweeney is as unnerved by women’s presence as Prufrock and the speaker in the *Portrait*, alike. The image of the fallen woman seems to reoccur occasionally in *The Waste Land*, as well. She is fallen and may cause the downfall of men.

In *The Waste Land*, Philomela is a representative of all the modern tortured women. After the First World War, the sense of anarchy and desolation was intense. Women, thus, are associated with pain and trauma. All female characters in the poem endure a certain type of torment. Some suffered physical trauma like the female typist, while others endured emotional deprivation like the woman with “bad nerves”. Philomela, however seems to suffer all types of pain such as corporeal subjugation,



mutilation and psychological distress. She, however, achieves a relative vengeance as has already been explained. The traumatic experience of modern society ceases to be Eliot's main concern after his conversion to Anglicanism. Starting with *The Waste Land*, the sense of disintegration was coupled with an attempt at achieving wholeness. Deliverance can only be sought through contemplating modern chaos as opposed to classical grandeur. In this particular poem, women representation is grimly associated with pain and suffering – along with men. Although power is distributed unequally between men and women, they are equally torn. The female archetype, thus, is Philomela or the torn woman. It is very important to point out that the horrors of modern society are not limited to women. While men and women appear to undergo different types of torment – according to their gender roles – pain seems to unite them. The journey into the wastelands of modern Europe is but an attempt to seek redemption.

The search for wholeness culminates in Eliot's middle poetry, namely in *Ash-Wednesday*, where it is associated with spirituality. The image of woman in the poem is also associated with the divine. She is an earthly image of the Virgin Mary; therefore, the female archetype in the poem is the pristine woman.

The representation of women in Eliot's early and middle poetry is linked to a sheer understanding of the newly acquired female authority. The woman in modernist writings in general was misrepresented; her voice silenced, her own desires repressed, her body violated and her very identity cancelled in favor of a domineering patriarchal system that sees her as a second sex. Although Eliot's poetry does not seem divert

from that stream at first sight, but his view of a sane modern civilization sets women as basis in the recovery of Western civilization.

Although Eliot is not a social reformer, his satires of modern life resemble social criticism. The images of injustice, befouled sensuality, one-dimensional craving and unpleasant human experiences blur the line between desire and death in his poetry. Gender to him is anything but stable. In his poetry, Eliot's concern for the human compels him to write it. He portrays the feminine, the masculine and the hermaphrodite. Women evoked within him a mixture of desire and awe, fear and insecurity or even disgust. To Eliot, women were muses like Vivien Haigh-Wood and Valerie Fletcher, holy mothers like Charlotte Eliot or pen-friends like Virginia Woolf. Modernism started with the image of a woman and the spiritual plight of modern society will end with one.

Eliot's post-conversion poetry is characterized by a search for wholeness through spirituality. In order to achieve that, Eliot's archetype was the pristine woman, who is a sacred being. In middle poetry, women were represented almost as goddesses. They are linked to motherhood, daughterhood and blessing. The image is quite the opposite of that of early poetry. Eliot wrote a letter to his brother Henry in which he expresses concern for how shocking "Sweeney Erect" may seem to their mother. He also expresses shame for her reading some of his other poems. This shows how significant Charlotte Eliot was in her son's literary career. It is also a proof of the domination of the motherly over the sexualized; hence it is no surprise that some of his middle poetry venerates motherhood.

At first sight, Eliot's poems seem fraught with misogyny. Women in Eliot's early poetry are almost always mere catalysts to men's experience. He, however, attempts to give modern women a voice through poetry. He recognizes their importance. It seems as though Eliot's attempt to regain civilization through spirituality can only be achieved through women, which is indicated in middle poetry, namely *Ash-Wednesday*.

The modernist era witnessed an intense sense of anomie, anarchy and despair. Civilization is thus to be mourned, satirized and re-explored through literature. The pursuit of a "still point" as Eliot suggested in *The Four Quartets* starts with contemplating modern civilization. Indeed, only through carefully contemplating the past and present, one can look with some certainty towards the future.

