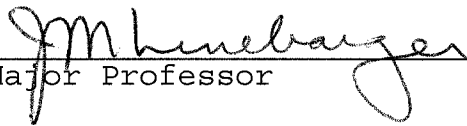


"LOOKING INTO THE HEART OF LIGHT, THE SILENCE:"

THE RULE OF DESIRE IN T.S. ELIOT'S POETRY

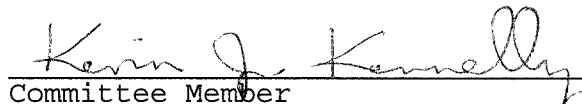
Stephen D. Adams, B.A., M.A.

APPROVED:

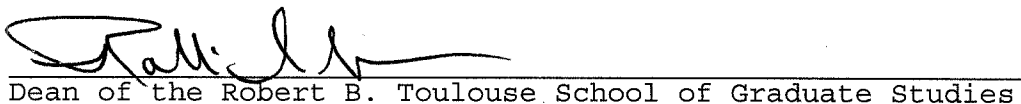
  
Major Professor

  
Committee Member

  
Committee Member

  
Committee Member

  
Chair of Graduate Studies in English

  
Dean of the Robert B. Toulouse School of Graduate Studies

379  
N81d  
No. 4/25

"LOOKING INTO THE HEART OF LIGHT, THE SILENCE:"

THE RULE OF DESIRE IN T. S. ELIOT'S POETRY

DISSERTATION

Presented to the Graduate Council of the  
University of North Texas in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

Stephen D. Adams, B.A., M.A.

Denton, Texas

August, 1995

Adams, Stephen D. "Looking into the heart of light, the silence": The Rule of Desire in T. S. Eliot's Poetry. Doctor of Philosophy (English), August, 1995, 174pp., references, 83 titles.

The poetry of T. S. Eliot represents intense yet discriminate expressions of desire. His poetry is a poetry of desire that extenuates the long tradition of love poetry in Occidental culture. The unique and paradoxical element of love in Occidental culture is that it is based on an ideal of the unconsummated love relationship between man and woman. The struggle to express desire, yet remain true to ideals that have deep sacred and secular significance is the key animating factor of Eliot's poetry. To conceal and reveal desire, Eliot made use of four core elements of modernism: the apocalyptic vision, Pound's Imagism, the conflict between organic and mechanic sources of sublimity, and precisionism. Together, all four elements form a critical and philosophical matrix that allows for the discreet expression of desire in what Foucault calls the silences of Victorianism, yet Eliot still manages to reveal it in his major poetry. In Prufrock, Eliot uses precisionism

to conceal and reveal desire with conflicting patterns of sound, syntax, and image. In The Waste Land, desire is expressed as negation, primarily as shame, sadness, and violence. The negation of desire occurred only after Pound had excised explicit references to desire, indicating Eliot's struggle to find an acceptable form of expression. At the end of The Waste Land, Eliot reveals a new method of expressing desire in the water-dripping song of the hermit-thrush and in the final prayer of Shantih. Continuing to refine his expressions of desire, Eliot makes use of nonsense and prayer in Ash Wednesday. In Ash Wednesday, language without reference to the world of objects and directed towards the semi-divine figure represents another concealment and revelation of desire. The final step in Eliot's continuing refinement of his expressions of desire occurs in Four Quartets. In Four Quartets, the speaker no longer carries the burden of desire, but language at its every evocation carries the cruel burden of ideal love.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION . . . . . 1

TRACES OF DESIRE: THE CRITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL MATRIX  
OF DESIRE IN MODERNISM . . . . . 8

PATTERNS OF DESIRE: THE AURAL AND IMAGISTIC VICISSITUDES  
OF DESIRE IN THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK . . 43

VARIETIES OF DESIRE: DESIRE AS SHAME, SADNESS, AND  
VIOLENCE IN THE WANDERING VOICE OF THE WASTE LAND . 96

LITURGIES OF DESIRE: SATIATING DESIRE WITH PRAYER,  
PETITION, MEDITATION, AND CONFESSION . . . . . 128

CONCLUSION . . . . . 158

## INTRODUCTION

The poetry of T. S. Eliot represents intense yet discriminate expressions of desire. His poetry is a poetry of desire that extenuates the long tradition of love poetry in Occidental culture. The unique and paradoxical element of love in Occidental culture is that it is based on unfulfilled desire. Since even before Dante and Petrarch, the unconsummated love relationship between a man and a woman has remained a cruel ideal. This ideal finds expression earlier in Plato's ideal forms and continues through the middle ages with the Troubadours, the tradition of courtly love, and the adoration of the Virgin. It is particularly during the middle ages when the Patriarchs of the Christian church, especially St. Augustine, began to interpret Original Sin as essentially sexual. Consequently, marriage was the least of several evils and sexuality between a man and his wife was tolerated as a poor substitute for chastity and the adoration of the Virgin. The compromise of marriage as an institution that legitimated sexuality was partly redeemed as a metaphorical union with

God, but the ideal love relationship remained chastity and adoration. On a secular level, chastity and adoration are epitomized in the story of Tristan and Isolde. After the annunciation to the Virgin Mary, the greatest ideal love affair in Occidental culture is Tristan and Isolde, but beneath the surface of the courtly love tradition lies bitter longing, betrayal, and adultery. In a sense, the bitterness of the courtly love tradition continues into the Renaissance as melancholy. Love is sickness and despair. The ideal love relationship continues and surfaces in the nineteenth century as the pristine Victorian woman on a pedestal. Victorianism is where Eliot begins, in an age when Foucault claims that the discourse of sexuality had been all but removed from public exchange. Consequently, desire in Eliot's poetry is silenced, but the silences are profound, and they do reveal themselves in powerful ways. The concealment and revelation of desire is the animating tension of all of Eliot's most important works.

In The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock, desire is presented in a changing pattern of sound and image with which the speaker must contend. These contentions are the

vicissitudes of desire as Prufrock struggles to conceal his desire yet reveals it in the only mode of expression open to Eliot: the rarefied air of the High Modernist aesthetic.

The High Modernist aesthetic is used by Eliot to conceal desire through the use of four core elements. These four core elements constitute a critical and philosophical matrix which both conceals and reveals desire. The four elements are the apocalyptic vision, Pound's Imagism, the sublime as science and mechanics, and precisionism. The apocalyptic vision consisted of shell shock and the blasted landscape of World War I, and provides an emotionally extreme context suited to the bitter longing of ideal love. The apocalyptic images, especially in The Waste Land, allow Eliot to express desire as the bitterness of ideal love without explicit acknowledgement of the sexual union that he desired. In the same way that Eliot displaces desire onto apocalyptic imagery, he goes a step further with Pound's Imagism. Eliot was not an Imagist poet, but the emphasis on surface and contour allowed Eliot to create symbols that retained an element of mysticism without having to suffer the criticisms of abstraction or imprecision with language.



Precisionism, too, plays a significant role in Eliot's poetry. Precisionism with poetic devices allows Eliot to displace onto the mechanics of poetry what was not otherwise available through language. Discords among sound, image, and syntax, especially in Prufrock, indicate the concealment and revelation of desire. A prime example of this method occurs at the end of Prufrock with the mermaids combing the hair of the waves. In one sense, the stanza represents a concretely rendered Imagist image, yet its difficult aural quality generates a tension. The seemingly concrete image is an impossible one, existing as an isolated, beautifully lyrical fragment that affects a serenity at odds with its aural quality. That affect embodies the vicissitudes of desire with which Prufrock must contend.

In The Waste Land, desire is revealed as shame, sadness, and violence. Through the use of shell shock and blasted landscapes, Eliot is able to powerfully negate desire, negation being the only possible approach in the apocalyptic vision, but the extant manuscripts of The Waste Land reveal a different poem. The poem of the manuscripts reveals a poem that contains explicit references to desire

which are frequently vulgar and include references to menstruation and excrement. These vulgar expressions of desire were the only sort open to Victorian Eliot and he exchanged them frequently in the form of the King Bolo poems to Conrad Aiken and Ezra Pound, as demonstrated in Chapter 1. Pound excised most of the vulgar expressions of desire and left only the negations. Consequently, the sincere negation of desire in The Waste Land is problematical and instead becomes an affirmation expressed as apocalypse. The apocalypse comes to a conclusion in the last section of the poem. In the "What the Thunder Said" section of the poem, the speaker experiences the blasted landscape of the desert and hears the water dripping song of the hermit-thrush. This song, in combination with the message of the thunder, prepares the speaker for the final prayer of "Shantih shantih shantih." The ending of The Waste Land as a prayer and the twenty-nine lines of the water dripping song (which Eliot claimed were the only worthwhile lines in the poem) signal a developing mode of poetic expression for Eliot. Before The Waste Land was published, Eliot had already written to friends, saying that he was moving onto a new

style.

In Ash Wednesday, Eliot relies less upon the extremes of the apocalyptic vision and more upon language itself to reveal desire. Desire is revealed as petition, meditation, and confession to a semi-divine figure. Eliot accomplishes the revelation in two ways: refining precisionism into nonsense and punning on God's logos as the culmination of all language. Consequently, the prayers to the semi-divine figure retain little semantic content. Instead, they represent a field of play within which repetition, contradiction, and an emphasis on "betweenness" causes language to be an emotive agency in itself without the need for reference to the world of objects. Language in itself evokes emotion, and because the semi-divine figure is the constant object of language, the inference that language is the silenced language of desire is plausible, especially as it emulates the model of ideal love where the speaker receives only the slightest of acknowledgments from the semi-divine figure.

Language as an emotive agency in itself that carries the burden of ideal love is Eliot's final refinement and

the method of Four Quartets. A single moment exists in "Burnt Norton" when the "lotos rose quietly, quietly," and the "surface glittered out of heart of light." No longer does Eliot or the speaker carry the burden of desire. It has been displaced onto language itself. This method has made Four Quartets problematical. Eliot's speaker in Four Quartets speaks at length in a conversational yet forceful style. The images are frequently moving but lack the intensity and the animating tension of an image like the mermaids combing the hair of the waves. Four Quartets also lacks the blasted landscapes and difficult precisionism of the earlier poetry. All that remains of the later Eliot in Four Quartets is the "descanting voice" of "The Dry Salvages," literally the voice that sings above the others "though not to the ear . . . and not in any language." The descanting voice is the inner rhythm of Four Quartets that sounds as deeply as the fragmented voice at the end of The Waste Land or the desperate plea at the end of Ash Wednesday; it is the movement of language itself that now most powerfully reveals and most emphatically conceals desire.

## CHAPTER 1

### TRACES OF DESIRE: THE CRITICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL MATRIX OF DESIRE IN MODERNISM

Desire in Eliot's poetry lies deep within the poems' structures and consists largely of three characteristics: syntactic structures with rhetorical, often ironic, significance; images which at first glance are clear and concrete but quickly leap into the realm of the impossible or the surreal; and a unique type of symbolism based on those images, one that defies precise readings and invites readers to participate in the creation of meaning. These characteristics manifest themselves as silences in Eliot's poetry, finding their origin only in the core premises of the rarified air of the High Modernist aesthetic. Taken together, these core premises form the critical and philosophical matrix of desire in Modernism and consist of 1) the apocalyptic vision of the Modernists, especially as it evolves from the failure of Victorianism and the effects of the First World War; 2) Pound's Imagism and his early

relationship with Eliot; 3) the unsettling debate concerning mechanical sources of sublimity that replace organic ones; and 4) the use of precisionism by the Modernists to achieve an abstracted, non-figurative representation of experience that, in certain ways, acknowledges an intellectual Catholicism. Elaborating upon these four core premises will reveal silences in Eliot's poetry and how these silences can be characterized as traces of desire.

The apocalyptic vision in general, a vision of the world in great chaos or at its end, is not unique to Modernism. It finds expression in the Bible and in art based on particular scriptures. But the Modernist apocalyptic vision differs from other similar visions. The Modernist vision is secular in its origin, not sacred or prophetic, and it comes from within. It is the psychic scarring left after a great emotional upheaval and is then narcissistically projected out onto the landscape. This narcissistic projection is one of Modernity's claims to a radical break with the past, and the fact that "[it] brought us a new art is undeniable" (Bradbury 19). It claims originality in subject, purpose, and mode of expression, but

like any other aesthetic program, Modernism relies on the milieu of the turn into the twentieth century. In fact, the claim to a radical break with the past is paradoxical since "one of the features of the age . . . is that it is remarkably historicist, disposed to crisis-centered views of history" (Bradbury 20). Two important components of the crisis-centered milieu of the turn of the century are the failure of Victorianism and the First World War. Together, these two events define the Modernist apocalypse and its relevance to locating desire in Eliot's poetry.

Eliot grew up and intellectually matured in the Victorian milieu. Eliot's Victorianism was one filled with silences, and these silences, as Foucault notes, are the silencing of desire (36). The Victorians removed from public discourse the modes of expressing desire and especially removed desire from the environment and the discourse of children. The discourse of desire had been appropriated and moved into the private bedrooms of married adults. Consequently, no publicly acceptable rhetoric existed for the expression of desire. What remained were crude expressions exchanged, in private, between close

acquaintances. Eliot's King Bolo poems are a good example.

Eliot writes of King Bolo in a 1914 letter to Conrad Aiken:

Now while Columbo and his men  
 Were drinking ice cream soda  
 In burst King Bolo's big black queen  
 That famous old breech l(oader).  
 Just then they rang the bell for lunch  
 And served up--Fried Hyenas;  
 And Columbo said "Will you take tail?  
 Or just a bit of p(enis)?"

Eliot continues in the letter to explain the nature of the parenthetical material with a reference to Dr. Hans Frigger and Herr Schnitzel, who are "inseparable friends" (42). In 1916, Eliot writes to Aiken again: "King Bolo's big black bassturd kween / Her taste was kalm and klassic / And as for anything obscene / She said it made her ass sick" (125). Even as late as 1922, Eliot was still dropping verses about King Bolo into his letters to Aiken and Pound.

For desire to return in some measure to public discourse, some great event would have to occur to loosen the Victorian's hold on it. The event would be the First



World War. This First World War unraveled the Victorian absolutist system of values, including its monopoly on the discourse of desire. The war not only removed the discourse of desire from the Victorians, but also provided an emotionally sufficient context for reintroducing desire back into public discourse. For Eliot, accustomed to Victorian silences, the reintroduction of desire back into the public discourse was achieved through the context of the apocalyptic vision. This vision allowed him the extremes of emotion that would be consistent with desire, but his Victorian silence would allow him to express those emotions only as shell shock, not as an insatiable longing for love. His King Bolo poems and other profanity exchanged with Pound clearly indicate that desire was foremost on his mind.

The apocalyptic vision and its constituent parts of Victorianism and the First World War are a core element of Modernism and provide a first trace of desire in Modernism, but the apocalyptic vision needed an aesthetic component, one that would disavow the aesthetics of the Victorians and assert itself as new. For Eliot, this aesthetic component would also have to express an abstraction such as desire but

still maintain Victorian silences. Eliot developed this aesthetic component from a combination of Pound's Imagism and the Symbolist movement of the 1890s. The result of the combination allows Eliot to present clear images with vernacular diction but still maintain the ineffable, mystical quality associated with the Symbolists of the 1890s. The leap in itself from the apparently concrete into the realm of abstraction constitutes a silence that hides desire and is possible only in the Modernist context of Imagism where language had the ability to evoke precise meaning.

Eliot had a philosophical basis for believing that language had the power to communicate and found a literary correspondence in Pound's Imagism. Pound's Imagist manifesto consists of three major tenets: 1) the direct treatment of the thing, whether objective or subjective. 2) the use no word that does not contribute to the presentation, and 3) composition in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of the metronome.

Eliot was not an Imagist per se; and the short life of the movement reveals why Eliot never fully embraced it. As

an organized movement, Imagism began about 1914, well after Eliot had already written Prufrock and several other early but important poems. In addition to Pound, the Imagists included Hilda Doolittle, Richard Aldington, William Carlos Williams, and Amy Lowell, who carried on the movement for a time after Pound abandoned it. One reason for the abandonment of Imagism was its inherent limitations.

Imagist poems such as Pound's "In A Station of the Metro," or Williams's "The Red Wheelbarrow" leave, in a pragmatic sense, something to be desired. While the precise evocation of an image may be aesthetically pleasurable, the Imagist approach does not satisfy the need for sustained reading. Too much, in the case of the Imagists, is left to the reader. The sparing language of an Imagist poem only begins to describe the contours of the image and only invites a reader's imagination to the poem's edges, never into its depths, never asking for a sustained exchange of subjectivity that activates a text.

Eliot, without much help from Pound in the beginning, initiated a second strand of Modernism. Eliot's Modernism was Modernist Symbolism. Together, Imagism and Modernist

Symbolism delineate the two most important poetic strands of Modernism. Eliot's Modern Symbolism differed from the Symbolist movement of the 1890s. That Symbolist movement, best recognized in Yeats's early and middle poetry, partook of Romantic notions of the image's power to evoke a mysticism and the use of language's incantatory power to create a mood in the reader, which Eliot retained for himself. Stead concisely defines the differences among 1890s Symbolism, Modern Symbolism, and Imagism:

Each [Imagism and Modern Symbolism] stood in opposition to what it saw as false structures [1890s Symbolism], products of will and intellect, elaborated by the various rhetorics of a more conventional literature. From these false structures [Modern] Symbolism sought escape into the self-enclosed form, the poem as verbal (and semi-musical) event, resonating with suggestion, brilliant, evocative, but refusing to yield up any one unequivocal conceptual meaning; while the Imagists tied the poem to things, images, colors, sounds, scents, escaping equally from abstraction.

Both sought to capture "reality" itself rather than an interpretation of it. In [Modern] Symbolism the sensuous emphasis fell more upon the ear than the eye, a music which cast the feeling inward; in Imagism it was the other way about-- visual elements predominated over aural, and so the mind was turned outward to the world. (37-38)

One result of Eliot's hybrid symbolism was an obscurity, nearly an impenetrability, of the poem's meaning. Eliot was an obscure poet, his symbols often private or relying on an allusive network of meanings. No one approach to or explication of his poetry is satisfactory. His obscurity, "it must be insisted, is real," but it is part of his poetry's "emotional force and a source of its power of extended resonance" (Stead 48). This obscurity or extended resonance is best understood as the concealment of desire in his poetry, a kind of mist that hovers around the thematic centers of his best work.

The obscurity of Eliot's poetry becomes noticeable only when one begins to question the literalness of his images, a reasonable action in the High Modernist aesthetic that does

owe something to turn-of-the-century Realism. These literal questions, though, do not immediately come to mind. The Imagistic sharpness of the images and Eliot's unmatched aural clarity bluff the reader past the need to question literalness. The result of this obscurity is a resistance to paraphrase, hence a silence behind which desire lingers. For example, one cannot say any more clearly "in the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo." The diction is vernacular and concrete. The women do not traverse the room; they do not glide across its space. The syntax is that of straightforward English, not composed of inversions or modifiers for the sake of adhering to metrics or rhyme. But what does the line mean, abruptly interposed among descriptions of a cityscape, and repeated two stanzas later? It can only suggest meaning and readers may only offer their best guesses, perhaps based on the relevance of juxtaposition in Eliot's poetry.

Quite likely, Eliot realized the inherent limitations of Imagism, that it did not sustain the reader's need for a subjective exchange with the text, though Eliot would not have put it in quite the same way. He needed a poetry that

would retain something of the ineffable, the magical, without veering off into abstraction. The ineffable quality here is what readers bring to the text with their individual discernments. This is not at all to say that the poem can mean anything. The poem must mean according to the sum of parts that surround it. Meaning, at least in Eliot's poetry, does have limits, but the empowering and enriching quality of Eliot's poetry is the aesthetic pleasure one gains in seeking correspondences among the stanzas. These correspondences are Eliot's juxtapositions of images between and among stanzas. His juxtapositions are aggregates of Imagist images.