Eliot's representation of women is compatible with the changes that occurred at the turn of the twentieth century. He is not a misogynist but a modernist who is very well aware of women's role in modern society.

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## ملخص

### تمثيل المرأة في الشعر الأول و المتوسط ل T.S. Eliot

#### The Representation of Women in T.S. Eliot's Early and Middle Poetry

تلعب المرأة دوراً أساسياً في الأدب الحديث و كون تي اس اليوت أيقونة الشعر الحديث في أوروبا و أمريكا , فإنّ الدور الذي تلعبه النساء في شعره لا يقل أهمية عن دورهن في الشعر الحديث . و لهذا كان هدف هذه الأطروحة دراسة تمثيل المرأة في الشعر الأول و المتوسط ل T. S. Eliot .

لا تكتمل هذه الدراسة إلا بمنهجية تناسب الموضوع . لذا فقد وقع الاختيار على نظرية Sexual politics ل Kate Millett ونظرية Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious ل Carl Gustav Jung .

تنص نظرية Sexual Politics على أن ترى العلاقة بين الرجل و المرأة كعلاقة سياسية مبنية على القوة و السيطرة . و يُلاحظ أنّ المرأة تُرى بعين النقص , حيث أنّها الجنس الأضعف والأولى بارتكاب الأخطاء .

و يقوم النظام الذكوري على إخضاع النساء لسلطة المجتمع حيث لا تتساوى في الحقوق بالرجل , و يظهر هذا جلياً في شعر T.S. Eliot , حيث أنّ المرأة تظهر في مختلف الطبقات الاجتماعية , ففي « Sweeney Among the Nightingales » نجد صورة المرأة المومسة التي تجني عيشها من خلال عملها في بيت الدعارة , فهي تمثّل الانحطاط الحضاري إذ أنّها تباع جسدها مقابل المال في ايطار صفقة اقتصادية محضة , نفس الصورة تتكرّر في « Sweeney Erect » .

في *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* يختلف تمثيل المرأة اذ تظهر بثوب الطّبعة الرأفية , فهنّ يحضرن معارض الفنّ و ينتقدن فنّانين بحجم مايكل أنجلو . الاّ أنّهن فارغات عاطفيا و أخلاقيا. بالاضافة الى ذلك فهنّ يمثّلن تهديدا لشخصية Prufrock .

في *Portrait of a Lady* لا يختلف الحال كثيرا اذ أنّ شخصّة المرأة البرجوازية تبدو في حلة من الضعف و قلة الحيلة اذ أنّها متشبّثة بأصدقائها المزعومين الذين لا يُظهر عليهم أدنى سمة من سمات الصّدّاقة .

نقدّم *The Waste Land* باقّة من النّساء من مختلف الأعمار و المستويات الثقافية و الاجتماعية الاّ أنّهن يشتركن في الألم و المعاناة التي يعشنها في ظلّ النظام الاجتماعي الجائر .

في *Ash-Wednesday* تظهر المرأة ككائن ملائكي في صورة السيّدة مريم العذراء و بياتريس حبيبة Dante و هما مثال واضح للمرأة في أرقى حالاتها حسب مفهوم المسيحية الحقّة .

أصبح تمثيل المرأة في الأدب الشاغل الرئيسي للنقد الأدبي الحديث. فقد جادل طابور طويل من النساء الكتاب أنّ النساء غالبا ما حرفت في الأدب الرجالي. فهم التجربة الإنسانيّة محكوم بجنس الكاتب. وبالتالي، فإنّه من الصعب حقا القول بأي قدر من اليقين ما إذا كانت تجربة الجنسين يمكن أن يقال من قبل مؤلف من الجنس الآخر. وتقول وأشار الفرنسية النسوية Helène Cixous أنّ "المرأة يجب أن تكتب عن النساء. والرجال عن الرجال."