"Pure images could be added to one another, without the imposition of a structure, without logical or narrative continuity; and given that there was a singleness of poetic impulse they would be found to cohere, or could be edited into coherence." (Stead 39)

Eliot's aggregation of images allows for individual discernment, as the images not only create a space for a continuing discourse about the meaning of his poetry, but

also create a discourse among themselves, one line or image seeking connection or communication with the next or others in the poem or even sometimes across poems. The correspondences among and between the images constitute a field of play, a kind of tease between text and reader that elicits desire.

The traces of desire apparent in Eliot's unique kind of symbolism, especially in connection with the aural density of his texts, owe much to the Modernist aesthetic of the image with its precision and hardness of focus. This Modernist aesthetic, though making claims of a radical break with the past, often laments passing from mystical, organic sources of sublimity into ones dominated by the machine. A mechanical sublimity would at first seem an impediment to tracing desire in the Modernist context, but a close reading of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," one of the most infamous statements of the clean science of poetry, reveals profound equivocation covered by syntactic structures with rhetorical, often ironic, significance. The essay attempts to reconcile individual aspects of creativity and self-expression with timeless modes of expression and timeless



thematic concerns, but the reconciliation is difficult because the opposition between organic forces and mechanic forces had reached a critical point in early twentieth-century thinking. Two important reactions to the opposition were from Henry Adams and the Agrarians, and both establish the intellectual context from which Eliot was drawing his main idea.

Adams, like Eliot, was a Victorian thinker struggling to make the transition into the Modern age and recorded this struggle in his autobiography, The Education of Henry Adams. The book is notable not only because Adams grapples with the intellectual issues of his time, but also because the chapter entitled "The Dynamo and the Virgin." In this chapter, Adams finds himself at the Great Exhibition of Paris in 1900. He goes into one of the exhibit halls and sees a dynamo that radiates with power. The dynamos were unsettling to Adams and attracted a great deal of attention. Other enormous sources of power such as steam ships and locomotives were different from the dynamo. Those energy sources used organic material as a fuel source and were comprehensible as sets of gears, pulley's, pistons, kinetic

energy, friction, basic physics, etc. The dynamo, by contrast, was not immediately comprehensible. It dealt with unseen forces and was more than a simple matter of mechanics. Adams laments the passing of organic sources of inspiration and power embodied in the Virgin Mary, a source of power and inspiration that, according to Adams, caused men to dedicate their whole lives to building the great cathedrals of Europe. Now, though, on the cusp of Modernity, the organic has been supplanted by the mechanic; the Virgin and has been replaced by the Dynamo as an awe-inspiring source of power. On the cusp of Modernity, man can no longer look to nature as a sublime source of self-empowerment. Man must now associate himself with the dynamo, an alien and alienating fact of modern life.

The shift from the organic to the mechanic carried with it more than just Adams's philosophical lament, but took on an economic, ideological aspect as well. The ideological aspect of the discontinuity between the organic and the mechanic was espoused by the Agrarians, a group of Southern American writers primarily associated with Vanderbilt University: John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, David Donaldson,

and Robert Penn Warren. The Agrarian movement is important to Eliot because it represented a disapprobation for the cult of science, since its promises of ease and security were, they felt, untrue. They felt that labor was to be enjoyed and valued for its sake, not engaged in at a fierce tempo. They believed that labor had become mercenary and servile, as only the end of labor or the finished product was being valued and the main fault with modern modes of production was the sense of aimlessness arising from the uncertainty of vocation. Agrarians claimed that the culture of the soil is the best and most sensitive vocation and from that vocation all else followed. An appreciation of art, for instance, depends on the right attitude to nature. Other amenities of life were also affected by the loss of culture of the soil: manners, hospitality, sympathy, family life, romantic love, and social exchanges which reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs, a sensibility that extended even to a culture's tables, chairs, portraits, festivals, laws, and marriage customs. These things were all affected by the loss of the organic.

Both the Agrarian's reactionary stance and Adams's

philosophical lament for the passing of another great agrarian period the middle ages, find parallels in Eliot. In his "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot too grapples with the discontinuity of the organic and the mechanic. Eliot, like the Agrarians, dismisses any kind of progressivism with the fact that

art never improves . . . [but] the material of art is never quite the same. . . . That this development, refinement perhaps, complication certainly, is not, from the point of view of the artist, any improvement. Perhaps not even an improvement from the point of view of the psychologist or not to the extent which we imagine; perhaps only in the end based upon a complication in economics and machinery. (39)

And like Adams, Eliot believes that the changing mind of Europe should "abandon nothing en route" and does not "superannuate" Dante, Shakespeare, Homer, or the "rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen."

In content, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" contains three important items: the historical sense, the

ideal order, and the impersonality of poetry, all of which are still continuing aesthetic issues. At the beginning of the essay, Eliot declares that it is the poet's resemblance to his predecessors, not his differences which, paradoxically, make him unique. The poet's relationship with tradition is of the greatest importance and the poet does not inherit, study or imitate tradition, per se, but gains it by "great labor" (38). One prerequisite to tradition is the historical sense, a poet's feeling for the totality of literature and its interrelations throughout history. Further, the historical sense that contributes to the ideal order also includes a feeling for what Bergson had called "real duration," which roughly equates with memory. Eliot describes historical sense as "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together. . . . and it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his own contemporaneity" (38). Eliot's description is Bergsonian: immediate experiences filtered through memory in order to be meaningful is Bergson's clock time, an abstracted, spatial representation of time based on

discreet, linear units of measurement. Eliot's timeless is Bergson's real duration: "a flowing, irreversible succession of states that melt into each other to form an indivisible process. . . something immediately experienced as active and ongoing" (Goudge 288). And real duration roughly equates with memory or how one proceeds to order sensory perceptions. To sense tradition or have a historical sense, one recognizes the new as new in its moment but also as simultaneous with all that has come before because memory, great labor, consumes the new and gives it an order, hence Eliot's "ideal order." The ideal order

is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them [the existing monuments]. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives . . . [but] the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. (38-39)

Until the ideal order comes about, all of Eliot's thinking seems Classical enough. A poet must obtain tradition and must have a historical sense, but the

relationship between tradition and historical sense, on the one hand, and the ideal order on the other, admits the role of the individual, who is not at all absent from the process. The ideal order, the relationship of the existing monuments, depends upon memory for arrangement and upon memory for the "supervention of novelty." Memory seems to be the crux of historical sense and the ideal order depends upon memory for its structure, one which now seems organic in composition and subjective in the relations it makes between the existing monuments.

Eliot covers the glaring organic web of relations in the ideal order with a mechanic metaphor for the creative process:

I therefore invite you to consider, as a suggestive analogy, the action which takes place when a bit of finely filiated platinum is introduced into a chamber containing oxygen and sulphur dioxide. . . . When the two gases . . . are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid . . . [and] the platinum itself is apparently unaffected. . .

. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum.

(40-41)

From the start, the analogy unravels. It purports to uphold the Classicism of the first part of the essay and seeks to distance the creator from creation and to establish an "inert" relationship between the two. The inert relationship fails to hold, as Eliot himself may have believed by qualifying his analogy as "suggestive." The analogy further unravels when one recalls the means by which tradition is attained, not with study or inheritance, but with mysterious great labor. This great labor is organic, the sweat of the brow, or perhaps something more pregnant in meaning. As Eliot's discussion proceeds, the great labor of the poet and the creative process is continually figured in the most organic of terms, and though Eliot offers mathematical proportions to cover them, he only succeeds in creating a contradiction: "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfect will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material" (41). The more perfect the artist is, the more perfect will



be the digestion and the transmutation of the passions. Mathematical proportion and the separation of creator and creation, on the one hand, contradict the organic, growing agency of creation: digestion and transmutation. A bit later, Eliot refers to the poet's mind as a "receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles can unite to form a new compound are present together" (41). The receptacle of the poet's mind becomes a figure for the womb, and its new compound is a figure for gestation and birth. To carry the scientific metaphor further, Eliot's precise figures easily precipitate. They fall out of solution and into the organic figures from which they arose.

"Tradition and the Individual Talent" equivocates on the nature of creativity. At once, creativity is a clean science and also the gestation and labor of a birth. Eliot rebukes Wordsworth's "'emotion recollected in tranquility'" as an inexact formula since Eliot realizes the "intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place" (41). Eliot recognizes the tumult of creation in dismissing Wordsworth, but attempts to

control the process with additional science metaphors. He figures creativity with fusion and pressure, but the pressure is released not with a controlled valve, but with a Coleridgean eruption:

Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these feelings. (43)

The words may tacitly support the impersonality and the Classicism of the creative process, but the tight rhetorical structure of the statement and the sarcastic tone of the last sentence indicates irony: poetry is indeed the refuge of emotion, especially desire. The escape is not from the feelings, as Eliot indicates, but an escape from the inability to express or satisfy them outside of poetry. Poetry, then, becomes the refuge of desire and the medium to communicate it to others, albeit indirectly, silently.

Eliot's indirection manifests itself most clearly in his discussion of Paolo and Francesca and clearly indicates

what he means in saying "the emotion of art is impersonal" (44). Concerning Dante's episode of Paolo and Francesca, Eliot says that "the intensity of the poetry is something quite different from whatever intensity in the supposed experience it may give the impression of." Paolo and Francesca are in the second circle because of their adulterous lust, yet exciting or moving the reader to lustfulness is a far different thing than the passage itself exhibiting lust in its figures of speech, its rhetoric, its music, its images, symbols, and allusions. How powerfully the poem suggests lust, not the degree to which it invokes lust in the reader, is for Eliot the supreme poetic accomplishment.

Eliot again equivocates on the nature of the creative process by dismissing the sublime: "any semi-ethical criterion of 'sublimity' misses the mark" (41). To remain consistent and construct a good argument, Eliot realizes that he must dismiss the sublime. The sublime assumes different definitions, depending on the period under consideration. If Eliot meant Longinus's Classical definition, then the sublime was a powerful rhetorical

effect of the gifted orator, among other things. The orator's words would unite the audience and cause them to initiate some course of action. The sublime, in this way, was an agency for self-empowerment and the identification of the self with the words of the orator. As opposed to the Classical definition of the sublime, Eliot may also have had in mind its Romantic definition, especially as the Moderns were engaged in their Bloomian, Oedipal misreading of the Romantics. The Romantic sublime, according to Edmund Burke, was distinguishable from the positive, rhetorical effects of the Classicists. For Burke, the sublime was a powerfully negative emotion, asserting nature as an absence, a void, or an other that threatens to destroy the self causing the mimetic identification of the self and the defense of the self against the sublime which constitutes what many critics call the American sublime of epic solipsism or "the American will-to-sublimity" (Wilson 4). Whether Eliot intended the Romantic or the Classic definition of the sublime, the self partakes of it in significant ways. The sublime evokes personal responses from those in its midst, and this personal response would not fit into Eliot's program, though

his own creative efforts seemed subject to some process below the threshold of consciousness.

Eliot's compositional method reveals a heavily Romantic tendency toward an inspiration that produces beautiful lyrical fragments. Taken a stanza at a time, much of Eliot's work consists of beautiful, intense lyrical fragments. Eliot composed bits and pieces at a time, carrying around fragments in his head until he found the right place to insert them into a poem. Ash Wednesday is an obvious example of Eliot's compositional method. Of the six parts, the first three were published as separate poems, each fragment standing firmly on its own. Only later did Eliot compose the remainder of the poem and sew the fragments together as the whole of Ash Wednesday. By the time of the publication of Ash Wednesday in 1930, Eliot was a master of his compositional method. The Waste Land was composed in much the same way, in fits and starts and without any sure plan of where the pieces were going. "Burnt Norton" was composed of fragments left over from Murder in the Cathedral.

Eliot's dismissal of the sublime is calculated. As a

good rhetorician, Eliot must address and refute a central tenet of creativity and the relationship between the art object and its audience. His dismissal, though, is a weak one. As he equivocates on the platinum analogy by calling it suggestive, he equally qualifies his dismissal of the sublime by referring to any "semi-ethical criterion."

Perhaps a half credible definition of the sublime would indeed miss the mark, but a fully credible definition of the sublime (Classical or Romantic) would serve quite well to reveal the organic, magical qualities of Eliot's Modern Symbolism.

Taken as a whole, Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" reveals the animating tension of Eliot's best work. On the surface, the essay and the best poetry claims Classicism, detachment, erudition, and authority. Beneath the surface, the essay and the poetry shudders and recoils from its dark origin. The labor pains of birth, pressure, digestion, and transmutation dominate the process, one as tumultuous as Coleridge's definition of creativity and the desire to appropriate that creative power in Kubla Kahn.

In Kubla Kahn, creative power manifests itself, quite

clearly, as eroticism, but Eliot's desire equivocates. It remains hidden behind the clean metaphors of science and buried beneath syntactic structures with rhetorical significance. The contours of these syntactic structures are obvious in the Modernist context because of the degree to which they draw attention to themselves. The Modernist literary context calls for the precise rendering of the object as a reaction against Victorian sloppiness and Romantic heresy. Eliot does indeed invoke a kind of literary precisionism, but for him it involves more than a corrective to sloppiness and heresy. For Eliot, precisionism indicates a silence, the most emphatic silencing of desire yet presented and one that could exist only in the Modernist context.

Eliot's precisionism finds a literary end in Pound's Imagism, but had an important theological and philosophical backing in T. E. Hulme. Though Pound had no patience for Hulme's philosophy, Hulme was especially important to Eliot. Hulme argued for the formal characteristics of the work as a saving grace against Romantic heresy, believing that "the typical philosophical decision of the Renaissance . . . was

the exclusion from serious consideration of the Dogma of Original Sin, [so] perfection had to be conceived in entirely human terms. . . . If life, specifically human life, is at the center, any attempt to think ethically must result in a confusion of the human and the divine. . . . Romanticism is merely a phase of Renaissance Pelagianism, a humanistic sham religion" (Kermode 123-24). The confusion of the human and the divine that had plagued poetry as a Romantic heresy was dispelled in Modernism with precisionism, a return to acknowledging humanity's finite nature and to realizing perfection not in the self but in the art object. For Eliot, Hulme's doctrine was sound and provided a basis for many of Eliot's developing beliefs. Hulme supported Eliot's mistrust of the ego as a center of creativity or perfection. This support would allow Eliot to create a formalist kind of poetry whereby the expert use of literary devices as ends in themselves would sustain the work and also remove from the work any definitive semantics. All that would remain in the poetry was a kind of naked language that could evoke meaning and feeling from the reader based on formal qualities alone, not on concrete



reference to the world of objects. Eliot clothes the nakedness of his poetry with the emphatic presence of irony, juxtaposition, assonance, consonance, alliteration, rhyme, and allusion, among others, but the very presence of these devices indicates that desire lies concealed beneath them. In effect, precisionism is a second kind of tease that reveals and conceals desire in the contours of its syntax and in its aural density. The revelation of desire is impeded by images which are apparently clear and concrete, but quickly leap into the realm of the impossible or the surreal. This impeded revelation of desire occurs in the early poetry, but most critics prefer to ignore it in favor of other aesthetic concerns.

Of the early poetry, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" provides a concise example of how Eliot is an intense yet discriminate poet of desire. "Rhapsody" exemplifies core aspects of the High Modernist aesthetic and also reveals how those particular aspects contain traces of desire that flourish throughout Eliot's poetry. The traces though are not recognized by most critics because Eliot wrote the poem in 1911, while he was attending the lectures and under the

influence of Bergson. A Bergsonian hermeneutic, therefore, dominates the explications of the poem and also the meaning of the grim ending of the poem: "the last twist of the knife."

The meaning of "the last twist of the knife" involves two unsatisfactory possibilities derived from a Bergsonian interpretative strategy: 1) after sleeping, the speaker will wake to life, a death sentence compared to what was achieved in the Bergsonian moment of real duration in the fourth stanza of the poem, or 2) that life triumphs over the lunacy of the imagination and the last twist is the death sentence for the imagination.

Either explanation depends upon Bergsonianism, creating a split between the critics as to whether Eliot was dismissing or embracing Bergson's philosophy. The split is significant because it suggests that a Bergsonian hermeneutic does not fully account for other elements in the poem that could provide a fuller reading. Even critics that attempt to mediate the split still tend to find the same results. One critic in particular maps out a clear Bergsonian hermeneutic that mediates between those who

believe that Eliot is embracing Bergson and those who believe that he is dismissing Bergson. To briefly summarize the critic who mediates between the two camps will reveal to what extent Bergsonianism dominates the poem and also to what extent Bergsonianism cannot fully account for other elements of the poem.

"Rhapsody," according to Donald Childs, is a "culmination" of Bergsonianism and is "a matter not of presenting ideas but of realizing them" (476,77). Childs explicates the poem with Bergsonian terms such as "practical memory," "pure memory," "real duration," and "practical intellect." With these terms Childs reveals how the street lamps of the poem are the practical intellect focusing consciousness on images that draw its selective attention. These images require the consciousness to act, so it evokes practical memory, which carefully selects other stored images that roughly correspond to what is under consideration. When practical intellect fails (that is when the street lamps mutter or hum) then real duration or lunar light prevails and reveals images to the conscious. Lunar light is imagination in the Coleridgean sense, meaning that

it has the power to synthesize images, as in the "lunar synthesis" in stanza one. The lunar synthesis, real duration, pure memory (all synonymous) change metaphor to metonymy: while the prostitute and the rat illuminated by practical intellect evoke like images, the moon becomes the constituent parts associated with it. The shift from metaphor to metonymy is subsumed under Bergsonianism and is then applied to the last line of the poem. Either the shift is positive and the return to practical intellect is the cruel last twist of the knife, or else the shift is negative and the last twist of the knife destroys the lunacy of imagination, especially as it is associated with egocentricity.

Rather than reading the enigmatic ending of the poem as a part of larger Bergsonian hermeneutic, a rather slim part of the Modernist context, one can read the ending as though it were the cutting edge of desire that torments the speaker. The reading of the knife as tormenting desire seems plausible based on the hermeneutic established earlier, since the poem does contain four core elements of the High Modernist aesthetic: 1) it employs an apocalyptic

vision to evoke images of Victorian degeneracy and the decay of the urban landscape, 2) it uses elements of Pound's Imagism such as clear diction, 3) it equivocates on the organic nature of the creative process via Bergson and 4) it relies on precisionism to contain and deliver its meaning.

"Rhapsody" exists as a rigid structure. It begins at midnight and ends at four in the morning, and the four hours in between are represented by the four major parts (not stanzas) of the poem. All of the parts involve the speaking street lamp. Each major part of the poem too echoes the rigid structure of the poem as a whole. For every image associated with light (lamp or moon), other corresponding images are presented, but the characterization of the light as enlightenment misleads critics into a Bergsonianism that does not correspond to the speaker's first characterization of light.

The speaker first characterizes the light as a drum beat, not as a kind of practical intellect or enlightenment: "Every street lamp that I pass / Beats like a fatalistic drum." Presented early in the poem, the beating of the drum evokes a primitivism that contrasts with both the notion of

a rhapsody and also the supposed absence of the savage on metropolitan streets. The speaker, though, seems alive to this savagery, especially as he characterizes it as fatalistic. The fatalistic drum beat represents a metaphor for a heart beat that skips and flutters as does the iambic rhythm of the lines. "Every street lamp that I pass" is a beheaded iambic line. In the next line, "Beats" is ironically off beat and "like a fatalistic drum" returns to iambs. The rhythm continues regularly iambic with "And through the spaces of the dark / Midnight shakes the memory." In the last line of the stanza, the pounding drum is felt. Three successive stresses in a "madman shakes" closes the stanza on an emphatic note.

No doubt the street lamps do direct the consciousness of the speaker, but they are not a Bergsonian practical intellect. Instead, the street lamps beat with a primitivism and are associated with a madman, a prostitute, and a rat. These images take advantage of the drastic, unbalanced tone of the urban apocalypse and lie in sharp contrast to the rigid structure of the poem. In brief, that contrast is desire.

"Rhapsody on a Windy Night" was written in Paris at about the same time as The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock. Prufrock reveals desire the same as "Rhapsody," only with a more emphatic expression and a correspondingly greater degree of subtlety in the revelation.

## CHAPTER 2

### PATTERNS OF DESIRE: THE AURAL AND IMAGISTIC VICISSITUDES OF DESIRE IN THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK

As in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," the enigmatic ending of Prufrock suggests the need for an encompassing hermeneutic, one that embraces more than the details of the content and satisfactorily integrates other elements of the poem into a whole. Too many readings of Prufrock fail to include important aspects of Eliot's poetry in their conclusion. A broader interpretative strategy should combine Eliot's music with his penchant for intrigue and duplicity of meaning. This broader interpretative strategy will also account for the fact that sense, sound, and syntax do not always combine to form a whole. Sometimes one or more of these elements is working against the others, creating a canceling effect or a silence that I have identified as desire. Other silences occur as well in the structure of the poem.

Although no other critics mention it, the poem contains



four distinct parts divided by a sequence of dots or a device on the page. The division of the poem into four parts becomes another effort to control desire. The four parts are interrelated by similar patterns of auralty and images, but the four parts also reveal the speaker's desire in distinct ways. Taken as a whole, the patterns reveal how Prufrock attempts to rule desire and is, in turn, ruled by desire. His attempts to rule desire manifest themselves as details of content that suggest ennui; regular iambic rhythms, and the use of assonance for the liquid vowels. Prufrock also attempts to rule desire with rhetorical devices and figures of speech, but his rule over desire is tenuous at best. The ennui is noticeably affected, regular iambic rhythms and assonance for the liquid vowels is undercut by abrupt shifts of rhythm and sound, and the rhetorical devices and figures of speech point away from the surface detail. As Prufrock establishes rules for desire and is in turn ruled by desire, he experiences extreme shifts of emotion. These rapid shifts of emotion are the contentions or viscidities that leads him dangerously close to resigning his control over desire.

Separately, each of the four main parts of the poem

reveals desire in distinct ways. The first part of the poem characterizes "you" and "I." "I"'s character is revealed in the aural density of its utterance and in its difficult syntax. Syntactic control and rhetorical devices tightly structure the second part of the poem and render the speaker's intentions duplicitous since the content details are not in harmony with the sounds and the tone of those stanzas. Only two stanzas comprise the third section of the poem, but they reveal the vicissitudes of the speaker's desire as they represent a radical juxtaposition of images and sound. Aural density, in the fourth part of the poem, confirms the vicissitudes of the speaker's desire.

Various explanations of Eliot's "sexual demon" that suggest youthful exuberance are not fully satisfactory. Something exists in his early poetry, and indeed throughout his poetry, that cannot be explained by youthful exuberance or first experiences. His poetry is too well controlled to dismiss matters of desire as youthful exuberance. The poetry maintains a delicate balance between control and release. It tips its hand with carefully controlled allusions, rhythms and meters, and curiously ambiguous

addresses to the reader: in Prufrock, there is the infamous "you and I;" in The Waste Land the speaker calls the reader hypocritical, but also a double and friend; Gerontion is filled with questions to an audience not readily apparent except for the reader; and in Four Quartets, the speaker addresses the reader with "you are the music while the music lasts." Among Eliot's most important poems, Prufrock is the darkest because its undercurrents run the deepest.

The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock is highly ironic, filled with dark, brutal, debilitating images. A speaker on a kind of journey to a brothel or a date or a wedding hesitates and doubts himself. He cannot decide whether to proceed or not, nor can he decide how to present himself or what to say. He seems tired and bored. He imagines that were he to talk to a woman he would be misunderstood. He disclaims a likeness to Prince Hamlet, at first an obvious comparison, and then proceeds to imagine himself walking at the beach with his pants rolled up. The beach represents a liminal space between the land and the sea. The beach also represents a psychic topography, another liminal space where the vicissitudes of desire are concealed and revealed in

Prufrock's narcissistic love of his own language. The beginning of the poem, like the ending, is also a liminal psychic space figured as evening (between day and night). In this temporal liminality, the speaker presents sounds, images, and a syntax that will introduce readers to the two parts of his psyche in a struggle to reveal desire but also to conceal it. This struggle represents the vicissitudes of desire throughout the poem.

The poem begins with a revelation of desire in the epigraph: "If I thought that I was speaking to someone who would go back to the world this flame would shake no more. But since nobody has ever gone back alive from this place, if what I hear is true, I answer you without fear of infamy." The epigraph promises a sincere confession as the speaker Guido has nothing to fear from Dante the Pilgrim's hearing of his story. The epigraph does not suggest what the content of the confession will be, but does suggest that it will be sincere, much in the same way that Gerontion, a more mature Prufrock, says he would "meet you upon this honestly."

Eliot used the confessional mode to circumvent both his

own fiercely repressive ego-ideal and also a larger, cultural ego-ideal of society. He could express desire only as confession, negation, or the appropriation of a discourse. In the case of "Prufrock," confession and negation allow the speaker of the poem to talk at length about desire and seduce the reader of the poem into recognizing desire as Freud's process of transference.

The poem begins with an invitation to experience desire:

Let us go then, you and I,  
 When the evening is spread out against the sky  
 Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
 Let us go through certain half deserted streets,  
 The muttering retreats  
 Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
 And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:  
 Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
 Of insidious intent  
 To lead you to an overwhelming question. . .

The "you" of the first line is both an unidentified part of the speaker's psyche and also the reader. The simile "like

a patient etherised upon a table" in the third line of the poem suggests some important details about both the speaker's intent and the character of "you." Both aspects of "you" must be able to identify with "a patient etherised upon a table," since the point of the comparison would be to draw upon something that would be in common to both "you" and "I." The patient etherized upon a table suggests that sense and reason are suspended, that the patient is pliable to suggestion, and that he is easily manipulated both mentally and physically. This debilitated state is how the "I" identifies with the "you," as both must know something about it. The etherized condition is a liminal one, between life and death, just as the evening suffuses itself across the sky, indicating a temporal liminality between day and night.

The "I" has proposed something dark as the "then" of the first line suggests. "Then" as it is in the first line suggests that readers have entered an argument in medias res and must now do some work to discover the substance of the argument and also the identity of the "you and I." After the forboding first three lines, a discreet syntactic unit,

the "I" specifies some places that it would like to go. The "I" presents some concrete, "certain" streets, certain at least in what "I" expects them to contain: "The muttering retreats / Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels / And saw dust restaurants with oyster shells." That whole clause, in apposition to the "deserted streets," is both certain (or literal) and figurative. Literally, the "I" is looking for the seamy side of Boston with cheap hotels where one passing through for the night can stay and eat seafood in a portside restaurant. Figuratively, these half deserted streets are deep inside the psyche of the "I." They are the paths to places where language fails to wholly signify but instead mutters its desire as a gritty appetite.

The last syntactic unit: "Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent / To lead you to an overwhelming question" amplifies the figurative nature of the half-deserted streets. The "I" who speaks is no longer trying to ground his argument in the concrete but moves into the abstract, as with many of Eliot's Imagistic images. The "I" suggests that the route it will take with "you" will literally twist and turn but will figuratively be full of

innuendo and duplicity meant to ensnare the unsuspecting reader into something insidious, a question or proposition that a desirous "you" does not have the patience to hear articulated.

"You" interrupts to ask the "I" more about the overwhelming question, but "I" brushes off the interruption with "Oh, do not ask 'What is it?' / Let us go and make our visit."

In this first stanza, Eliot has compressed a great deal that foreshadows the balance of the monologue. The scene is seamy and infused with a great deal of sexual innuendo. The subject of the poem is a visit or journey to somewhere concrete and "certain" but also most uncertain in a route that will twist and turn as does the complex syntax of the stanza from "Let us go" to the "overwhelming question."

The temporal liminality of the setting and the liminality of the state of "you" correspond to the liminal music of the passage that strikes a balance between softer, drawn out liquid sounds and the harsher dentals all drawn together with the alliteration and consonance of the "s" sounds: "Let us go, through half deserted streets, / The



muttering retreats / Of restless nights in one night cheap hotels / And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells." The liquid vowel sounds of "Go," "through," and "half" give way to the dentals "d" and "t" of "deserted streets," partially smoothed over by the "s" sounds. The pattern reverses itself in "the muttering retreats:" dental sounds begin the line only to be softened by the "s" of "retreats" before the assonance of the liquids "and," "sawdust," "restaurant," and "oyster." The deliberateness of Eliot's ear reveals a precisionism that bluffs the reader into reading the words for the sounds, with sense coming only later, in reflection or upon successive re-readings. The initial reader of Eliot's poetry becomes debilitated in just the way the "I" would prefer and becomes synonymous with "you."

In the next part of the poem, the scene changes to a room--the you and I apparently having departed the previous location with "Let us go and make our visit." In this new place, "the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo." The lines have little semantic content, relying mostly upon the liquid assonance of "o" and "a" sounds to imply a kind of tedium and ennui that runs throughout the poem. The

tedium of the passage corresponds to the slow liquid  
assonance.

The new room where the women come and go seems benign compared to the first passage. It doesn't have the sinister hissing quality of "s" sounds and the mix of dentals, smoothed over by the liquids. The room is new both spatially and psychically, a benign place. Syntactically, the passage is straightforward: it begins with a short adverbial prepositional phrase and then proceeds with a subject, a verb, and ends with a participial phrase that describes the actions of the women. It lacks the appositionally ambiguous quality of the first passage.

The two line stanza of the women and Michelangelo is repeated two stanzas later, and in between the speaker introduces an animated yellow fog. The fog feeds on the filth of the city, carrying with it the waste of industry and reinforcing the macabre, debilitating tone associated with the etherized sky that has now been transmuted into fog.

The "tone" of the yellow fog is acidic, pestilent, and stealthy and represents a harbinger of death as it

stealthily comes like a cat seeking an entrance into the house:

The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes

The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes

Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,  
Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,

Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house and fell asleep.

Eliot's description of the fog is uncanny in its use of repetition and assonance. He makes the most of liquid vowel sounds: fog, smoke, window, tongue, into, corners, pools, drains, soot, and falls to evoke the slow, rolling motion of the fog as it advances through the city and to the house where it finally settles into sleep, mimicking the course of the etherized sky.

The yellow fog carries over into the second stanza and

helps to suggest its tone and theme:

And indeed there will be time  
For the yellow smoke that slides along the street,  
Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
There will be time, there will be time  
To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
There will be time to murder and create,  
And time for all the works and days of hands  
That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
Time for you and time for me,  
And time yet for a hundred indecisions  
And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
Before the taking of a toast and tea.

The verbal pattern of the stanza evokes an ecclesiastical tone, suggesting that all events and circumstances are foreseen and planned for. The speaker, though, subverts the message, indicating that his activities will not be the life-affirming kind that the tone of the passage indicates. Instead, the speaker will prepare a face to murder and create. He will contend with the vicissitudes of life by bathetically figuring them as the "works and days of hands /

That lift and drop a question on your plate." For all the contentions in life, there will be time, and there will be time to play out the solutions to scenarios that will come to mind. All this "before the taking of a toast and tea." The toast and tea, because of the plate and its connection to the platter that contains John the Baptist's head, evokes at least two serious corollaries to the psyche of the speaker. One corollary is that questions on the plate are grave, like the ineffable question that ends the first stanza. The second corollary evokes a perverted communion, one similar to the dark communion in Gerontion. The taking of a toast and tea further undercuts the ecclesiastical tone of the stanza. The undercutting points to irony; it is bathetic in fact, as the grand, oratorical beginning ends in the anticlimax of a "taking" of toast and tea. The bathos of the stanza evokes the nullifying, etherizing effect of the first stanza and leads to a pathetic repetition of the Michelangelo lines.

Like the previous long stanza, the next main stanza begins again with oratorical grandiosity and ends in bathos. The passages are connected with the repetition of "time" and

with allusions to Dante's ascension imagery figured as flights of stairs. Incorporated into the turning on the stairs are hints of the self-consciousness of the speaker. He wonders "Do I dare?" Dare what? Pursue or quest after the ineffable questions in the first stanza? Whatever the speaker is doing and wherever the speaker is going, his timidity and hesitation become explicit in this stanza and preoccupy him for some length in the monologue. He has now a preoccupation with his hair and his head. The preoccupation with his head connects with the previous plate and the forthcoming platter. The bald spot in the middle of his hair evokes a further preoccupation with virility. His bald spot resembles a tonsure, an outward sign of a vow of chastity. When the speaker intimates his self-consciousness and his preoccupation with virility, he does not so much fear desire, but desperately yearns after it and fears rather that his outward appearance will impress others as one being too frail in stature ("how his arms and legs are thin").

The speaker's self-consciousness begins to assume dramatic and narcissistic overtones. He begins to believe

that his pursuit will disturb the universe, that his concerns, once projected onto the landscape around him, will assume grandiose proportions. Both grandiosity and paranoia are two manifestations of the neurotic condition that the speaker is beginning to reveal about himself. This condition begins to manifest itself more clearly in the rhetorical devices of the next main section of the poem.

The next three stanzas form a group thematically centered on a preoccupation with desire. In these three stanzas, the speaker uses patterns of aural and imagery to evoke a weary tone, but these devices contrast the meaning implied by the use of the rhetorical devices within the stanzas.

The first of the three thematically related stanzas contains images of passing time and voices which the speaker links thematically and syntactically. Thematically, the speaker characterizes the passage of time as mechanical, but precise to no particular end. The passing of evening, morning, and afternoon seem to be an exercise in futility for the speaker, a futility that is reinforced by the disingenuous rhyme of noons/spoons. This disingenuity

points to a deeper undercurrent, since to measure is also to contain or restrict, not just to mete out. The speaker measures coffee with his coffee spoons and in doing so recalls the sawdust restaurants of earlier in the poem. The image of measuring out the coffee brings into the current stanza a subtle degree of intrigue which the language and the slow tempo of the passage tend to obscure.

A clearer example of the kind of intrigue in the stanza occurs in "Sweeny Among the Nightingales." Eliot's known interest in mysteries, Sherlock Holmes, and his descriptions of the seamy sides of town and brothels combine to create a dark intrigue based on desire. In "Sweeny Among the Nightingales," Eliot borrows portents of doom and allusions to sexual betrayal to render an atmosphere of suspicion and intrigue, one without any clear plot or indication of which of the characters are innocent of the intrigue and which are involved. Further, the identities of the characters themselves are in question. Clearly, the poem includes Sweeny, the person in the Spanish cape, Rachel nee Rabinovitch, but the rest of the characters have unclear identities. The identity of the man in mocha brown is



probably the same as the silent vertebrate in brown, but is this man Sweeny, or distinct? Also, the identity of the man with heavy eyes is unclear. Is he also the man in mocha brown or someone different? Sweeny could be both the man in mocha brown and also the man with heavy eyes, or there could be three separate characters. If three separate characters exist, then the host could be the fourth or he may double as Sweeny, the man in mocha brown, or the man with heavy eyes. The identities of the women are a little more clear. The woman in the Spanish cape and Rachel nee Rabinovitch are designated as distinct with "She and the lady in the cape / Are suspect, thought to be in league." Another female character probably exists, the "indistinct" person who converses alone with the host at the door. The "indistinct" character is probably female since the whispered conversation is juxtaposed with an allusion to Agamemnon.

The allusion to Agamemnon refers to his betrayal by Clytemnestra. The betrayal occurred when Agamemnon returned home from the Trojan war. While he was gone his wife became the lover of Aegistheus, and she planned to kill Agamemnon for sacrificing their daughter Iphigenia to propitiate the

gods for good fortune in war. A conspiracy exists between Clytemnestra and Aegistheus. At the urging of Clytemnestra, Aegistheus ambushes Agamemnon and his men upon their return.

The allusion to Agamemnon reveals the "gambit" in "Sweeny Among the Nightingales." The intrigue of the poem may revolve around Sweeny and the women who are attempting to set up Sweeny to be murdered ("Rachel nee Rabinovich has murderous paws"). "The host with someone indistinct" may be discussing the gambit while the man in mocha brown may be about to put the plan in action. The "plot" turns on the identity of the man with heavy eyes. If this man is Sweeny, then he has recognized and declined the gambit, probably one involving seduction. If the man with heavy eyes is the man in mocha brown, then the gambit may be spoiled since its agent has declined to take a part and leaves to stand outside of the window.

The "brains" behind the gambit may be the host or a house mother in a brothel. She may have signaled the man with heavy eyes that now is the time, but the person in the Spanish cape may have clumsily spoiled the gambit. The host could also be the subject of the gambit, this time probably

male since he is mentioned in closest proximity to the Agamemnon allusion, with host being a perverted pun for the Eucharist "to be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk" as in Gerontion. The final result of the gambit will be most bitter and undignified as suggested by the "liquid siftings" of the nightingales that "stain the stiff dishonored shroud" of Agamemnon.

The setting for these intrigues is in a restaurant, as suggested by the presence of the waiter, or perhaps in a brothel with the facade of a restaurant. The waiter serves "oranges / Bananas, figs, and hothouse grapes," fruits that are tropic, exotic, and, in the case of the grapes, unnatural in origin. These fruits are also associated with desire. In addition to the fruits, a Coffee-cup, presumably containing Sweeny's coffee, is associated with the foods served, and because of the exotic origin of the coffee bean, takes on similar characteristics. The fruits mentioned along with the coffee recall the familiar trope of associating the appetite for food with an appetite for desire because of the orality of each, and that particular trope is appropriate to Sweeny. Sweeny represents for Eliot

the brute side of man and is one of the few characters that Eliot repeats throughout his poetic career. Sweeny is the insensitive brute of "Sweeny Erect" who does not at all understand the "female temperament." The speaker of "Sweeny Erect" accurately renders the crude character of Sweeny with "the lengthened shadow of a man / Is history, said Emerson / Who had not seen the silhouette / Of Sweeny straddled in the sun." In "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service" Sweeny shifts from "ham to ham" in a crude baptism and, consistent in character, is brutish in "Sweeny Among the Nightingales." He is described by the speaker as swelling and laughing and rendered with animal imagery: ape, zebra, and giraffe.

In many ways, Sweeny and Prufrock are different characters. One is timid and cerebral while the other is crude and outspoken, but both characters are driven by desire. Sweeny's desire is lecherous. He guards the "hornèd gates" in "Sweeny Among the Nightingales," an allusion to Dante where the hornèd gates mark the entry into the circle of the inferno that contains the lecherous. Prufrock is ruled by desire in the same way as Sweeny, but manifests it differently. Prufrock manifests desire by

misdirection and negation. He protests too much; he speaks ironically; and he drops too many verbal clues for the reader. Misdirection dominates the three thematically related stanzas.

For example, the lines "Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons, / I have measured out my life in coffee spoons" misdirects the reader. In this case, Eliot's precise use of the iconic function of language to suggest tedium falters in the presence of the disingenuous rhyme of "-noons/spoons." It also falters in the presence of the coffee as it is associated as these recall the intrigue of sawdust restaurants on half-deserted streets and to the intrigue of the Sweeny poem with its catalog of oral desire. Thus the lines have a dark undercurrent to them that, when connected to the "voices dying with a dying fall," begin to render the theme of the three stanzas duplicitous: on the surface, Eliot presents images that symbolize ennui but an undercurrent of blatant disingenuity suggests irony.

"I know the voices dying with a dying fall / Beneath the music from a farther room" evokes a drowning. A dying fall for Eliot is, according to Hargrove, a sinking into the

depths of the ocean, much like Phlebas the Phoenician will sink to the depths in The Waste Land. Hargrove describes Eliot's use of landscape and designates his use of the sea as symbolic of the surreal and of retreats into the unconscious. The "voices dying with a dying fall" have an onomatopoeic effect suggesting the ebb and tide of water with the falling being the sinking or drowning. The image is a desperate one with the music from a farther room representing the surface or the real from which the speaker is slowly receding.

The voices, like the coffee spoons, misdirect the reader. The passage could rely on the Shakespearian trope of dying as climax, another intimation of desire. This reading gains support via the repetition of dying and the use of "fall" having the connotation of a sexual sin. To "know the voices dying with a dying fall," is to surrender oneself to desire, to lose oneself in the act of sexual climax.