تغير دور المرأة في المجتمعات الغربية وفقا لما هو موضح في العصر الفيكتوري من الملاحظ ان النبيرة الأخلاقية العالية، أنشأت موقعا هامشيا بالنسبة للمرأة. كان موقعها محدد بدقة من قبل الدين والتقاليد الاجتماعية. هذا التمثيل هو قريب جدا من الحكايات الاسطورية. على سبيل المثال، في "سنو وايت والأقزام السبعة" صورت النساء إما ساذجة وضعيفة وغير قادرة على تحمل اعباء الحياة من تلقاء نفسها مثل سنو وايت أو ضحلة أو شريرة متأمرة مثل زوجة والدها. في الواقع، مثلت النساء إما

كمخلوقات وديعة، حلوة المعشر، قادرة على الحب الأمومي، تعيش حياة سعيدة أو مخلوقات تسعى الى المصلحة الذاتية لينتهي بها المطاف يتدمير الذات. بطلات الرواية الإناث، بالتالي، لسن بطلات حقيقيات لأنهن لا تدخلن في أي صراع أخلاقي أو تغيير مسار الأحداث - على الأقل ليس اثر رغبة في ذلك. الخير لا ينبع من العمل ولكن من تقبلهن السلبي القدري لبيئتهن.

ويمكن تطبيق نفس السمة إلى حكايات أخرى مثل سندريلا. فتاة شابة جميلة ولكنها غير ذكية تنظف الأرض، تطبخ، تعتني بالآخرين وتنتظر أميرها الساحر لانقاذ حياتها من ظلم زوجة ابيها وأختيها. هوجمت هذه صورة المرأة ضعيفة في القصص الخيالية من ناقدات كثر مثل أندريا دوركين التي ركزت على أساطير الشرق الأقصى. على الرغم من الادعاء بأن المرأة لا تحتاج الأمير الساحر لينقذها من تعاستها ، تحريف صورة المرأة لا يزال قائما.

واحدة من المسائل التي كثيرا ما فكرت في الأدب هي المساحة التي تشغلها المرأة في الأعمال الأدبية الرجال وكيف يتم التعامل مع الذات / الجسد الأنثوي. توعية الرجال بالذات الأنثوية والجسد الأنثوي تختلف. في الواقع، كره النساء، مهما بدا خفيفا،فهو متجذر في الثقافة الغربية لأنه يقوم على الاعتقاد بدونية الأنثى الكامنة المفترض، وبالتالي منح المصداقية لهيمنة الذكور، وبذلك يكون وضع النظام الأبوي أمرا لا مناص منه. الأدب هو واحد من وسائل التي سعت إلى تبرير النظام الأبوي وتبعية المرأة. فهو يعزز مفهوم ضعف الإناث "الطبيعي" جسديا وعاطفيا على حد سواء. عادة ما ترتبط المرأة في الثقافة الغربية مع إما الشر المطلق أو سذاجة غير المتطورة. و الصورة النمطية لزوجة الاب احسن مثال ذلك في القصص الخيالية. الأساطير القديمة تميل إلى وضع ملصقات للنساء. اليونانية ميدوسا، آلهة الرومان ايريس، ليليث ودلايلا من العهد القديم جنبا إلى جنب مع إيزابل الكتاب المقدس هي امثلة قديمة قاتمة عن المؤنث. فهي تمثيل مبتذل للمرأة في الإعدادات الأبوية التقليدية. وتولدت الصورة النمطية الممنهجة للنساء بعمق في المجتمع الذكوري الأوروبي. يبدو أن الأنوثة في جميع أشكالها تهدد الرجال: "طفلة أو امرأة، زوجة أو أم، تقطع هذه الأنثى الرجال إلى أشرطة أو تبتلع الرجل كليا". ظلمت المرأة



في كتابات الرجال بشكل عام. فالمرأة لم تصور بشكل يليق بها في الكتابات الحديثة. يبدو أن الأدب الحديث أسكت صوتها، قمع شخصها، أنتهك جسدها وألغيت هويتها لصالح النظام الأبوي المتسلط الذي يرى المرأة على أنها جنس ثان، على حد قول سيمون دي بوفوار.