Both thematically and syntactically, the images of the coffee spoons and the voices are related. Thematically, both are symbolic of intrigue and the dark undercurrents of

the poem. Syntactically, both symbols are connected since both of them are independent clauses connected with a semi-colon, implying a connection between the two more emphatically than would the use of a period.

The first of the three stanzas ends with "So how should I presume?" The question is highly rhetorical in two respects. In one respect, the speaker has asked a question which he has already answered. He presumes most assuredly that desire ensues from his surroundings and that he himself is deeply implicated in the desire. In a second respect, the speaker uses the rhetorical strategy of anaphora with only minor variations in each of the three stanzas. The repetition of the speaker's fear of presumption indicates that he really has no fear of assuming in matters of desire, only that he wishes to put up a front to avoid the appearance of impropriety.

Continuing to organize the three stanzas around the fragmented image of woman, the speaker moves to eyes in the second stanza and affirms a pattern for the three stanzas that culminates in the third stanza. In the second stanza, the speaker affirms a pattern of tight rhetorical control

and irony to negate desire, and this highly rhetorical structure implies a great deal about the potential themes of the three stanzas and the poem as whole. The second stanza makes use of the rhetorical devices of chiasmas<sup>1</sup> and polyptoton<sup>2</sup> to balance and control the passage. Chiasmas governs the first four lines of the stanza with a minor variation at the end of the first line:

And I have known the eyes already . . .

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,

And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin

When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall . . .

Syntactically, the first line begins with the subject (I) followed by a verb phrase (have known) and an object (the eyes). The second line is in apposition, but reverses the place of the object making it into the subject. The second and third lines are linked by polyptoton. In the second line, "formulated" functions as an adjective, and in the third line it functions as a past participle, providing a degree of lexical cohesion in the stanza that only increases as the stanza proceeds from the third to the fourth line. The third and fourth lines, relative clauses preceding an



interrogative, also make use of polyptoton. Both clauses begin with a relative pronoun (When) and are followed by a subject (I), a passive voice verb phrase, and then end with participial phrases composed of a present participle and a prepositional phrase. Polyptoton occurs when the object of the preposition in the third line (pin) becomes the past participle (pinned) in the fourth line.

The stanza closes with the speaker articulating two interrogatives. The speaker's first interrogative is "then how should I begin / To spit out the butt-ends of my days and ways? / And how should I presume?" To "spit out the butt-ends" implies inept articulation and also that the content of the speech will be dregs of conversation already chewed to a pulp. The speaker can seem to find no suitable way to talk about his life. The second interrogative makes use of anaphora, the repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of successive phrases or clauses. Having already inquired once before, the speaker inquires again "And how should I presume."

The third stanza also make uses of anaphora: "For I have knowr them all already, known them all," a line

repeated at the beginning of each of the three stanzas. The third repetition of the line indicates the speaker's irony. The speaker is not at all world weary but is eager to know the evenings, mornings, afternoons, the eyes, and arms of a companion.

Unlike the previous two stanzas, the third stanza is explicitly desirous, only the degree of the desire is being silenced:

Arms that are braceleted and white and bare  
[But in the lamplight, downed with light brown  
hair!]  
Is it perfume from a dress  
That makes me so digress?  
Arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a  
shawl.

Eliot's diction here is revealing: braceleted, white, bare, lamplight, downed, hair, perfume, and dress. This set of words interspersed throughout the stanza creates a lexical cohesiveness that reveals the sensual detail, the desire that has accumulated throughout the three stanzas. The lexical coherence of the passage and the theme that it

indicates is further supported by the phonological cohesiveness of the stanza.

The sounds in this third stanza demonstrate the heights of Eliot's technical precision in much the same way as in the opening stanza of the poem. The first three lines of the stanza are end-stopped, each forming syntactic units that are linked together with consonance and assonance. The repeated sounds of a, an, ar, r, al, m, and n heighten the sensuousness of the stanza because of their relative association with desirous lexical choices. The sounds of the passage are slow and smooth, requiring heavy, extended aspiration. By manipulating the duration of the aspiration both at the level of the word and at the level of the phrase, Eliot is able to adjust the cadence throughout the lines. The cadence increases as a reader proceeds through the lines until finally the second line ends in the syncopated rhythm of "braceleted and white and bare," a rhythm made more emphatic by the sudden switch from a liquid sounding consonance to a consonance dominated by dentals.

"But" marks the end of the heavy syncopation and begins what for the speaker is a new sensual revelation about the

arms he sees. At first glance, the arms are abstract, pristine, and ornamented and in fact, as the aspirated rhythm of the previous lines would suggest, become a figure for desire without union. The arms seem unapproachable, to be admired by the speaker only at a distance. After closer scrutiny, the speaker discovers that, in the "lamplight," the arms are "downed with light brown hair!"

Throughout the poem, the speaker seems to be preoccupied with hair. Earlier he speculated that people would comment on "how his hair is growing thin!" and now he mentions hair again in the middle of an explicitly desirous passage. Later he will parenthetically remark that his head has "grown slightly bald" and ponders "shall I part my hair behind." At the end of the poem, he sees the mermaid combing the white hair of the waves. The presence or absence of hair is used by Eliot as a figure of speech to suggest satiated or unsatiated desire.

Hair also figures in Eliot's other poems. In "La Figlia Che Piange," the speaker tells the young girl "weave, weave the sunlight in your hair." The hyacinth girl of The Waste Land has her "wet and her arms full of flowers," and

in a musical passage in Ash Wednesday, "Blown hair is sweet,  
brown hair over the mouth blown, / lilac and brown hair."

In all of these cases, hair figures desire, especially as it is rendered in the sensuous details that Eliot includes.

The speaker's discovery of an arm "downed with light brown hair" rehumanizes the arm. The hair is metonymical of desire. Metonymy and synecdoche are similar in that synecdoche uses a direct connection between part and whole such as the eyes, the arms, and the hair to suggest a woman. Metonymy is the substitution of the name of an object closely associated with a word for the word itself; in this case the repetition of hair becomes a substitution for desire, especially in the lexical field established by the speaker's diction. The speaker attempts to negate the desire he has expressed by parenthetically isolating the line. The bracketed line functions as an aside to the reader, a way to reveal an exciting discovery without losing the facade of ennui that dominates the surface of the three stanzas.

The self-conscious speaker realizes the nature of his revelation and immediately readjusts his rhythm and sounds

in an effort to recapture the sleepy tone of the three stanzas, as the character of the speaker now becomes reticent. He is closed and analytical, rhetorically examining his own response to the arms and displacing his high degree of desire onto a fairly inert image: "Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?" The image does retain a high degree of sensuality, but throbbing, syncopated desire has become a mere digression.

The last two lines of the stanza rely on the consonance of r and m, sounds that require aspiration, sounds made at some depth in the throat. The articulation of m and r dovetails well with the speaker's newly recovered reticence. M requires both aspiration and a complete closing of the lips while r requires both aspiration and a partial closing of the lips. These sounds are, in a sense, hidden in the mouth and throat and prevent other sounds from easily following behind it: "Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?" The speaker reinvents a reserve in both the articulation and the mood of line; an interrogative rendered in sounds that occur in the throat with partial or complete closure of the lips suggests a reticence in sharp

contrast to the exclamatory nature of his previous desirous aside.

The last line before the refrain of presumption is a fragment, a sensuous contemplation of the movements of the arms. It is also an incomplete utterance, suggesting a choking off, as though the speaker is about to slip again. The fragment is a noun phrase that should be part of a series of coordinating conjunctions: is it perfume from a dress[, and/or] arms that lie along a table, or wrap about a shawl that make me so digress? If this is the case, then the speaker has choked off his utterance, fragmented his syntax so that the line in question simply lies on the page outside of any syntactic field. The fragment supports the rhetorical nature of the previous question. The eyes, the hair, the arms, and the perfume make the speaker digress, but they do much more than that. They reveal a desire for the reunion of these parts into a whole that are otherwise kept separate to maintain a rule over desire.

The stanza closes with a final repetition of "and should I then presume? / And how should I begin." The abundance of anaphora in the three stanzas, the knowing and

the presuming, suggest a conflict. Either the speaker knows or must assume. This basic conflict reveals the duplicity of the three stanzas: on one level the tone and content of the stanzas suggests ennui. On a deeper level, the three stanzas make a careful use of rhetorical devices to indicate the opposite. The dark overtones and submarine imagery of the first stanza develop implications for the second stanza. The second stanza reveals a closely controlled rhetorical structure. This structure undercuts the self-deprecating implications of its content and points to a sub-text more explicitly revealed in the third stanza. The third stanza is as closely controlled as the previous two. Its lexical and phonological cohesion reveal the intensity of the desire that the speaker has been signaling previously. In addition, the third stanza represents a culmination that has been building through the three stanzas. The number of lines in the three stanzas progresses from six to seven to eight, each stanza gaining in length. The stanzas also gain in rhythmic intensity and cadence. The first stanza has a slow cadence and even rhythm, while the third stanza has a heavily syncopated rhythm and a cadence made quicker by a



more frequent use of dentals. The end of the three stanzas represents a climax, and the next part of the poem presents the character of the speaker as less reserved and more hysteric.

The second of the four sections of the poem contains two images. Both images are of loneliness, one of them being poignant and the second being hysterical. Both stanzas contain imagery that has already been previously presented, and they function as a reiteration of prior themes.

The first stanza lexically coheres to the previous parts of the poem. It is set at dusk on confined ("narrow") streets, and the speaker sees animated smoke like the yellow fog. The speaker also sees "lonely men in shirt-sleeves" looking out of their windows. The image evokes a great deal of pathos, particularly in the subtlety of its detail and in the smoothness of its regular iambic rhythm. A number of details, though, darken the implications of the images. For example, the mention of the narrow streets recalls streets that follow like a tedious argument of insidious intent.

In the opening stanza of the poem the speaker has figured language topographically and has suggested that language, perhaps his language, has an insidious intent. That within his monologue the speaker has implied duplicity in intent is repeated in the short stanza of the lonely men. Those narrow streets are the topography of language, in this case characterized as narrow and pointed in intent. The narrow, insidious intent of the language is further supported by the phonological cohesion of the stanza. As in the opening stanza, this stanza uses alliteration and consonance and is predominated by s sounds. The alliteration and consonance of the s sounds correspond to the hissing quality of the s sounds in the opening stanza. The s sounds in the opening stanza reinforce the ominous implications of the setting and the speaker's invitation. The speaker's invitation in the opening stanza trails off into an ellipsis the same way that this stanza ends, as though there were something yet to be said, something ineffable and probably restrained. The ellipsis in the lonely men stanza, just as in the other stanzas that use

ellipsis, is not an affect of ennui. Its implication is much more sinister and has the same feeling of restraint that the "arms that lie along a table" fragment had earlier. The speaker would like to say more and suggests this by ellipsis.

The second stanza is most often read as an image of alienation, an utter withdrawal into the self, and a vision of the self as minuscule and timid, a reading made even more emphatic by the synecdoche of the claws. The speaker cannot even utter his likeness as a whole, but instead refers only to parts.

The stanza has other implications as well via juxtaposition and submarine imagery. The ragged claws are metonymical of the sea and imagery associated with the sea. From the opening of the poem, the speaker evokes sea imagery. The oyster shells in the opening stanza suggest that the setting of the restaurant is near the sea. The fog, water suspended in the form of vapor, also suggests the sea. In the three stanzas that end the first part of the poem, the voices dying with a dying fall evoke the ebb and tide of the sea and foreshadow a drowning. And in the

closing stanzas of the poem, the beach, the waves, the mermaids, and the chambers of the sea complete a distribution of sea imagery throughout the poem. All of the images form a continuous set of associations with desire.

The lines "I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas" phonologically cohere to the previous stanza, providing grounds for juxtaposition. The lines also develop a tension between the alliteration and consonance of the s sounds and the harsher sounds of hard g and hard c. The stanzas contrast tonally as well. The tone of the first stanza is resigned and manages to evoke pathos in the reader; it is also smooth and measured, a quality derived from the regular iambic rhythm of the lines. By way of contrast, the tone of the second stanza is much less controlled, its image much more surreal.

The phonics of the second stanza are not smooth, and, in fact, they tend to be grating in nature. The phonic coherence of the stanza relies mostly on assonance with some alliteration. The sounds of ou, a, u, and oo dominate the passage. Those sounds in combination with the dentals and

harsh sounds of hard g and hard c help to support the coarser, less restrained tone of the passage.

If the ragged claws are not just synecdoche, but metonymical of the sea, the sea being a figure of speech for the unconscious and desire, then the speaker has revealed difficult and ambivalent feelings about desire. The speaker has revealed these feelings by juxtaposing tonally contrasting stanzas that contain images of desire. The two short stanzas that constitute the second part of the poem set a pattern of ambivalent feelings about desire that manifest themselves in the tonally complex stanzas that follow.

The third part of the poem begins by repeating an image of a lazy afternoon. The afternoon, "the evening, sleeps so peacefully! / Smoothed by long fingers, / Asleep tired or it malingers, / Stretched on the floor, here beside you and me." The cat symbolizes the ambivalent feelings that the speaker has about desire. His desire seems controlled. Phonically, the passage makes use of oo, o, e, and double e sounds to slow the cadence. In addition to a slow cadence, the speaker also uses a number of polysyllabic words that

the reader must pronounce carefully, especially since the stanza is awkward to read. For example, "sleeps so peacefully" requires that each syllable be articulated since Eliot has used the present singular of sleep. The added s at the end of sleep prevents elision, requiring the reader to pronounce the present singular s and also the s of "so." The slow cadence of the stanza abruptly changes. The next line introduces "tea and cakes and ices," a series of monosyllabic words that quickens the cadence. The phonics of the stanza also changes with more dentals and the sounds of hard c and k. The issue facing the speaker is now one of a strength of will that mounts to a crisis.

The phonics established at the abrupt change and the use of monosyllabic words to increase the cadence continue for several lines:

But though I have wept and fasted, wept and  
prayed,  
Though I have seen my head [grown slightly bald]  
brought in upon a platter,  
I am no prophet--and here's no great matter;  
I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker,

And I have seen the eternal footman hold my coat,  
and snicker,

And in short, I was afraid.

In content, the passage raises several issues. It alludes to baldness, betrayal, and the speaker's bathetic revelation of his vision of his death, but particular construals of the content do not necessarily point out desire. One may concentrate on the baldness, here and throughout, that suggests a lack of vitality; the platter that most likely alludes to John the Baptist and his betrayal by a woman; and a fairly disingenuous figuration of death as the eternal footman; and from these, infer some meaning. Just as easily, one may focus on the weeping, fasting, and praying and the speaker's self-conscious declination of being compared to a prophet and construe these into some meaning as well.

Though raising a certain suspicion, content clues in themselves are not sufficiently persuasive in establishing the role of desire in this passage or anywhere in the poem. These content clues only subtly reveal the presence of desire while their multiple construals work to conceal

desire. A fuller expression of desire in the passage is silenced by its formal attributes.

As mentioned, the abrupt shift in the cadence and the phonics of the passage are a signal to their meaning as well as the formal devices that are used. Thus far, disingenuity of rhyme and figures of speech have signaled disjuncts between content and meaning. This stanza seems no different. The platter/matter rhyme and the flicker/snicker rhyme do little to make the passage more coherent. The rhymes do not add syntactic or semantic coherence; they only add a forced phonic coherence. The forced phonic coherence of the lines points to a building feeling of bathos, as does the disingenuous figuration of death as an eternal footman.

Death as an eternal footman has about it the tone of Victorian sentimentality with substantially less semantic force than does Dickinson's use of Death in a carriage, escorting that speaker to eternity. For Prufrock, death lacks the dignity and the "civility" that it represented in Dickinson's poem. Death taunts and undermines what Prufrock had supposed would be an important journey. Not only that, but death is no longer a passenger in a carriage towards



eternity but has been demoted to a mocking attendant who helps Prufrock slip into his "morning coat." The dignity of death has been undermined by the disingenuity of its figuration so that it seems most unlikely that a construal of content elements suggesting some kind of betrayal and misogyny sufficiently explains the purpose of the passage.

More likely, the passage reveals the vicissitudes of desire. At first, Prufrock seems to welcome and revel in the control exerted over desire, then quickly loses that control and expresses via a disingenuity that builds into bathos the way that desire rules over him. The two remaining stanzas of the third section of the poem reveal and conceal desire in a similar fashion:

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
After the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and  
me,  
Would it have been worth while,  
To have bitten off the matter with a smile,  
To have squeezed the universe into a ball,  
To roll it toward some overwhelming question,

To say: 'I am Lazarus, come from the dead,  
Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all'--  
If one, settling a pillow by her head,  
Should say: 'That is not what I meant at all.  
That is not it, at all.'

The fluctuating tone of the passage conceals and reveals a great deal about the desire of the speaker that the content does not. The content does reveal an inarticulateness on the part of the speaker concerning a matter of great importance. He cannot fully mimic or complete the words of Lazarus but instead brings to an unsatisfactory end what he began with an oratorical flourish. The content also reveals apprehension concerning an intimate encounter and the fear of being misunderstood. Those details of content, though, do not sufficiently account for other elements in the passage. For example, why the particular choices of cups and marmalade and tea and why the abstraction of biting off some matter and rolling it towards another unutterable question?

The fluctuating tone of the passage accounts for the disparate elements of content. The speaker focuses on

details (the cups, the marmalade, the tea) that, taken together with the porcelain and some polite conversation, reveal a triviality and an attempt to conceal desire, and the smoothness of the tone also indicates the speaker's control over the concealed desire. These concealments, like so many others, ultimately fails. The sign of the failure lies in the abrupt shift of tone from a smooth and collected revery to a much more aggressive tone.

The repetition of "would it have been worth while" signals the abrupt transition from the calmness of small, concrete details into abstractions with an aggressive tone. "To have bitten," "to have squeezed," "to roll," "to say," are all significantly more aggressive than the revery over cups, marmalade, and tea. These details of content serve to recall the reserve and the tedium of earlier passages, a reserve that by now signals a fight to conceal desire that manifests itself now as seemingly concrete images of biting, squeezing, rolling, and saying that, when scrutinized for their literalness, quickly leap into the realm of the impossible. How exactly does one squeeze the universe into a ball and roll it toward some question? Despite the

vernacular diction and straightforward syntax, the language here is highly figurative, contrasting the first lines and indicating a desire that rules the speaker.

The last stanza of the third section repeats the pattern of the previous stanza, as it begins with sensuous details and then abruptly shifts to more aggressive abstractions. The content details of this last stanza recall the sensuous details of the eyes and arms stanzas:

And would it have been worth it, after all,  
Would it have been worth while,  
After the sunsets and the door yards and the  
sprinkled streets,  
After the novels, after the teacups, after the  
skirts that trail along the floor--  
And this and so much more?

As the sensuousness of the details have increased, so has the rigidity of the syntactic structures which contain them. The repetition of "after" implies that Prufrock is using the full resources of the language to articulate what could be said more concisely. Prufrock lingers over the details, listing them in as protracted a manner as he can. This

repetition also occurs with the "would it have been worth while" lines, which indicates that Prufrock is looking for every opportunity to extend what he is saying. Prufrock is in love with his own language, a kind of self love that is being extended to the audience for their own gratification. Despite this linguistic narcissism, Prufrock claims that it is "impossible" to say just what he means.

The exclamatory nature of "it is impossible to say just what I mean! / But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen" and also the abrupt tonal shift compared to the calm of the previous lines indicate, in one sense, irony. The impossibility of Prufrock saying just what he means does not correspond to a number of elements in the poem: the epigram establishes a confessional mode where the speaker will articulate his message without the "fear of infamy," and also the speaker has been loquacious in his attempts to express desire, as evidenced by his repetition and the love of his own language. In another sense, the speaker is sincere in his exclamation, and it has been impossible to say literally what has been hidden in the silences of the rhetorical/syntactic structures, in the

precisionism, and in the apocalyptic vision of the wasted cityscape. The speaker has been unable to articulate a fulfilled expression of desire and has resorted to manifesting silences in the place of desire. His attempt to throw his nerves in patterns on a screen becomes a figure of speech that reveals both his raw susceptibility to the vicissitudes of desire and also the need to display his desires.

The nerves in patterns on a screen also figure language on a page, an intricately woven text that reveals itself to readers only in the ways in which they can perceive images and ideas in what is otherwise an enigmatic obscurity. The process here is akin to letting one's eyes go out of focus while looking at an abstract design to see some other clearly distinguishable figure lurking behind the design.

The speaker's patterned language and figures of speech reach a conclusion in the fourth and final section of the poem. The last section of the poem contains two parts. The first is a declamation of noble indecision and is in juxtaposition to the second part. For the second time in the poem, Prufrock declaims a likeness to a noble figure.

Earlier, Prufrock had said that he is "no prophet" and now says more emphatically "No! I am not Prince Hamlet." The immediate relevance of declaiming any likeness to Hamlet is to distinguish Prufrock's "Do I dare and do I dare" from Hamlet's "To be or not to be." Prufrock is pondering neither regicide nor matters of state. Instead, Prufrock has pondered in his monologue the vicissitudes of his desire. Prufrock is not Hamlet but one who, as he says, plays the role of adviser, most likely to himself. As he claims, he has been full "high sentence" and has been "politic, cautious, and meticulous" with what he has said. Prufrock has been cautious to the point of being "obtuse" or blunt. His words on the surface do not contain the semantic content that is being otherwise implied, but he has been meticulous in his implication, leaving nothing to chance. And as for being politic, Prufrock has been discreet in his revelation, relying on flexible fields of verbal play rather than on explicit semantics.

Prufrock's discretion leaves room for misunderstanding, and he realizes this possibility. He fears that his silences will make him ridiculous and foolish and that the

feared silences will occur at delicate moments when "one is settling a pillow by her head." Prufrock qualifies these fears with a repetition of "almost" and with a repetition of "at times." The repetition indicates a rhetorical strength that lies beneath the statement of the fear. By way of anaphora, Prufrock has constructed a syntactically rigid structure with "At times, indeed, almost ridiculous; / Almost, at times, the fool." What Prufrock hints at with "almost," he asserts more vigorously in his syntax. Prufrock has boldly distinguished himself from other likenesses; he has characterized his methods as politic, cautions, and meticulous; he has recognized the semantic limits of his monologue; and he has reasserted the strength of the vicissitudes of his desire and his ability to articulate them. These vicissitudes have taken their toll on Prufrock, and he expresses his exasperation over the degree to which desire rules him in the last part of the poem.

Until the last part of the poem, the speaker has been vague about psychological topography; he has revealed little about whether we are witnessing an ego as it experiences,



reacts, and orders the world, or whether we are witnessing one part of the psyche as it acts to either repress or balance another part of the psyche. These last lines are more topographically clear. As in the beginning of the poem with half deserted streets, muttering retreats, and restaurants with oyster shells, the ending of the poem reveals more topographical certainty.

The poem ends at the beach, a liminal space that mediates between two realms. This liminal space is relentlessly subject to the ebbing of the tide and the wearing of the soil and is figured in the exasperation of "I grow old . . . I grow old. . . ." The ellipsis, as earlier, represents an internal struggle and a silencing of desire which must then be articulated as figures of speech: "I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled / Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach? / I shall wear white flannel trousers and walk upon the beach." The symbolism of the actions proposed suggests a resignation to the demands of the psychical space that the speaker is occupying, and he presents the wearying nature of those demands as a description of the actions of the mermaids:

I have seen them riding seaward on the waves  
Combing the white hair of the waves blown back  
When the wind blows the water white and black.

The aural density of the passage causes one to read it slowly, so as not to stumble over the difficult combination of w, b, bl, and m sounds. One must articulate each sound separately. Little room exists for the smooth elision of sounds, and what alliteration does exist is interrupted with another sound that requires careful articulation, so as not to stumble over it. The difficulty of articulating the passage reveals the difficulty of the rules of desire. These rules twist Prufrock the same as the sounds twist the articulation of the passage.

The rules of desire also have a second character about them which the passage reveals. The image the passage presents is one of great lyrical beauty and intensity. Isolated on the page, the image remains fixed in one's mind as an easily memorable one, presenting a sharp image, but also an image that quickly leaps into the realm of the impossible. No such image can exist in actuality, but in its evocation, one experiences a serenity at odds with its

difficult aurality. A subtle, but powerful contradiction exists within the image of the mermaid combing the foamy crest of a wave on a choppy sea. This contradiction embodies the difficult rules of desire that have so engulfed Prufrock. If he wakes from the chambers of the sea, then he leaves behind a portion of the serenity that it guarantees and will drown in reality. Yet to remain in the chambers of the sea means to remain subject to the vicissitudes of a desire that have wearied him in the twisting sounds of the mermaids' song.

The vicissitudes of desire have dominated Prufrock. These vicissitudes take on a different character in The Waste Land. In The Waste Land, desire no longer ebbs and flows in the cool ennui of the high Modernist aesthetic, but it distorts, fragments, becomes surreal, and speaks in resounding claps of thunder.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Chiasmas reverses the grammatical structure of one clause or phrase in a second clause or phrase.

<sup>2</sup> A repetition of a word root as a different part of speech.

### CHAPTER 3

#### VARIETIES OF DESIRE: DESIRE AS SHAME, SADNESS, AND VIOLENCE IN THE WANDERING VOICES OF THE WASTE LAND

The Waste Land is composed of a number of voices that wander throughout its apocalyptic landscape. These voices appear in five different sections, and each section presents a different expression of desire. Desire is expressed as shame, sadness, violence, languor, and prayer. In addition to these varieties of expression, desire also manifests itself in the apocalyptic landscapes and in the precision found in some sections of the poem. To support the claim that a variety of desires wanders through the poem, references can be made to the manuscripts of The Waste Land, particularly to the excisions that Pound made.

The material excised from The Waste Land consists of lines removed from the final draft and also lines and short poems intended to be appended to the poem after the final cry of "Shantih." All of the excised material was cut because either Pound or Eliot felt that it was inferior

either in imagery or rhythm, or else departed from whatever threads Pound identified as running through the poem. Most scholars agree that had the excised material been left, the poem would be a substantially different piece. Currently, the poem begins with the striking "April is the cruellest month," but fifty-four lines originally preceded it. These fifty-four lines concern the recanting of a rowdy, drunken night on the town had by a group of middle-class to upper-class men. The lines are significant because they include references to an attempt to satiate desire. Roughly a third of the lines are devoted to a conversation between the speaker and the house mother of brothel: "get me a woman, I said; you're too drunk, she said." The speaker wanders the streets all night and getting out of a cab reports that "I got out to see the sunrise, and walked home" (54). The lines suggest a drunken Prufrock, one that actually wanders the streets, as opposed to repressing desire in an internal monologue. Though now excised from the poem, these fifty-four lines and the theme of wandering and insatiable desire establish a motif for the rest of the poem, as it originally stood, and, by induction, as it stands in its revised form.

The remainder of the "Burial of the Dead" contains few other significant revisions. As it stands, a minimum of five voices speak, the voice of "April is the cruelest month" dominating. This first voice is grave in tone and also speaks the "what are the roots that clutch" passage; the response to the Hyacinth girl passage, including the two parts in German; and the closing unreal city passage that includes the one-sided exchange with Stetson.

This voice, though grave in tone, wanders in its expression of desire. At first, desire is a shocking negation, painfully expressed as "breeding," "mixing," and "stirring." The expression reveals the speaker's pain through diction and syntax.

The word choices of breed, mix, and stir are unpleasant. They suggest an unnatural dynamic. Syntactically, the participles are suspended at the ends of the lines. They are preceded by a caesura (falling naturally on the comma) and succeeded by nothing, existing then, quite separate from the rest of the phrase to which they should be attached. This painful negation of desire is one mode of the first speaker's expression of desire.

After the voice of Marie, the first voice speaks the "what are the roots that clutch" passage. The passage foreshadows the last section of the poem and presents an apocalyptic image. The apocalyptic image, as previously established, reveals Eliot's use of a blasted landscape as an emotionally sufficient context for expressing desire that would otherwise be suppressed by the Victorian's avoidance of the discourse of desire. The image is an intense expression of desire as the apocalyptic elements compound the effect as the passage proceeds: "stray rubbish", "dead tree", "dry stone", "red rock", and "fear in a handful of dust."

In a similar image that closes the section, the first voice speaks of a Dantean limbo where "a crowd flowed over London Bridge." The speaker "had not thought death had undone so many," and, like Dante the Pilgrim, he stops to interview one in the crowd that he recognizes.

The unreal city passage is significant because it reveals the complex nature of Eliot's allusions, and it also reveals a misdirection, another mode of expressing desire. The passage alludes to Dante the Pilgrim's first stop in the



Inferno, in a limbo which contains multitudes of wandering souls. Again, the element of wandering ties this passage to the others. The wandering souls are so condemned because they would not take a firm stance on anything in life, and Dante's rule of symbolic retribution requires them to roam in limbo, a place which is barely within the gates of Dante's Hell and is therefore not of Heaven or of Purgatory. The souls in Dante's limbo wander and sigh in the same manners as Eliot's crowd, and when Eliot's first voice remarks "I had not thought death had undone so many" he is quoting Dante the Pilgrim. In Eliot's unreal city, a figure of speech for a kind of limbo, the first voice recognizes someone in the crowd that he knows as Stetson. Dante the Pilgrim too recognizes only one person who in "cowardice" made the "Great Denial." Dante the Pilgrim's coward was most likely Celestine V, who abdicated the Papacy in favor of Boniface VIII for fear that his involvement with worldly affairs would damn his soul.

By extension, Stetson too makes a cowardly denial, one that Grover Smith explains with the grail myth. The great denial in "Burial of the Dead" is the denial of desire, but

the grave first voice realizes the hypocrisy, the impossibility of denying desire. Desire may be negated and misdirected; it may wander through a confusion of voices, but it cannot be denied.

In "A Game of Chess," originally entitled "In the Cage," fewer voices speak. This section of The Waste Land contains two main parts, and they are generally juxtaposed as instances of class distinction, where the first part describes an upper-class couple. The disjunction, though, reveals very little about the whole section. In both parts, desire is emphatically negated as garish and violent.

The thirty-four opening lines of "A Game of Chess" are spoken by a new voice. The voice describes a room that is occupied by a woman brushing her hair, and it characterizes the room as over-wrought, garish, in fact, in the baroque collection of ornaments, odors, lights, and art works. For example, the first nine lines are a long syntactically elaborate description of a chair, the floor, a dressing table, a mirror, jewels, and jewel cases. So much detail packed into lengthy subordinate clauses undercuts the beauty of the individual details. The beauty is further undercut

with the significant detail of the cupidon who "hide his eyes behind his wings." The cupidon expresses shame, hiding his eyes in much the same way that the flowing crowd over London Bridge keep their eyes fixed before their feet and that Stetson denies desire.

The opening lines of "A Game of Chess" recall the "bric-a-brac" that decorates the shelves of the lady in "Portrait of a Lady," and the next eight lines similarly compare to "the four wax candles in the darkened room,/Four rings of light upon the ceiling overhead,/An atmosphere of Juliet's tomb." The comparison reveals a consistency in the material that Eliot is working with and also shows a development in the way he is working with the material. The bric-a-brac has become baroque, and the four wax candles have become "sevenbranched candelabra," doubled by the mirror's reflection. Further, the "four" rings of light on the ceiling overhead have become "stirring" patterns on the "coffered ceiling." Again, emphatic ornamentation and elaborate artifice are dominating the passage, now with an explicit emphasis on "strange," "synthetic," "troubled," and "confused." The weight of the details again undercuts any

potential beauty in favor of garishness.

Beginning with the next three lines, the garishness begins to take on a violent aspect. The three lines describe a fire burning in a fireplace, but even the fire is unnatural. The fire burns green and orange because copper (blue crystals in its unprocessed state) have been added to it. The light of the fire has been characterized as "sad," and its artifice subtly meshes and introduces the violence of the rest of the passage.

The "carvèd dolphin" too is sad. The dolphin in religious symbolism represents salvation and resurrection and carries souls into the world beyond. In this way, the dolphin acts as a guide. Here, though, the dolphin is another highly artficed object taking its place in the garishly baroque setting, and the emphasis on "carvèd" provides a smooth transition into the violent imagery of the passage that is figured with savagely wrought woodworking.

The speaker next describes a painting that alludes to Philomela and Tereus. Tereus cuts out the tongue of Philomela to prevent her from telling about how he had raped her. Tereus' cutting out of Philomela's tongue is the

"barbarous" parallel to the carved dolphin. In both cases, the sacred has been profaned by unnatural acts. Even Philomela's "inviolable voice," her transformation into beauty and inspiration as the nightingale, has failed. Her only message is "Jug Jug" to dirty ears. Philomela's message, as evidenced by the manuscripts, presented a problem for Eliot. Originally, the line read "Jug Jug into the dirty ear of death" and then into "the dirty ear of lust." These lines show both Pound and Eliot reducing the explicitness of the violence and veiling the desire. In the same way, "other withered stumps of time" was reduced from "old stumps and bloody ends of time." Without these reductions, the violence itself becomes the focus, subverting the fact that the violence, as in the allusion to Philomela and in the excision of lust, is a figure of speech for negated desire.

The passage comes to a close with the withered stumps of time that express shame, as did the cupidon with hidden eyes. The withered stumps of time, like the huge sea-wood that burns in the fireplace, have transformed the scene from the garish and baroque into the violent, even the

apocalyptic, and here again, a blasted vision of the landscape provides the emotionally sufficient context for desire that Eliot's Victorian silence required.

The passages that follow involve conversation between the woman who sat in the chair and a man whose sounding footsteps close the first passage of "A Game of Chess." The woman is seeking acknowledgment, and the man answers her questions with remarks that suggest violence. Their conversation parallels the organization of the opening passage, since the woman's questions evoke an affectedness similar to the artifice of the room's interior and the man's remarks parallel the violence that evolves out of the artifice.

The conversational passages subtly re-play the opening passage, but the connection between them would have been more emphatic had not three important details been excised from the passage. Those details consist of an allusion to Dante, what Pound identified as an allusion to Joyce's Ulysses, and a reference to the Hyacinth girl in "The Burial of the Dead."

Where the final draft of The Waste Land reads "Nothing

again nothing," Eliot had originally written "carrying away the little light dead people." This allusion to Dante's circle of the carnal would have indicated the desire in the passage and the torturous nature of desire. Another detail excised from the original occurs just before "those are pearls that were his eyes." In the drafts, the line is immediately preceded by "I remember the hyacinth girl." Again, the excised detail is a clear indication of desire and is as sensual as the allusion to Paolo and Francesca, as well as being bitterly ironic and torturous. Those two excisions also have in common the fact that no one seems to have marked through them on the drafts published in 1972 by Valerie Eliot; they must have been dropped at some very late point in Eliot's revision process.

The last detail was excised by Pound, and he identified it (perhaps a bit sarcastically) as an allusion to Molly Bloom in the Penelope section of Ulysses: "those are pearls that were his eyes, Yes!" Pound excised the exclamatory "Yes," most often read as Molly Bloom's emphatic embrace of desire. Curiously, Valerie Eliot explains the presence of the word with Joyce's explanation: "the most positive word

in the human language." In combination with the allusion to Dante and the reference to the Hyacinth girl, the "yes" could only have been Molly Bloom's desirous "Yes."

Perhaps acting on Pound's excision of "Yes," Eliot himself most likely cut the other two details to completely rid the conversational passages of any sensual detail. As a result, the passages have been stripped down to the bones of "rat's alley," leaving only the images of harshly negated desire.

Desire here is also harshly negated in the second main part of this section, but as opposed to desire manifesting itself as garishly baroque detail or violence, desire is darkly humorous.

The negation of desire that occurs in the second main part is Lil's use of her prematurely aged appearance to thwart her husband Albert's desire for her. Lil resists making herself "a bit smart" for Albert because the most likely result will be another pregnancy. Her last pregnancy ended in an abortion, and the one previous to that nearly killed her. Lil's premature aging began with the pills she "took to bring it off," but she has intentionally let the



aging go to the point where she looks "antique." In connection with Lil's antique looks, shame is evoked through the indignation of Lil's friend. Lil's friend claims that she ought to be ashamed "to look so antique," but her solution for Lil, one offered by the husband as well, is for Lil to have all her teeth pulled out and get a new set. The pulling of Lil's teeth echoes Philomela and her cut-out tongue. Neither Lil with ill-fitting false teeth nor Philomela with her tongue cut out will be able to communicate their respective stories. Though Lil's teeth being pulled out and the need to make herself "a bit smart" is darkly humorous, an undercurrent of violence runs through the second main part of "A Game of Chance" as well. Consequently, the two sections share more commonalities than differences. The differences of class distinction serve only to change the mode of expression of desire as it wanders from the room of an upper-class home to a lower-class bar.

In "A Game of Chess," then, desire is negated as the expression of the garishly baroque and the violent. Expressions of violence continue in "The Fire Sermon" but

are also mixed with expressions of desire as sadness and languor. The particular mode of expression used in "The Fire Sermon" seems to have been the most difficult for Eliot. Expressing desire as sadness and languor intermixed with violence must have been close to Eliot's personal feelings at the time. As evidenced by the manuscripts, "The Fire Sermon" was revised significantly, with several false starts. For example, the songs of the three Thames Daughters near the end of the section seem to have been revised many times. In addition to difficult revisions, a great deal of material was excised from the beginning of the section. These seventy lines are a crude Parody of Pope's Rape of the Lock. The lines were cut by Pound because he too most likely identified sadness and languor as the dominant modes of expression in "The Fire Sermon."

The parody of Pope at the beginning of "The Fire Sermon" is similar in content to the King Bolo poems. Both the excised lines and the King Bolo poems make use of vulgarities and references to excrement and menstruation. Though those things represent one of the more emphatic ways that Eliot negated desire, they do not seem to fit into "The

Fire Sermon." Other evidence of Eliot's difficulty of expressing desire as sadness or languor exists in the formal qualities of many of the lines excised and some which remained in the final draft. Because Eliot's own personal feelings were so close to the method of negating desire in "The Fire Sermon," he reverted back to precisionism. As previously established, precisionism is one of Eliot's primary means of concealing desire, and in "The Fire Sermon" he tried to use it again. For example, the Pope parody consists of heroic couplets, a highly restrictive form that Eliot, according to Pound, could not master for sustained periods. Eliot also reverts to quatrain stanzas with abab rhyme schemes. Some of these quatrain stanzas were excised, while many of them remain in "the young man carbuncular" passage, partially hidden in the final draft when Eliot closed up the spaces that had existed between the stanzas in the drafts.

As the poem stands, "The Fire Sermon" begins with an apocalyptic vision of London. This particular vision differs from other similar ones. As opposed to being a vision of a blasted landscape, the vision is one of

desertedness. It includes small details that point to the destruction of London and also includes the first instance of weeping in the poem: "by the waters of Leman I sat down and wept." The line ends with a Prufrockian ellipsis that leaves the reader wanting more, but the speaker here denies the reader's desire for more detail by invoking a complicated web of allusions. This first instance of weeping finally relieves that thread of shame which has been building throughout the previous two sections. The weeping, along with the deserted city streets, are both part of an apocalyptic vision that reveals an undercurrent of sadness.

The second part of the opening passage involves a complicated wave of allusions to Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," Shakespeare's The Tempest, myth, a war song from the First World War, and Verlaine's Parsifal. From this web of allusions, one may construe numerous readings for the remaining lines. The most emphatic element of the allusions seems to be the radical juxtaposition of the serious and the comic, the most radical one occurring at the end of the stanza with Sweeney and the allusion to Parsifal. Eliot borrows a ballad sung by the Australians during the

Dardanelles Campaign of World War One and follows it with a quote from Verlaine: Et o ces voix d'enfants chantant dans la coupole!" (And O those children's voices singing in the dome). The quote evokes Wagner's Parsifal, which involves the washing of Parsifal's feet before he heals the Fisher King and which ends with children singing Christ's praises from the dome of a castle (497n5). These two instances of feet washing involve cleansing and humbling, both of which are proposed solutions to the burning fires of lust but cleansing and humbling in The Waste Land are at best problematic. The excisions from the original drafts indicate an equivocation on cleansing and humbling as a way to negate desire.