بعد وقت قصير من وصوله الى لندن في عام 1914، كتب Eliot رسالة إلى Conrad Aiken والذي ينص مع بعض الخجل: "أنا أعتد اعتمادا كبيرا على النساء (أعني المجتمع الأنثوي)". هذا اعتراف الحذر يستحق مراقبة لأنه يشهد على أهمية المؤنث في حياة الشاعر.

. وكانت والدة الشاعر، الذي كان شاعرا والمصلح الاجتماعي، وهو فنان أحببت الذي تحول لها الاهتمام الكامل لابنه الموهوب لها. شارلوت إليوت مراقبة مهنة ابنها وفقا لما هو موضح في الفصل الرابع. وقد تأثر إليوت عدد من النساء طوال حياته؛ والدته، حبه الأول Emily Hail، زوجته الأولى

vivien High-wood، صديقه Mary Trilivien، وزوجته الثانية Valerie Fletcher.

لا يعارض Eliot التيار الرئيسي للأدباء الغربيين حول موضوع النوع الاجتماعي في ذلك الوقت. الا ان نظرتة الى النساء متناقضة , تتراوح بين الاشتمزاز المطلق إلى الحيرة، التبجيل.

وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى إلقاء الضوء على جانب حيوي جدا في المجتمع الغربي الحديث أوائل القرن العشرين بدت هزتها أسباب مختلفة. وتعد هذه الدراسة التي ستجرى في نهج التحليل النفسي النسوية واليونغي مع إيلاء اهتمام خاص للنص. واحدة من أهم القضايا التي ينبغي استكشافها هو تطور TS عرض إليوت للمرأة خلال مسيرته الأدبية من حوالي 1910-1930 أي شعره المبكر والمتوسط. انها تهدف الى اظهار كيف تى اس تطورت عرض إليوت للمرأة من الاشتمزاز لالتبجيل في عملية النضج..

وقد أملى على اختيار الموضوع من خلال وعي الشخصي بأهمية مثل هذه الدراسة ومصلحة حقيقية في الأدب الحداثي، ولا سيما شعر إليوت.

تتكون الرسالة من أربعة فصول. الفصل الأول بعنوان "الحداثة والمرأة و إليوت " يوفر إطلالة على النظريات المطبقة أثناء التحليل، ويدرس في السياق الذي كان يتألف الشعر إليوت. ويستكشف قضية الجندر والجنس في الحداثة ويقترح مراجعة الأدبيات المعنية مع صورة المرأة في الأعمال الحداثية. في الواقع، فإنه يكاد يكون من المستحيل لعرض الشعر إليوت دون الخلفية التاريخية والثقافية، وخاصة إذا واحد

الفصل الثاني بعنوان "المرأة في شعر إليوت المبكر: وشنيع المؤنث" تعنى تصوير المنحازة بين الجنسين المرأة في أقرب قصائد إليوت وهي "الهستيريا"، "سويني منتصب"، "سويني بين العنادل"، صورة لسيدة و أغنية حب J. ألفريد بروفروك.

مكرس للأرض اليباب تقديراً لأهميته: الفصل الثالث بعنوان "محنة إذا تجاوزنا الجنس الأرض اليباب". ويناقش النساء تصوير بالمقارنة مع عدد الرجال في القصيدة، وتوجه تشابه بين الأسطورة والحداثة والأنوثة.

الفصل الأخير بعنوان "تى اس شعر إليوت في وقت لاحق: إن "يتعامل مع قصيدتين Ash- Wednesday و « Marina » في القصيدة الأولى، وسيتم النظر تمثيل المرأة في مع اعتبار خاص للأساطير المسيحية. في كل قصائد، إليوت يحيد عن خسة من الأنوثة إلى ارتفاعه.

وتهدف الفصول الأربعة في كشف غموض المرتبطة التمثيل إليوت للمرأة وعلاجه من أجسادهم..