Several excisions support the fact that cleansing and humbling as a way to negate desire are questionable. The excised Pope parody contains a reference to Mary Magdalen, frequently identified as the Mary who washed Christ's feet with her hair, a sensuous washing at least. A second important excision occurs in the song of the first Thames daughter. Originally, her song was longer and included "mine were humble people." Her song also included "near

Richmond on the river at last I raised my knees," implying not so much an unwanted advance as an opportunity that has arrived. The combination of humbling and cleansing as a major theme of "The Fire Sermon" and as a solution to the burning fires of lust does not seem to mesh with other evidence of Eliot's intentions for the section.

What "The Fire Sermon" does reveal is desire expressed as violence, perversion, languor, and mostly sadness. After the opening passage, three successive stanzas express varying modes of desire: a stanza that is an allusion to Philomela, a stanza concerning homoeroticism, and a stanza dominated by languor.

The closing stanzas of the poem concern the Thames daughters, girls that grew up in London districts near the Thames. The first passage presents a contemporary view of the river that foreshadows the images of control later spoken by the thunder. For now, the image has shades of apocalypse and creates an interesting link between the Dog in "The Burial of the Dead" and Greenwich Isle, the birth-place of Elizabeth. This connection renders problematic a contrast between Elizabeth and the Thames daughters, since

Elizabeth is associated in the poem with an image of shame. As a consequence, the entire substance of the song of the Thames daughters is a song of sorrow expressing desire. Collectively, the Thames daughters sing of the river and then of Elizabeth and Leicester, and then, in turn, each sings her own story. Each element of the songs involves shame. The first two elements Eliot seems to have written without too much difficulty, though the entire song of the Thames daughters exists as an afterthought to what Eliot originally submitted to Pound on typescript.

Eliot did have difficulty with the three individual songs of each Thames daughter. For example, the song of the first Thames daughter appears without any references to humility, though that had been an integral part of the song as originally written. The song of the second Thames daughter includes a significant change: "comment" was substituted for "outcry," clearly indicating that the "event" in question was a rape and also indicating how violence and sadness have been mixed to form an expression of desire. The song of the second Thames daughter also includes more weeping, another indication that the thread of

shame building throughout the poem is finding relief. This second Thames daughter seems as ashamed as her lover. Her heart has sunk below her feet, and, consequently, her closing question, "what should I resent," rings with irony.

Of the three Thames Daughters, the third daughter seems closest to both the main speaker of "The Fire Sermon" and also Eliot. Her song is composed of four disjunctive elements. The fragmented elements of her song foreshadow the emphatic fragmentation in the closing lines of The Waste Land and also reveal the severe strain that expressing desire as sadness and violence has placed upon her and Eliot. In the final draft, this element reads "the broken fingernails of dirty hands," but originally the line read "I still feel the pressure of [a] dirty hand." The line as Eliot originally wrote it evokes a bitter shame that still resonates in the third Thames daughter as a physical sensation that will not go away. Additionally, the passage as we have it now is the revision of a false start: "I was to be grateful / On Margate sands there were many others." The third Thames daughter, too, has been raped, but unlike



the others, she felt that she must accept the dirt and the shame and feel grateful for the opportunity.

The distraught voice of the third Thames daughter is quite similar to the voice that concludes the poem. The concluding voice is different from the voice that spoke throughout most of "The Fire Sermon." Further, this voice differs from the grave first voice of "The Burial of the Dead." The voice that closes "The Fire Sermon" is nearly Eliot's own. The voice speaks in fragments, and the tone of the voice is emphatically imploring. The voice is the voice of "The Hollow Men," fighting desperately to articulate a point which language does not have the capacity to contain: "To Carthage then I came / Burning burning burning burning / O Lord thou pluckest me out / O Lord thou pluckest / burning." The combination of the occidental Augustine and the oriental Buddha, representative of a total renunciation of desire, has completely failed, making the literal value of "The Fire Sermon" highly ironic. The rhythm of those lines reads like a nursery rhyme, particularly with the inverted syntax of the first line. The lines also reveal the degree to which desire, expressed as sadness and

violence, has unraveled the speaker of those lines; the negations of desire in "The Fire Sermon" have not been enough to control desire.

While the manuscripts of "The Fire Sermon" reveal Eliot's difficulty in composing that section of the poem, no apparent first drafts exist for the fourth section, "Death by Water." A fair copy of "Death By Water" exists, but the neatness of the handwriting indicates that it is indeed a fair copy and not a first draft. In addition to the fair copy, a typescript also exists. Because of the lack of a first draft, Eliot's difficulties in composing the section are not apparent. What is apparent in the final draft of the poem is the enigmatic quality of the ten lines that constitute "Death by Water," since outside the context of the other four parts of the poem, a clear theme is difficult to determine.

What is known is that "Death by Water" originally contained ninety-two lines, the first eighty-two being cut by Pound. He probably excised the first eighty-two lines for reasons similar to the other excisions. Whatever threads that Pound saw running through the poem seem not to have

been present in those eighty-two lines; but Pound felt very certain about the last ten lines, calling the Phlebas section an integral part of the poem.

Eliot seems to have readily agreed to excising those first eighty-two lines, at least compared to his questioning Pound again concerning the use of Gerontion as a prologue and his equivocation about excising the Pope parody at the beginning of "The Fire Sermon." Because Eliot readily agreed to cutting the first eighty-two lines and because of Pound's certainty about the integral nature of the Phlebas lines, the "Death By Water" section would then seem to function as a focal point for the various expressions of desire that have run throughout the previous three sections. And as a focal point, "Death By Water" contains three elements that connect it to the other sections: the mention of Phlebas the Phoenician, an image of decay underwater, and a warning to those who "turn the wheel and look to windward."

"Death By Water" begins with Phlebas the Phoenician, who originally appeared as one of Madame Sosostri's cards. Madame Sosostri also connects Phlebas to "A Game of Chess" when she says "those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!"

She also foreshadows "Death By Water" with "fear death by water." Because Phlebas appears in "The Burial of the Dead," where desire is expressed as shame, he also has a connection with shame, especially as Phlebas has forgotten (repressed, perhaps) some apparently important material: "Phlebas . . . / Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell / And the profit and loss."

The material that Phlebas has forgotten has led to his death, but "as he rose and fell" in the current of the whirlpool, he sees his "age and youth," thus coming to some revelation that he has taken with him to the bottom of the sea. Now, a fortnight dead," Phlebas seems suspended in a perpetual decay: "a current under sea / Picked his bones in whispers." The decay is barely hinted at in a single sentence, but a poem dated around 1921 and excised from The Waste Land reveals more detail. "Dirge" features Bleinstein underwater:

That is lace that was his nose  
 See upon his back he lies  
 (Bones peep through the ragged toes)  
 With a stare of dull surprise

Flood tide and ebb tide  
Roll him gently side to side  
See the lips that unfold unfold  
From the teeth, gold in gold.

Not only are the images similar, but Bleinstein's Graves's disease (mentioned earlier in "Dirge") connects him to Phlebas. One symptom of Graves's disease is an abnormal swelling of the eyeballs, and from this, the lines "those are pearls that were his eyes" takes on additional meaning, though the lines are from Shakespeare's The Tempest. Also from "Dirge," another connection arises. Though a dirge is a sad song or funeral lament, etymologically it precedes from the Latin dirigere, meaning to direct, the first word of the antiphon in the Office for the Burial of the Dead. Phlebas the Phoenician, then, is another image of shame and the burial of desire, and quite possibly the ideas that he has forgotten about may have been things related to desire.

Phlebas also appears in "A Game of Chess." In what Eliot referred to as "the nerves monologue," the husband says "those are pearls that were his eyes," repeating Madame Sosostris's earlier exclamation concerning Phlebas.

Recalling that the nerves monologue was a replay of the garishly baroque and violent stanza that opens "A Game of Chess," Phlebas then also serves as a focal point for the desire expressed as sadness and violence in the first passage of "A Game of Chess."

The final way in which Phlebas serves as a focal point of desire throughout the text occurs in the last lines, via the word choice of "consider." The lines function as a warning: "O you who turn the wheel and look to windward / Consider Phlebas who was once handsome and tall as you." This warning about Phlebas connects him to the warning implicit in "The Fire Sermon," where desire was expressed as sadness, languor, and shame. The warning is further connected to "The Fire Sermon" through the nautical terminology. The first passage of the song of the three Thames daughters contains similar language: "the barges drift / With turning tide / Red sails / Wide / To leeward, swing on the heavy spar," and additional nautical language was excised from their song, as well.

The seemingly enigmatic nature of "Death By Water" becomes a focal point for all the desire in The Waste Land.

Through subtle clues, Eliot has compressed the varieties of desire into "Death by Water." The title of this section then comes to read as death by the varieties of desire as they have all been focused here on the water imagery. Water, though, is the most important aspect of the last section of the poem, suggesting that desire is the guiding theme of The Waste Land.

The "What the Thunder Said" part of the poem consists of three main sections: surreal images of apocalypse and the twenty-nine lines of the water dripping song of the hermit-thrush; the voice of the thunder; and a final prayer that is inherently silent, a silence even more profound than the failure with the Hyacinth girl. These three parts form the last section of the poem, a section which Eliot wrote with great rapidity. First drafts of the section exist with minimal changes. Because of the lack of revision, it seems that Eliot now had some sense of the structure of the final poem, a sense which departs from some of the notes on The Waste Land that have held sway in Eliot criticism. Chief among those notes are the reference to Weston, which Grover Smith embraces, and the note on Tiresias as the key speaker

of the poem, which many critics have sharply debated. The notes, though interesting in themselves, do little to elucidate the grand design of the poem: varying themes that exist in a complicated web of allusion, repetition, and indirection; one of the grand designs being Eliot's revelation of desire and its concealment as essentially an emphatic negation of many expressions and varieties of desire that wander through most of the lines and voices in the poem. The grand design concludes in the last part of the poem with its three sections.

The first of these three sections includes the images of apocalypse and the twenty-nine crucial lines of the hermit-thrush. The apocalyptic images concern Gethsemane and the Crucifixion, hallucination, a primal horde, chaos that has become surreal, and death in the Chapel Perilous. These images are intense, rendered with a minimum amount of language; and the intensity of these apocalyptic images reveals a high degree of desire, since Eliot used the emotional depths of the Modernist apocalypse as a figure of speech for that which his Victorian silences disallowed expression.



Situated in the middle of the apocalypse that has become chaotic and surreal is a song of desire. These twenty-nine lines that Eliot referred to as "the water dripping song of the hermit-thrush" question the sincerity of the negated desire. The lines are an intense meditation by the speaker that reveal a connection between water imagery and desire. As foreshadowed in "Death by Water," water represents the culmination of the varieties of desire scattered throughout the poem. Counting synonyms, water is mentioned fourteen times in the twenty-nine lines--twenty-one times counting the "drip drop drip" line. The repetition of water and the aural density of the passage reveals a concentrated effort on the part of the speaker to create water with nothing but the force of his words. This intensely meditative passage represents something new in Eliot's poetry. At this point, he has taken the first step towards the next phase of his poetic career where language itself without any need for worldly reference becomes his primary mode of expression. This method borders on non-sense and is the key element in Ash Wednesday and the Four Quartets. For now, the attempt to create something from the

sounds and structure of language with sense far in the background is a crucial turning point. It reveals the most forceful attempt yet in The Waste Land to express desire and this time with the aid of pure language. The language used in these twenty-nine lines substantiates itself, and points into itself for meaning, not needing any reference to the world of objects. Consequently, the speaker has found a mode of expression that temporarily frees him from the burden of negating desire. At the end of the passage, the speaker has failed and says "there is no water" and then speaks with apocalyptic passages that are chaotic and surreal in nature. His efforts, though, have been of some value in that they have prepared him to hear the voice of the thunder.

The message the speaker receives is "give," "sympathize," and "control," all of which he is able to understand. Concerning the message to give, the thunder offers "the awful daring of a moment's surrender," which is not to be found in Victorian silences, only in this moment that we "have existed." This moment is the moment of the nerves in patterns on a screen or more sensuously expressed

as "the heart of light, the silence" associated with the Hyacinth girl.

The speaker next receives the message to sympathize. This message further emphasizes the solitary nature of each person and why that moment of surrender is indeed so daring. The sympathize message asks the speaker to understand (itself a kind of sympathy) that the isolation of each requires surrender. Without surrender, one is left with Prufrock's "that's not it at all," a continual rejection that is insurmountable. Finally, the speaker receives the message of control which the thunder has expressed with nautical terminology. Previously, the speaker has attempted to rule desire with nautical terminology, but has failed. He has not, as the thunder indicates, been "invited." Only after his preparation does nautical imagery have meaning.

Only after the speaker has been prepared and then hears the voice of the thunder does he find relief. The relief is another kind of silence, a prayer that consists of the vast variety of experiences of the poem condensed into a complex weave of allusions that ends in understanding. These allusions involve the grail myth that has run loosely

throughout the poem and its implications of denial, shame, seduction, fertility, and death; references to the London Bridge nursery rhyme, which invokes the Dantean implications of adultery; the swallow, which evokes Philomela and desire as violence and sadness; Le Prince d'Aquitaine à la tour abolie, which evokes more of the ruined towers and the chaos of The Waste Land; and Hieronymo's feigned madness, which indicates control and structure and significantly undercuts other critics' attempts to characterize the poem as having no coherence or determinable meaning. Of these allusions, the final one is the closure to the prayer, one that signifies that through the varieties of desire in The Waste Land, an understanding has been reached. The exact nature of that understanding is unclear, though it pertains to the activity of prayer as an expression of desire, as opposed to the shame, sadness, and violence of The Waste Land.

## CHAPTER 4

### LITURGIES OF DESIRE: SATIATING DESIRE WITH PRAYER PETITION, MEDITATION, AND CONFESSION

In Ash Wednesday, Eliot's mode of poetic expression shifts from expressing desire as radical vicissitudes and strong negations in the form of shame and violence to expressing desire as a liturgy. Though the shift seems radical, Eliot has only refined his previous methods of silencing desire. In Prufrock and The Waste Land, desire reveals and conceals itself in the High Modernist aesthetic, most notably in the use of precisionism and apocalyptic images. With precisionism, Eliot maintained control over the sounds, syntax, and images of his poetry and frequently one or more of those elements would be in discord with the others, creating a canceling or silencing effect. In combination with content clues, these silences would constantly reveal desire. A special case of this silencing occurs when sound and syntax do not correlate with Eliot's apocalyptic images. Apocalyptic images, especially those in The Waste Land, create an intensely emotional context, one substantial enough to stand in place of deeply personal desire. The Waste Land both epitomizes and exhausts this form of silencing desire, and before The Waste Land had gone

to print, Eliot had already made known the fact that he was moving into a new style.

Eliot's new mode of poetic expression begins to surface in The Hollow Men (1925). Though one critic cautions that Eliot did not leap full-blown from the head of Zeus, Eliot's poetry does seem to clearly progress, with Eliot refining his method at each step. In this way, The Hollow Men provides a link between the sadness and violence of The Waste Land and the liturgical satiation of desire in Ash Wednesday. In The Hollow Men, Eliot still makes use of a blasted landscape to evoke emotional extremes, but the landscape is more forgiving. More clearly than the final shoring together of fragments as a slight indication of hope in The Waste Land, Eliot names hope in The Hollow Men as "the perpetual star / Multifoliate rose" of the Virgin, "the hope only / of empty men." The explicit nominalization of hope as the Virgin is the step towards satiating desire.

A further step towards satiating desire occurs in the use of the Lord's Prayer at the end of The Hollow Men. The use of prayer in Eliot's poetry is not new to Ash Wednesday. In The Waste Land, Eliot borrows from the Anglican prayer service for the dead and closes the poem by importuning "Shantih shantih shantih." The use of prayer in The Hollow Men is the beginning of Eliot's new mode of poetic expression. Though the Lord's Prayer appears only in fragments in The Hollow Men, its controlled structure and

repetition must have been a useful model. The prayer begins and ends by invoking God's Kingdom, and, in between, it repeats "day" and "trespasses." It also includes the rhetorical "and lead us not into temptation" to emphasize the delivery from evil. The Lord's Prayer and other devotional prayers have become models for Eliot's poetry, a model furthered by Eliot's interest in the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes and John Donne. Between the two, Eliot had a preference for Andrewes because he exhibited what Eliot termed "relevant intensity." To demonstrate relevant intensity, Eliot quotes from one of Andrewes's sermons:

I add yet farther; what flesh? The flesh of an infant? What verbum infans, the Word of an infant and not able to speak a word. How evil this agreeth! (Essays 307)

Eliot says that "in this extraordinary prose . . . there are often flashing phrases which never desert the memory" (307). Andrewes's words remain in the memory because of pattern and sound, an affect that Eliot himself had long been aware of in his use of precisionism. Precisionism has now turned into an "intensity," something similar to the fusion and pressure of "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Taken a step further, the relevant intensity borders on non-sense:

a logical universe of discourse meticulously selected and controlled . . . with which the detached intellect can make . . . a series of

abstract, detailed, artificial patterns of words and images . . . [that] have their own significance in themselves. (Sewell 66)

In large part, non-sense defines the method of Ash Wednesday. Ash Wednesday is "a logical universe of discourse meticulously selected and controlled" into a "series of abstract, detailed, artificial patterns." Consequently, details of content and allusions may or may not be helpful in the explication of the poem, since clear reference to the world of objects is not necessary in non-sense. Ash Wednesday makes use of non-sense, and including non-sense into the overall interpretative strategy of the poem more satisfactorily answers questions that other explications leave unanswered. For example, Ash Wednesday contains a great deal of repetition, contradiction, and an emphasis on betweenness (as in being between states of being), but why? These poetic devices are the ones that indicate non-sense, a semantic silence that requires a broad interpretative strategy, one that recognizes that alongside the semantic silences of non-sense is the consistent presence of a Beatrice-like figure. This semi-divine figure appears in all six parts of the poem which are forms of prayers. Petitions, meditations, and confessions, because they are addressed to the semi-divine figure and otherwise lack semantic content, indicate a concealment of desire that is subtly revealed by recognizing non-sense as a continuing refinement of Eliot's



poetic method.

An example of non-sense as part of Eliot's method occurs in part II of Ash Wednesday. Part II was probably the first part written and was published as "Salutation" in 1927. "Salutation" features a speaker whose voice is divided between what is perhaps his consciousness and his bones. The salutation of the voice is directed toward the "Lady," a semi-divine figure. The salutation takes place in the desert, an apocalyptic setting similar to the dark wood that begins Dante's Inferno. In the dark wood, Dante the Pilgrim finds that the short way to Heaven is blocked by beasts who threaten to devour him, one of which is a leopard. In "Salutation," the three white leopards have already devoured the speaker, suggesting that unlike Dante the Pilgrim, the speaker did not have the strength to descend through Hell and recognize sin. Despite the failure and despite the death of the bones, the Lady intercedes on their behalf. The Lady, like Dante's Beatrice, represents desire, as attested to by the bones. In two different instances, the bones make use of non-sense to articulate desire.

The first non-sensical articulation occurs in connection with the Lady: "the Lady is withdrawn / In a white gown, to contemplation, in a white gown. / Let the whiteness of bones atone to forgetfulness." The lines have affinities to precisionism; yet the devices do not seem to be operating in the same way. They rhyme of withdrawn/white gown and the internal rhyme of gown/gown, along with the

whiteness of the gown and the whiteness of the bones represent a repetition that turns the passage into itself. The lines do not have a reference in the world of objects. Instead, they refer only to themselves. In this way, they become a fetish, since desire has been displaced onto a part (language without reference) instead of being directed towards and referring to the whole (the Lady).