يمكن النظر الأنوثة في كما التهميش في المجتمع الذكوري. ومع ذلك، فإن المرأة تمثل جوهر الحضارة الحديثة في الشعر إليوت. أنه من الامن بماكان الادعاء بأن صورة المرأة في شعر Eliot هي كناية عن حالة أوروبا في أوائل القرن العشرين. في الواقع المرأة في هي ممثل للحضارة الغربية والمرأة ممثلة الحداثة في مهدها - كما سبق أن أشير - كانت أول محاولة للدفاع عن الحداثة من خلال إبراز المرأة الحديثة كهوية جديدة للمجتمع.

عندما ينظر المرء عن كثب في الأمثلة الثلاثة الإناث في قصائد إليوت المختارة، أحد فوجئنا بشدة التجربة الأنثوية التي يمثلونها. التجربة الأنثوية هو ممثل الحضارة الحديثة نفسها. المرأة الساقطة على سبيل المثال - في قصيدة « Sweeney Amon the Nightingale »، الذي يستخدم جسدها لتحقيق مكاسب مادية. وهي عقيمة رغم نشاطها الجنسي. انها ترمز الى الحضارة الحديثة في حالته المتدهورة وعدم قدرتها على التجدد. ماهي إلا نتيجة من نتائج الاقتصاد الحديث. وضعها الاجتماعي والاحتياجات الاقتصادية توفر مبررا لاستخدام جسدها كسلعة. وهي، مع ذلك، مقاومة للمجتمع. فهي لا تسعى لتبرير أعمال لها، أو لوضع الرابطة العاطفية مع موكلها. انها مثالية السياسة الجنسية. في «Portrait of a Lady»، المرأة الساقطة متمثلة في امرأة عالية الحالة الاجتماعية. منصب سيده يسمح لها - على ما يبدو - إلى عدم تمكين الرجال. في الواقع حتى Sweeney غير مطمئن من جانب وجود المرأة كماو كذلك المتحدث في ال «Portrait» على حد سواء. صورة المرأة الساقطة يبدو أن تتكرر في «The Waste Land»، كذلك. انها صورة امرأة سقطت ويمكن أن يتسبب في سقوط الرجال.

«The Waste Land» في Philomela هو ممثل لجميع النساء للتعذيب الحديثة. بعد الحرب العالمية الأولى، كان الشعور الفوضى والخراب الشديد. النساء، وبالتالي، ترتبط مع الألم والصدمة. كل الشخصيات النسائية في قصيدة تحمل اي نوع معين من العذاب. يعاني بعض الصدمات الجسدية مثل طابع الإناث، في حين عانى البعض الآخر الحرمان العاطفي مثل امرأة مع "الأعصاب سيئة". Philomela، ولكن يبدو أن تعاني كل أنواع الألم مثل القهر ماديته والتشويه والضغط النفسي. انها، مع ذلك، يحقق الانتقام النسبي كما تم شرح. التجربة المؤلمة للمجتمع الحديث

يتميز الشعر في وقت لاحق إليوت بالبحث عن الكمال من خلال القيم الروحية. من أجل تحقيق ذلك، كان النموذج الأصلي إليوت مريم العذراء، وهي كائن مقدس. في الشعر في وقت لاحق، ومثلت النساء تقريبا كآلهة. وهي مرتبطة بالأمومة والنعمة. الصورة هي العكس تماما من شعر Eliot في وقت مبكر.

في رسالة كتبها Eliot لشقيقه Henry أعرب فيه عن قلقه لكيفية صدمة « Sweeney Erect » قد يبدو أن والدتهم. كما يعرب عار بالنسبة لها قراءة بعض قصائده الأخرى. وهذا يدل على مدى أهمية وشارلوت إليوت في مهنة الأدبية ابنها. وإنما هو أيضا دليل على هيمنة الأمومة. وبالتالي فإنه ليس من المستغرب أن بعض من شعره لاحق تكرم الأمومة.

كل رجل الذي يندرج في إطار موجة لها Men. "الى بلدها بعد خائفون من قبل مفاتها والسلطة. سحر روعت هو بالتساوي ما يشعر بروفروك تجاه النساء يلتقي. فهي مصدر الإعجاب والرهبة. خوفا النساء يرتبط أساسا مع خوفا من الرغبات التي تثير في الرجال. وبالتالي، فإن استياء وكرهية النساء المفتوحة التي أظهرتها بعض الرجال تشهد على ضعف تواجه نسائهم. استنش يضعه ببلاغة: "إن الخوف من النساء، يرتبط بشكل وثيق مع الخوف من استهلاك يرغب في غضون ذلك، يكشف عن نفسه ليس فقط باعتبارها العجز ولكن كما غضب لا حدود لها ضد الإناث". سويني يسلك هذا النوع من السلوك، جنبا إلى جنب مع المتكلم في « Hysteria » .

ويرتبط تمثيل المرأة في شعر إليوت في وقت مبكر والمتوسطة إلى الخوف الهائل من سلطة الإناث ، عن رأيه في الحضارة الحديثة عاقل يضع المرأة كأساس في انتعاش الحضارة الغربية.

ويرتبط شعر Eliot في وقت مبكر أساسا بشعور من الشذوذ والملل ومشروع الروحي، مع أمل ضئيل للغاية من أجل الخلاص. « Hysteria » و « Sweeney Erect » على سبيل المثال هي مثالية لحالة مندهورة للحضارة الحديثة. ويرتبط تمثيل المرأة في الشعر في وقت مبكر مع هذا الشعور. وبالتالي، فإن النموذج الأصلي للإناث للشعر المبكر هو امرأة سقطوا. بدءا من الأرض اليباب، وقد يقترن بمعنى التفكك مع محاولة لتحقيق الكمال. لا يمكن إلا أن يلتمس الخلاص من خلال التفكير في الفوضى الحديثة بدلا من عظمة الكلاسيكية. في هذه القصيدة بالذات، ويرتبط تمثيل المرأة متجه مع الألم والمعاناة - جنبا إلى جنب مع الرجل. على الرغم من أن السلطة وتوزع بشكل غير متساو بين الرجال والنساء، على حد

سواء التي مزقتها فيها. النموذج الأصلي للإناث، وبالتالي، هو Philomela أو امرأة ممزقة. رحلة إلى الأراضي البور أوروبا الحديثة ليست سوى محاولة لتحقيق الخلاص. البحث عن الكمال يتوج في الشعر الأوسط إليوت، وهي في الرماد، الأربعاء، حيث أنه يرتبط مع الروحانية. ويرتبط صورة المرأة في القصيدة أيضا مع الالهة. هي صورة الدنيوية من مريم العذراء. وبالتالي، فإن النموذج الأصلي للإناث في القصيدة هي المرأة البكر.

للهولة الأولى، قصائد إليوت تبدو محفوفة كراهية النساء. المرأة في شعر إليوت في وقت مبكر هي دائما تقريبا مجرد عوامل مساعدة لتجربة الرجال.

بيد أنه محاولة لإعطاء المرأة العصرية صوت من خلال الشعر. إنه يدرك أهميتها. يبدو كما لو أن محاولة إليوت لاستعادة الحضارة من خلال روحانية لا يمكن تحقيقه إلا من خلال المرأة، وهو ما أشار إليه في الشعر المتوسط، وهي Ash Wednesday. تمثيل إليوت للمرأة متوافق مع التغيرات التي حدثت في مطلع القرن العشرين. انه ليس الكاره للنساء ولكن الحداثية الذين جدا تدرك جيدا دور المرأة في المجتمع الحديث.

شهد عصر الحداثة شعور عميق من الشذوذ والفوضى واليأس. وهكذا إلى أن نعى الحضارة، مهجو وإعادة استكشاف من خلال الأدب. السعي وراء " النقطة الساكنة" كما اقترح Eliot في The Four Quartets تبدأ تفكر في الحضارة الحديثة. في الواقع، إلا من خلال التفكير بعناية في الماضي والحاضر، يمكن للمرء أن ننظر بشيء من اليقين تجاه المستقبل.