The second occurrence of non-sense occurs in the song of the bones as a series of paired opposites. The paired opposites, unlike Blake's Marriage of Heaven and Hell, do not form a synthesis that leads to a higher understanding. Instead, they are an expression of the inadequacy of referential language to fully embody the Lady. The mystery the language invokes is desirous in nature, especially as Part II of Ash Wednesday originally stood as an address or greeting.

Part I of Ash Wednesday was originally published second as "Perch' io non spero" in 1928. The title translates "because I do not hope to turn" and, as is well documented, comes from a poem by Calvicanti. Though the title suggests a theme for the entirety of Ash Wednesday, especially as it is well-explicated by Williamson, Ash Wednesday involves more than the penitent's turn from the world to God, the cleansing of death as a resignation of self in Part II, and the struggle to move beyond hope and despair in Part III. What the allusions to Shakespeare, Dante, and the Bible do

not reveal is that a desirous current runs beneath all the parts of the poem, not just in the temptations of the sensual world. The poem is an attempt to rule desire with the language of prayer: petition, meditation, and confession. In "Perch' io non spero." the speaker reveals desire in beautifully lyrical stanzas, which, none-the-less, are carefully controlled expressions of desire.

The opening lines "Because I do not hope to turn again / Because I do not hope / Because I do not hope to turn" contain a high degree of auralty and repetition that source hunting does not fully satisfy. The allusion to Calvicanti as well as to several Biblical passages is granted; yet why the auralty and the repetition? The opening three lines depend upon aspirated sounds and upon the exhalation of air to evoke a tone of dejection. One critic even compares the sounds to a moaning organ with great releases of air and sound (Muske 1153). The auralty of the lines and its accompanying tone of dejection represent the speaker's struggle with desire as he is using auralty to keep desire under control. The need to control desire also accounts for the repetition: three concerted efforts to conceal desire as a pattern of sound.

The speaker ends the first stanza by asking "Why should I mourn / The vanished power of the usual reign?" The line contains several possibilities. "The vanished power of the usual reign" many refer to the turn to God and the

reenunciation of this world. This reading would do much to support the general theme of the penitent struggling to renounce the world for the next world that runs throughout the poem and is implied in its overall title of Ash Wednesday. Further, the dejected tone of the opening lines reinforces that reading, since the power to turn has "vanished" and the speaker will not even mourn its loss. These lines do more than elucidate the general theme of the surface of Ash Wednesday. The lines draw attention to themselves not only because of the allusive nature of the "usual reign" but also because of the contradiction implied in "usual reign." Reigns do not connote the commonplace. A reign suggests a uniqueness which "usual" undercuts. As in the song of the bones, this paired contradiction conceals the desire which was already partially revealed in the opening lines.

The turning in the first stanza of "Perch' io non spero" is the turn away from desire once having mastered it, but the turn is difficult, the control tenuous. The control is tenuous, propped up so to speak, with the stanzas that began with "Because." The first "Because" controls the "infirm glory of the positive hour." The "infirm glory" may mean grace in a moment of need or faith in God after the resurrection, but another curious contradiction occurs. "Infirm glory" is a figure of speech difficult to comprehend, encompassing a thought or feeling that, under

the rules of desire, must be a silencing of desire. This silencing of desire manifests itself again as a negation of a sensuous image of a place "where trees flower and springs flow," a negation since in this place there "is nothing."

The third stanza begins and repeats "Because." The repetition reveals a further attempt at controlling desire with a pattern of language. The pattern of the language in the third stanza approaches non-sense with the heavy repetition of "always" and "only" and the alliteration of l and s sounds. The heavy aural pattern of the stanza and the rigid use of conjunctions to connect the redundancies of time, place, and actuality all represent the use of language to control desire. Further, because the speaker has gained a certain amount of control over desire, he will "rejoice that things are as they are" and will "renounce the blessèd face / And renounce the voice." He has "construct[ed] something" for himself that will replace the blessed face and voice. The construct is the pattern of the language: aurality and images that are sensuous in nature but are in contrast to the theme of turning and negation.

The contrasting elements within the stanzas contours among the stanzas as well, so despite the renunciation, the speaker prays to God "to have mercy upon us." Further, he prays that he "may forget / these matters that with myself I too much discuss / Too much explain." Instead, he would prefer to "let these words answer / For what is done, not to

be done again." In combination, the contrasting turn to God, the forgetting of matters, the letting of certain words to stand for others, all reveal that the language of "Perch' io non spero," if not the whole of Ash Wednesday, represents a trope for some other emotion or feeling not at all clearly articulated on the surface.

"Perch' io non spero" closes with the eleventh repetition of "Because." By now the repetition of "because" has become emphatic, revealing an intentional artifice on the part of the speaker to restrain a desire that he feels must be bound by the limits of syntax and the logical progression of reasoning. The speaker has overstated his case for why he can "no longer strive to strive towards such things." The struggle, as with Prufrock, has wearied him; his wings "are merely vans to beat the air." The wearied speaker has been reduced to another paired contradiction: "Teach us to care and not to care." Again, this contradiction is the inadequacy of language to fully figure the speaker's intentions.

The inadequacy of language to fully figure the speaker's intentions in parts I and II of the poem carries over into part III. Part III was published third in 1927 as "Som de L'Escalina." This poem plays a pivotal role in the whole of Ash Wednesday, as its Dantean ascension motif is distributed throughout the poem so that, as many critics point out, the speaker of the poem begins with renunciation,

passes through death, gains strength "beyond hope and despair," envisions the garden again, struggles with the Word, and, in the last part of the poem, has some measure of success in passing beyond hope and despair, but is still tempted by the world and prays not to be separated from the "blessèd sister, holy mother."

Like the two previous parts, "Som de L'Escalina" is highly structured, concealing desire in two ways: first, in the structure of the Dantean ascension and second, in the distraction of the sensual world. Concerning the Dantean ascension, the speaker narrates an ascension, and at each stage of the climb the speaker, like Dante's Pilgrim, gains in self knowledge. The rigid structure of the ascension provides a framework that reins in the strong emotions of the speaker. These emotions consist of hope and despair, and they have a wearying effect upon the speaker, one similar to the vicissitudes that Prufrock expresses in the intensely lyrical passages of the mermaids combing the hair of the waves. Hope and despair is yet another contradiction and a figure of speech for desire, especially as hope and despair are the two constituents of desire that make its rule and rules both pleasurable and unbearable. Desire is also "the devil of the stairs who wears / The deceitful face." Desire causes the twisting and turning. It causes the speaker to see his image struggling on the stairs below, and it also causes him to continue twisting and turning himself as he



progresses up the stairs. The speaker believes he has left that twisting and turning behind him, but he has not. He is literally twisting and turning up the stairs. "At the first turning of the third stair," the speaker is tempted by a sensuous image: he sees

a slotted window bellied like the fig's fruit  
 And beyond the hawthorn blossom and the pasture  
 scene

The broadbacked figure drest in blue and green  
 Enchanted the maytime with an antique flute.

The image is one of the few pastoral images in Eliot's poetry and one of the few landscapes that do not consist of rock, sand, and stone. This landscape is green, a less cruel April. The missing cruelty in the landscape has been displaced onto the language itself: densely aural passages and tightly controlled patterns of language and syntax now bear the burdens of desire. The comparative rarity of this pastoral image in Eliot's poetry is obvious. For Eliot, the pastoral imagery leads to an uncomfortably heightened sensuality: "Blown hair is sweet, brown over the mouth blown / Lilac and brown hair." These two lines represent a fragment that Eliot was probably carrying in his head and then edited them into the poem, since they are clearly separate from the subject of the previous pastoral image and share only a theme of sensuality. The blown hair and the pastoral image are undercut by the speaker as a "distraction, music of the flute, stops and steps of the mind over the / third stair" which is "fading, fading." In overcoming the distractions, the speaker hopes to find "strength beyond hope and despair," that is, he hopes to control desire.

The control that the speaker exerts over desire is tenuous at best, a struggle composed of "stops and steps" that culminates with a quotation from Matthew 8:8. The verses preceding and succeeding Matthew 8:8 concern a centurion who has asked Jesus to heal a sick servant. Jesus says he will come, but the centurion stops Jesus and asks only for him to say the word and that he is not worthy to have Jesus enter his house. Jesus agrees and praises the centurion for his faith. In the context of "Som de L'Escalina," neither the source nor the content of the allusion are overly helpful. What is important about the closing lines is the speaker's admission that he is still struggling with devil of the stairs, or that desire still rules him.

The other important element in the closing lines concerns the power of language in itself to be an agency; the words in themselves are sufficient, and reference to the world of objects is not necessary. Language that is sufficient in itself to be an agency of emotion does find support in the allusion to Matthew 8:8. The centurion is a soldier who gives orders and then others cause things to happen. The centurion also receives orders and himself causes things to happen. His faith in giving and receiving orders gives him faith in the words of Jesus, as he needs the word only and by past experience knows that the cure he seeks for his servant will occur. Language for the speaker

of the poem does have an emotive force, one sufficient enough to elicit desire from the reader via a method even more sophisticated than in the earlier poems.

In the context of Ash Wednesday, the last line of part III also has significance as it provides continuity into the last half of the poem. The last three parts of Ash Wednesday were not published separately. They were meant to form a whole with the first three parts. "But speak the word only," then, introduces the petition of part IV. Part IV returns to the semi-divine figure of part II. The semi-divine figure is the same figure that appears throughout the poem. Her half divinity is confirmed in part IV: she represents a release from the temporal world of suffering, but the release she grants is in part sexual. Most critics of Ash Wednesday support the contention that the release the semi-divine figure grants is sexual, but the contradictory, controlled language of the first three parts of the poem indicates that her release is wholly sexual and that the remainder of Ash Wednesday is a petition for, a meditation on, and a confession of desire.

The first stanza of part IV amply supports the divine aspect of the Lady of part II. She moves "in white and blue, Mary's colour," and she brings life to the garden of the desert of part II; she "made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs." In her life-giving capacity, she is also a fertility goddess, and "in ignorance and in knowledge of

eternal dolour," she embodies the same kinds of contradictions given to the lady of silences in part II. This particular reading is difficult, since the attributes of Mary are the same as those attributed to the semi-divine figure. Mary's ignorance of eternal sadness is her unmovable divinity, her status as Queen of Heaven, yet her knowledge of eternal sadness is her maternal lamentation for Christ and her role as intercessor for all those who suffer. Had the speaker actually called on Mary, as the speaker does in part IV of the "Dry Salvages," the contradiction would be rather easily resolved, but Mary is not invoked, and the contradiction falls into place with all the others in the poem.

The semi-divine figure who is "in ignorance and knowledge of eternal dolour" is desire and the petition of "Sovegna vos" at the end of the second stanza is a petition to desire. "Sovegna vos" is an allusion to Arnaut Daniel's lines in the Purgatorio, but the source here is less than helpful in explicating the closing lines of the stanza. At best, this allusion, like a number of Eliot's allusions, is the importation of sound and tone of voice, not always context and meaning. "Sovegna vos" adds solemnity to the line; it deepens the desire of the speaker to a level that finds expression only outside of English. With careful qualification, Eliot's own remarks in "Dante" that "genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood" (206), lends

support to reading *sovegna vos* without importing Arnaut Daniel into the reading. Further, the depth of the petition to desire finds support in "Dante" as Eliot speaks here of intensity and compression, in much the same way as he spoke of it in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" as fusion and pressure. This compression or intensity, the quality that Eliot admired most in Dante, sounds the depths of Eliot's own silences, for at their core, these silences are petitions to desire that could not otherwise expand themselves into referential language. They remain trapped in the contradictions and controlled language of the speaker in Ash Wednesday.

The middle section of part V involves a repetition of the petition to desire via a figure of speech that evokes Dante's Purgatory. "The years that walk between, bearing / Away the fiddles and flutes" represent Dante's refining fire, a self-imposed kind of hell that burns away sin and allows the penitent to gain Paradise. In Ash Wednesday, Paradise is desire and is the "one who moves in time between sleep and waking, wearing / White light folded, sheathed about her, folded." The figure sheathed in white light is the Lady of part II and the recipient of the *sovegna vos* petition. She is again a figure of intense desire, this time expressed in the non-sense of "white light folded, sheathed about, folded." As the *sovegna vos* petition increased the depth of desire, so does the non-sense increase the depth of

desire by repeating that earlier petition. This non-referential language has the power of the word at the end of part III, and consequently desire manifests itself without explicit reference and also without any other agency than language itself.

The remaining lines of the stanza that begin with "white light folded" is essentially non-sense. It evokes little semantic content except that out of the Purgatory of the years in between will come "new years," and the new years are an "ancient rhyme." The ancient rhyme could be Dante's Paradiso, but it also suggests something eternally present yet forgotten, something that language's agency will evoke. The ancient rhyme represents language without clear reference to the world of objects. It evokes mystery like the bones' song, *Sovegna vos*, or white light folded, and as all these are petitions or representations of the semi-divine figure, so is the ancient rhyme.

The ancient rhyme is also the higher dream. Eliot defines the higher dream in "Dante:" it is the "serious pageantry of royalty, of the churches, or of military funerals" and not "what are popularly called pageants" (225). The pomp of the low dream constitutes the "jeweled unicorns" and the vulgar "gilded hearse," something like the baroque setting of "A Game of Chess." The higher dream is remote, "unread," and represents a silence, a pulsing "ancient rhyme" restored in the petition to the semi-divine

desire by repeating that earlier petition. This non-referential language has the power of the word at the end of part III, and consequently desire manifests itself without explicit reference and also without any other agency than language itself.

The remaining lines of the stanza that begin with "white light folded" is essentially non-sense. It evokes little semantic content except that out of the Purgatory of the years in between will come "new years," and the new years are an "ancient rhyme." The ancient rhyme could be Dante's Paradiso, but it also suggests something eternally present yet forgotten, something that language's agency will evoke. The ancient rhyme represents language without clear reference to the world of objects. It evokes mystery like the bones' song, *Sovegna vos*, or white light folded, and as all these are petitions or representations of the semi-divine figure, so is the ancient rhyme.

The ancient rhyme is also the higher dream. Eliot defines the higher dream in "Dante:" it is the "serious pageantry of royalty, of the churches, or of military funerals" and not "what are popularly called pageants" (225). The pomp of the low dream constitutes the "jeweled unicorns" and the vulgar "gilded hearse," something like the baroque setting of "A Game of Chess." The higher dream is remote, "unread," and represents a silence, a pulsing "ancient rhyme" restored in the petition to the semi-divine



figure.

The petition to desire is partially answered by the silent sister who "bent her head and signed but spoke no word." She restores the garden as the "fountains sprag up and the bird sang down," yet without the word, the petition is not fully answered. At best, the speaker has seen "the token," the silent sister's signing of the cross. The speaker makes another petition to the semi-divine figure who is now associated with the "broadbacked figure drest in blue and green" with the closing line of the Salve Regina. This petition for mercy at the close of the Catholic Mass, like the other petitions in part IV, is a petition to desire that reveals that the speaker is aware of the difficult rule of desire, since the "fruit of thy womb, Jesus" from the Salve Regina is obtained only after some kind of exile.

Part V of Ash Wednesday represents a meditation on the nature of the word. This meditation, like the petitions of part IV, is repetitive. The repetition suggests that the semantic content of part V gives way to a non-literal reading, a reading that embraces the non-sense of the first stanza and the aural density of the remaining stanzas.

The first stanza of part V consists of contrasts, continuing the pattern established previously in Ash Wednesday. Borrowing from the book of John and from the sermons of Lancelot Andrewes, Eliot has constructed a poetic meditation presenting the premise that God's logos exists

whether one speaks it or hears it or not, and though the logos may remain in darkness and the world may fight against it, it is at the core of everything. In this way, the logos is all words, and particularly in Ash Wednesday the logos is desire, worthy of petition and meditation. Its rule is absolute, as articulated in the first stanza.

The second stanza consists of a line quoted from the book of Micah 6:3. In the context of Micah, the line is highly rhetorical and ironic. God asks "O my people what have I done unto thee? and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me." God then recounts his blessings to the people and his punishments to other people who were against him. The context of Micah reveals little about the contents of part V of Ash Wednesday, except that God has never disfavored the people. He was always present and in this way the line repeats the theme of the opening stanza: God's logos is ever-present, and the logos is desire as it is represented in the semi-divine figure.

The remaining stanzas in part V are as tightly controlled as the opening stanza. They make use of an internal rhyme that prevents the language of the stanzas from finding references in the world of objects. The language turns in upon itself and is sufficient in itself as an emotive agency. These middle stanzas are different from the intensely beautiful lyrical fragments in the first parts of the poem or the ones in part VI. The middle stanzas in

part V are pure Eliot, like the water dripping song of the hermit-thrush in The Waste Land. They represent for Eliot a poetic mode that allows for the expression of desire without the negation and violence characteristic of The Waste Land. In explaining a key characteristic of Dante's poetry, Eliot explains his own method: Dante's "force of compression" inherently creates silences that for every "three lines needs a paragraph, and their allusions a page of commentary" (206). These silences are desire, now figured as a beatitude that Eliot believes is far more remote from this world than the phantasmagoria of the Inferno ("Dante" 217).

The third stanza typifies the method. It begins "where shall the word be found, where will the word / Resound?" The repetition of word and the found/resound rhyme indicate the pattern of the meditation that follows. Repetition of key words and the frequent use of internal rhyme draws the stanza in upon itself so that an initial reading of it concentrates upon sound and pattern long before semantic content or reference to the world of objects becomes possible.

The fourth stanza follows and intensifies the use of repetition and internal rhyme as a meditation upon the word. The stanza begins with the speaker asking if the "veiled sister" will "pray for / those who walk in darkness, who chose thee and oppose thee." The veiled sister is the semi-divine figure of parts II, III, and IV, and continues her

deny in private agonies the rule of desire. The speaker is dominated by and establishes for himself the rule of desire as "the desert in the garden the garden in the desert / of drouth."

Desire is strongly felt in Ash Wednesday, so strongly that the speaker's initial pleas of "because" have softened to "although." He is wavering in a betweenness, in the space where "dreams cross;" in the betweenness of "twilight," the "violet and the violet" of the semi-divine figure; in the betweenness of birth and dying, the life of sensuality. The wavering is felt by the speaker, who begins to confess his desire with the liturgy of the Catholic Confession: "Bless me father." The speaker confesses to the dominant role of desire in his life with lyrical intensity in the next stanza. The speaker rejoices in and recovers what has been lost in the wavering, the time when desire ruled him in the desert, as opposed to when he ruled desire in the garden or with beautifully lyrical images. The lyrical images are a construct, as the speaker acknowledges in part I "having to construct something / Upon which to rejoice" and also as the "empty forms" between Virgil's gate of false dreams.

The speaker has outgrown the desire inherent in the sensuality of lyrically beautiful fragments. Desire, as the increasing emphasis on betweenness indicates, is in God's logos, "the place of solitude where three dreams cross." The three dreams have been identified as the Lady, the Virgin,

and Christ (Williamson 183), but the semi-divine figure is the only figure present in the poem. Every invocation of her connects her to the Lady of part II, clearly not the Virgin. The three dreams represent the Trinity, which aptly represents the meditation on God's logos in part V. Further, the "other yew" that will "be shaken and reply" stands in opposition to the silent voices that eventually "drift away." The "other" yew, the wrath bearing yew or the yew of salvation, is the one that bears Christ, whose voice is synonymous with God's logos.

The final stanza of the poem is a petition to the semi-divine figure. Though the speaker addresses her as "Blessèd sister, holy mother," she is also the "spirit of the fountain, spirit of the garden," and, as such, her identity as the Virgin is tenuous because it is the semi-divine figure of part IV who goes "in Mary's colour" who "made strong the fountains and made fresh the springs." The semi-divine figure will satiate desire as she will "suffer us not to mock ourselves" with the falsehoods of sensuality. She will teach us "to care and not to care," a contradiction like the others in the poem that signal that language in itself is an emotive agency without reference to the world of objects. So in teaching the speaker "to care and not to care," she suggests that desire is in language; it is God's logos or "our peace in his will." This peace or satiated desire found in the emotive agency of language without

reference to the world of objects is Eliot's rule over desire. It is also the rule that dominates Eliot to an extreme degree, one from which he cannot depart from as the speaker in the closing lines of Ash Wednesday pleads "Suffer me not to be separated / And let my cry come unto Thee."