Eliot التزم بحزم لمثل هذا الرأي. على الرغم من أنه ليس مصلحا اجتماعيا، هجاء له الحياة العصرية تشبه النقد الاجتماعي. صور من الظلم، والحسية، والخبرات البشرية غير سارة تلمس الخط الفاصل بين الرغبة والموت في شعره. بين الجنسين له أي شيء ولكن مستقرة. في شعره، والاهتمام إليوت

للإنسان يدفعه إلى الكتابة عنها. انه يصور المؤنث، المذكر والخنثى. أثارت النساء في داخله خليط من الرغبة والرغبة والخوف وانعدام الأمن أو حتى الأشمئزاز.

ويتناول العمل البحثي الحالي تمثيل المرأة في شعر إليوت في وقت مبكر والمتوسط. ويترتب على نظرية Kate Millett التي علاقة الإنسان بالمرأة - وينظر إليها من حيث القوة - جنبا إلى جنب مع التقاليد الاجتماعية المرتبطة به. يتم تطبيق نظرية Carl G. Jung من اللاوعي الجماعي والأمثلة على الأمثلة المختلفة التي تبدو مسيطرة في جميع أنحاء شعر Eliot.

البحث الحالي يتتبع آثار أواخر القرن التاسع عشر وأوائل القرن العشرين المجتمع الحديث من حيث الجنس والإنتاج الأدبي في العصر من أجل تعيين الخلفية التي كانت تتألف الشعر إليوت.

تسعى إلى ويرتبط الشعر إليوت في وقت مبكر أساسا بشعور من الشذوذ والملل ومشروع الروحي، مع أمل ضئيل للغاية من أجل الخلاص. "الهستيريا" و "سويني منتصب" على سبيل المثال هي مثالية لحالة مندهورة للحضارة الحديثة. ويرتبط تمثيل المرأة في الشعر في وقت مبكر مع هذا الشعور. وبالتالي، فإن النموذج الأصلي للإناث للشعر المبكر هو امرأة سقطوا. بدءا من الأرض اليباب، وقد يقترن بمعنى التفكك مع محاولة لتحقيق الكمال. لا يمكن إلا أن يلتمس الخلاص من خلال التفكير في الفوضى الحديثة بدلا من عظمة الكلاسيكية. في هذه القصيدة بالذات، ويرتبط تمثيل المرأة متجه مع الألم والمعاناة - جنبا إلى جنب مع الرجل. على الرغم من أن السلطة وتوزع بشكل غير متساو بين الرجال والنساء، على حد سواء التي مزقتها فيها. النموذج الأصلي للإناث، وبالتالي، هو Philomela أو المرأة الممزقة. رحلة إلى الأراضي البورفي أوروبا الحديثة ليست سوى محاولة لتحقيق الخلاص. البحث عن الكمال يتوج في الشعر الأوسط إليوت، وهي في Ash-Wednesday، حيث أنه يرتبط مع الروحانية. ويرتبط صورة المرأة في القصيدة أيضا مع الإلهي. هي صورة الدنيوية من مريم العذراء. وبالتالي، فإن النموذج الأصلي للإناث في القصيدة هو إلهة.

ومتفهمين تمثيل المرأة في شعر إليوت في سن والتقدم شخصيا نحو الروحانية. أطروحة الحالية يتتبع صورة المرأة في شعر إليوت من الصورة الأولى للمرأة الساقطة لصورة السيدة مريم العذراء. ان المرأة في شعر تمثل حالة الحضارة الغربية. ففي الشعر الاول تظهر بكثير من الانحطاط و الدونية بينما في تظهر بصورة المرأة المعذبة في The Waste Land أما في الشعر الأوسط فهي تظهر بصورة المرأة الشريفة المشابهة لمريم العذراء.