In Ash Wednesday, Eliot has moved away from the silences he created out of the high modernist aesthetic and into the silence of non-sense and contradiction. His appropriation of a liturgical mode of worship is both sincere and also a new set of extreme figures of speech that are even more emotionally sufficient than the apocalyptic vision of violence and negation that had at one time served to silence desire. In Ash Wednesday, desire is silenced liturgically. These liturgical silences lead Eliot into the next phase of his poetic career: language that does not hide behind allusion or appropriation but which speaks plainly, speaks conversationally but forcefully. This is the method of the Four Quartets, a series of four poems that begins with the excised portions from Murder in the Cathedral and first appeared as "Burnt Norton" in 1936.

**This page has been inserted during digitization.**

**Either the original page was missing or the original pagination was incorrect.**

**This page has been inserted during digitization.**

**Either the original page was missing or the original pagination was incorrect.**



**This page has been inserted during digitization.**

**Either the original page was missing or the original pagination was incorrect.**

**This page has been inserted during digitization.**

**Either the original page was missing or the original pagination was incorrect.**

## CONCLUSION

The Four Quartets represent Eliot's last major poetry published from 1936 to 1943. Like all of Eliot's previous poetry, Four Quartets are carefully structured poems: four poems each with five parts and each part thematically coordinating with its corresponding part. Taken together, Four Quartets generate criticism similar to The Waste Land, though in much less quantity. Critical opinion of Four Quartets remains divided, especially concerning the question of whether or not Four Quartets really even represent poetry. Some critics still hold the opinion that The Waste Land is too fragmented to constitute a poem, just as others say that Four Quartets are too close to prose to be considered as good poetry. Opinions that doubt the poetic value of The Waste Land and Four Quartets do so because their interpretative strategy is too narrowly defined. A broader hermeneutic recognizes Eliot's progressive refinement of his method of poetic expression and also recognizes how that even in Four Quartets, Eliot continues to conceal and reveal desire.

A few critics will point to how the last three of the Four Quartets are Eliot's efforts to cancel the first one. "Burnt Norton" represents the culmination of Eliot's poetic method of concealing and revealing desire. Desire in "Burnt Norton" and throughout Four Quartets is revealed in two ways: first in the striking moment in the garden when "the lotos rose quietly, quietly" and "the surface glittered out of heart of light;" and the second revelation of desire occurs in Eliot's use of language as the logos that evokes desire at its every enunciation.

Throughout his life, but especially during the thirties and forties, Eliot kept in contact with Emily Hale. He corresponded with her, sent her signed copies of his books, and they visited each other in the summers. Emily Hale, most critics would agree, provided at least some inspiration for "Burnt Norton." Her relationship to Four Quartets is similar to the relationship of the semi-divine figure to Ash Wednesday. In Ash Wednesday, an inherently silent non-sense is directed to the semi-divine figure, and in the repetitions, the contradictions, and the emphasis on betweenness, one may infer an expression of desire. The same

method applies to "Burnt Norton," though much more subtly, since Emily Hale does not appear, and the language is not directed toward anyone or anything that is made explicit. "Burnt Norton" contains no explicit salutation or petition, but does contain, as mentioned in "The Dry Salvages," a "voice descanting (though not to the ear, / The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language)." The voice descanting is literally the voice set above, the voice that sings above the rest. The voice descanting is desire concealed in the sense that it never speaks and is revealed only in the sense that the speaker throughout Four Quartets must be speaking to some audience in a language wholly his own.

The language of the descanting voice reveals itself in the questions it asks: "But to what purpose / Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves / I do not know." The descanting voice also reveals itself in the momentary flashes of insight. One of these moments is in "Burnt Norton:"

So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,  
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,

To look down into the drained pool.  
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,  
And the pool was filled with water out of  
sunlight,  
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,  
The surface glittered out of heart of light,  
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.  
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.

The descanting voice speaks above the literal voice of the speaker. It reveals desire and repeats its insight as the paradoxes and moments presented throughout Four Quartets. The moments in Four Quartets represent the moment in time of the Annunciation, Gabriel's messages to the Virgin that she carries the Christ-child. The transaction of the message necessarily occurred in time, but the message itself is timeless. "Only through time time is conquered" represents one version of the message.

The language of Four Quartets and "Burnt Norton" is desire spoken by the voice above the voice of the speaker. The speaker intones the language according to the rules of grammar and the images most readily available to it. In this

way, the speaker of Four Quartets controls or rules desire. But desire rules the speaker as the insights, the moments and paradoxes, of the descanting voice.

Throughout Eliot's poetry, desire has been the descanting voice. In the early poetry, the descanting voice of desire was silenced in the High Modernist aesthetic. Eliot used the apocalyptic vision, Pound's Imagism, the opposition of mechanic and organic sources of the sublime, and precisionism to conceal desire; and these four elements constitute a critical and philosophical matrix that reveals desire. Beginning with the apocalyptic vision, Eliot used the emotional extremes of shell shock and disillusionment to create the blasted landscapes of his poetry. The blasted landscape is a topographical model of a mind with psychological scars, a mind that would like to express the emotional extremes of desire, but does not have the language to do so. The explicit language of desire is absent from Eliot's poetry because of the Victorian milieu that shaped Eliot's mind. This milieu silenced expressions of desire in public, causing, in part, the silences of Eliot's poetry. As a result, Eliot expressed desire as vulgarity, negation, and

violence, as evidenced by the King Bolo poems and The Waste Land. In addition to emotional extremes afforded by the apocalyptic vision, Eliot also used Pound's Imagism. Though Eliot is a symbolist poet, Pound's Imagism gave Eliot a method for making those symbols at least seem concrete. Imagism is also crucial to the silencing of desire. The surface objectivity of Imagism causes readers to approach only the contours, the content details of his poetry, causing a misdirection. This misdirection is sometimes recognized as Eliot's irony, but is never probed for its meaning, for what it is silencing. With the misdirection of Pound's Imagism, Eliot is able to invoke the mysticism of the symbolist poets without having to suffer the criticisms of abstraction and vagueness. Eliot's mysticism is the second silencing that occurs because of Pound's Imagism. This mysticism lends a lyrical quality to Eliot's poetry that creates an undercurrent that reveals what the Imagism has been concealing. This undercurrent is expressed best as Henry Adams's discussion of organic and mechanic sources of the sublime. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot tries to dismiss organic sources of the sublime as



manifestations of an overbearing ego, one not properly reined in by the ego-ideal. Eliot's clean metaphors of science and tradition are the ego-ideal at work, but throughout the essay, they metaphors are undercut by organic expressions of gestation and birth.

The equivocation on the source of the sublime also manifests itself as Eliot's precisionism. Eliot's Precisionism is the use of poetic devices to control expressions of desire by limiting them to assonance, consonance, alliteration, and rhyme, among others. Eliot's use of these devices is remarkable. The mechanics of Eliot's poetry silences the emotional extremes beneath the surface. Simultaneously, Eliot's precisionism reveals desire. Disingenuous rhyme, syncopated lines, abrupt shifts of tone, radical juxtapositions of images, and sounds battling for dominance reveal Eliot's desire.

The traces of desire and the silencing of desire found in the four core elements of the High Modernist aesthetic provide the animating tension of the vicissitudes of The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock. The vicissitudes of Prufrock are the mutable, external conditions that he faces

and the emotionally shifting mind that he presents. Prufrock is forced to contend with the ups and downs of his mental state, one drastically affected by desire. With the Modernist aesthetic, Eliot carefully articulates a parody of himself and of the contentions in his own mind. In Prufrock, desire is controlled and controlling. Eliot controls desire with the High Modernist aesthetic; yet the same aesthetic makes the struggle apparent. Prufrock contains seemingly concrete images, which, once their contours are penetrated, reveal images impossible in actuality. In combination with these images is a poet's workshop of poetic devices. The emphasis on precisionism in itself reveals an attempt to conceal desire. A prime example of the method of Prufrock is the mermaids combing the hair of the waves. In one sense, the syntax is straightforward and the image is sharply focused without abstraction or excessive language. But the image is also impossible in actuality. It stands as an isolated fragment of lyricism within which one experiences a serenity at odds with its difficult aural quality.

This image also supports a sub-claim: the text functions as an analyst who in the process of speaking with

the reader/analysand makes the reader/analysand conscious of symptoms previously unknown. The analyst makes his method of analysis apparent to the analysand, who, in turn, will essentially solve his own problems. In this way, readers understand and experience their own desires in ways that would have been impossible before. Though an unmitigated use of Freud is not current, his basic premises remain true and his methods of analyzing the psyche are most similar to the explication of a text, particularly poetry where explicit expressions are always misdirected or covered in some way. The fact that so many critics and practically anyone who reads Eliot cannot avoid rehearsing some of their favorite lines indicates the powerful exchange that occurs between Eliot's texts and their readers.

Eliot continues to be a discreet but powerful poet of desire in The Waste Land. In The Waste Land, Eliot uses the apocalyptic vision of the blasted landscape to express desire as negation in the form of shame, violence, and sadness. The negations are expressed by a variety of voices that wonder through the poem. The most lyrical negation in The Waste Land is the failure with the Hyacinth girl. The

failure is drastic, leaving the speaker "neither / Living nor dead . . . / Looking into the heart of light, the silence." The silence is profound, and it culminates an arduous process of negating desire. This process includes the violent and explicitly desirous poem The Love Song of St. Sebastian, which was never published, and also the cold turning and "troubled midnight" of "La Figlia Che Piange." Eliot has been negating and turning from desire, trying to avoid the silence, the heart of desire. The silences in The Waste Land conceal what the sadness and the violence reveal as negation.

In the midst of an apocalyptic waste land, Eliot found a method of expressing desire that represented a new step in his poetic method. No longer was desire purely a negation; now it becomes a use of language that has meaning only to itself without reference to the world of objects. The new method finds its basis in precisionism and its expression in prayer. Prayer is inherently silent, but also a profound expression of freedom, particularly so for Eliot who believed quite literally in a Hell and that grace (undeserved love) was the only means of avoiding Hell. By

the middle of the twenties, prayer was a daily part of Eliot's life, and, combined with a liturgical church service, it enabled him to discipline Prufrock's narcissistic love of language and to displace that love onto language itself. For example, the "I have seen them riding seaward on the waves" passage of Prufrock hints at the new strategy, but the passage still contains references to the world of objects and lacks the repetition and punning characteristic of the new style of Ash Wednesday. The new style is characterized by the water dripping song of the hermit-thrush and the non-sense of Ash Wednesday. Eliot's style culminates in the moment of "Burnt Norton," when the "lotos rose . . . out of heart of light." In "Burnt Norton," the heart of light, the silence is no longer the failure of the Hyacinth girl, but the satiation of desire, a terrible burden now carried by language itself.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ackroyd, Peter. T. S. Eliot: A Life. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.
- Adams, Henry. The Education of Henry Adams. Rpt. 1918. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1973.
- Adams, Stephen. "T. S. Eliot's Ash Wednesday: A Philosophical Approach to Empowering the Feminine." Thesis. U of North Texas, 1992.
- Alighieri, Dante. The Inferno. Trans. John Ciardi. New York: Mentor, 1954.
- Augustinus, Aurelius. The Confessions of St. Augustine. Trans. Edward B. Pusey. New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1961.
- Austin, Frances O. "ING Forms in Four Quartets." English Studies 63 (1982): 23-31.
- Barton, Ruth. "T. S. Eliot's Secret Garden." Notes and Queries 229 (1984): 512-14.
- Bay-Petersen, Ole. "T. S. Eliot and Einstein: The Fourth Dimension in The Four Quartets." English Studies 66 (1985): 143-55.
- Bedient, Calvin. He Do The Police in Different Voices: The Waste Land and Its Protagonist. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1986.
- Bloom, Harold. The Western Canon: The Books and School of the Ages. New York: Harcourt, 1994.
- Bornstein, George. Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot, and Stevens. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1976.
- Bradbury, Malcolm and James McFarlane, eds. Modernism. New York: Penguin, 1979.

- Brooker, Jewel Spears. Approaches to Teaching Eliot's Poetry and Plays. New York: Modern Language Association of America, 1988.
- Brooker, Jewel Spears and Joseph Bentley. Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990.
- Brooks, Cleanth. Modern Poetry and The Tradition. Rpt. 1939. New York: Oxford UP, 1965.
- Brown, Frank Burch. "'The Progress of the Intellectual Soul': Eliot, Pascal, and Four Quartets." Journal of Modern Literature 10 (1983): 26-39.
- Calinescu, Matei. Five Faces of Modernity: Modernism, Avante-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism. Durham: Duke UP, 1987.
- Childs, Donald J. "T. S. Eliot's Rhapsody of Matter and Memory." American Literature 63 (1991): 474-88.
- Davidson, Harriet. T. S. Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in The Waste Land. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1985.
- Drew, Elizabeth. T. S. Eliot: The Design of His Poetry. New York: Scribner, 1946.
- Eliot, T. S. The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909-1950. San Diego: Harcourt, 1950.
- . Knowledge and Experience in The Philosophy of F. H. Bradley. New York: Columbia UP, 1964.
- . The Letters of T. S. Eliot: Volume I 1898-1922. Ed. Valerie Eliot. San Diego: Harcourt, 1988.
- . Selected Prose of T. S. Eliot. Ed. Frank Kermode. New York: Harcourt, 1975.
- . The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts. Ed. Valerie Eliot. San Diego: Harcourt, 1971.
- Ellman, Richard and Charles Feidelson, eds. The Modern Tradition. New York: Oxford UP, 1965.
- Feder, Lillian. Ancient Myth in Modern Poetry. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1971.

- Ferguson, George. Signs and Symbols in Christian Art. London: Oxford UP, 1961.
- Foucault, Michel. The History of Sexuality. Volume I: An Introduction. Trans. Robert Urley. New York: Pantheon Books, 1978.
- Fowler, Roger. Linguistic Criticism. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986.
- Froula, Christine. "Eliot's Grail Quest, or, the Lover, the Police, and The Waste Land." The Yale Review 78.2 (1988): 235-53.
- Frye, Northrop. T. S. Eliot. New York: Grove P, 1963.
- Fussell, Paul. Poetic Meter and Poetic Form. rev. ed. New York: Random House, 1979.
- Gallup, Donald. T. S. Eliot: A Bibliography Including Contributions to Periodicals and Foreign Translations. New York: Harcourt, 1953.
- Gardner, Helen. The Art of T. S. Eliot. London: Cresset P, 1950.
- Gish, Nancy K. The Waste Land: A Poem of Memory and Desire. Boston: Twayne, 1988.
- Glaysner, Frederick. "T. S. Eliot and 'The Horror! The Horror!'" Modern Age 28 (1984): 339-48.
- Goodrich, Norma Lorre. The Holy Grail. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.
- Gordon, Lyndall. Eliot's Early Years. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.
- . Eliot's New Life. New York: Farrar, 1988.
- Gouge, T. A. "Henri Bergson." Dictionary of Philosophy. Gen. ed. A. R. Lacey. London: Routledge and K. Paul, 1976.
- Hargrove, Nancy. Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1978.
- Haskins, Susan. Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor. New York: Harcourt, 1993.



- Hay, Eloise Knapp. T. S. Eliot's Negative Way. Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982.
- Houghton, R. L. "Eliot's First Quartet." Cambridge Quarterly 18 (1989): 239-70.
- Howarth, Hobert. Notes on Some Figures Behind T. S. Eliot. Boston: Houghton, 1964.
- Howe, Irving. The Idea of the Modern in Literature and The Arts. New York: Horizon P, 1967.
- Jackaman, Rob. "Patterned to Perfection: The Conclusion of Four Quartets." Southern Humanities Review 16 (1982): 201-09.
- Kenner, Hugh. T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays. Englewood Cliffs: Printice-Hall, 1965.
- Kermode, Frank. The Romantic Image. Rpt. 1957. New York: Random House, 1964.
- Krutch, Joseph Wood. The Modern Temper: A Study and A Confession. New York: Harcourt, 1929.
- Loucks, James F. "Eliot's Four Quartets: Dry Salvages, second movement." Explicator 50 (1992): 100-03.
- McArthur, Murray. "Deciphering Eliot: 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' and the Dialectic of the Cipher." American Literature 66 (1994): 509-24.
- Margolis, John D. T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development, 1922-1939. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1972.
- Martin, Graham, ed. Eliot in Perspective. New York: Humanities P, 1970.
- Matthiessen, F. O. The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry. Boston: Houghton, 1935.
- Meisel, Perry, ed. Freud: A Collection of Critical Essays. Twentieth Century Views. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1981.
- Muske, Carol. "'Something Upon Which to Rejoice': The First Section of Ash Wednesday." Southern Review 21 (1985): 1152-55.
- Rimmon-Kenan, Shlomith, ed. Discourse in Psychoanalysis and

- Literature. New York: Methuen, 1987.
- Riquelme, J. P. "The Transformation of Romantic Tropes in T. S. Eliot's 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night.'" Style 23.1 (1989): 1-15.
- Rotsaert, Frank. "The Force of An Influence: Augustine and Eliot." University of Dayton Review 21 (1991): 145-59.
- Rougemont, Denis de. Love in the Western World. Rpt. Trans. Montgomery Belgion. New York: Harper, 1974.
- Schwartz, Robert L. Broken Images: A Study of The Waste Land. London: Bucknell UP, 1988.
- Schwartz, Sanford. The Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot, and Early Twentieth Century Thought. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1970.
- Schweik, Robert C. "T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets and the uses of 'Referred Forms.'" Cithara 28 (1989): 43-64.
- Sewell, Elizabeth. "Lewis Carroll and T. S. Eliot as Nonsense Poets." T. S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays. Ed. Hugh Kenner. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965. 65-72.
- Sharp, Corona. "'The Unheard Music': T. S. Eliot's Four Quartets and John of the Cross." University of Toronto Quarterly 51 (1982): 264-78.
- Sigg, Eric. The American T. S. Eliot: A Study of the Early Writings. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Sigmund, Freud. The Basic Writings of Sigmund Freud. Trans. and ed. A. A. Brill. New York: The Modern Library: 1938.
- . The Complete Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Trans. and ed. James Strachey. New York: Norton, 1966.
- Smith, Grover. T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning. Chicago: Chicago UP, 1950.
- . The Waste Land. Boston: Geore Allen and Unwin, 1983.
- Stead, Christian Karlson. Pound, Yeats, Eliot And the Modernist Movement. New Brunswick: Rutgers UP, 1986.
- Tompkins, Jane P., ed. Reader Response Criticism: From

- Formalism to to Post-Structuralism. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1980. Contains essays by the major Reader Response critics: Walter Gibson, Gerald Prince, Michael Riffaterre, Georges Poulet, Wolfgang Iser, Stanley Fish, Jonathan Culler, Norman Holland, David Bleich, and Walter Benn Michaels. Includes extensive bibliography.
- Traugott, Elizabeth Closs and Mary Louise Pratt. Linguistics for Students of Literature. San Diego: Harcourt, 1980.
- Warner, Martin. "Philosophical Poetry: The Case of Four Quartets." Philosophy and Literature 10 (1986): 222-45.
- Weston, Jessie. From Ritual to Romance. Rpt. Gloucester, Mass: Peter-Smith, 1983.
- . Quest for the Holy Grail. Rpt. New York: Haskell House, 1965.
- Wight, Doris T. "Metaphysics through Paradox in Eliot's Four Quartets." Philosophy and Rhetoric 23 (1990): 63-69.
- Williamson, George. A Reader's Guide to T. S. Eliot: A Poem by Poem Analysis. New York: Noonday P, 1953.
- Wilson, Rob. American Sublime: The Genealogy of a Poetic Genre. Madison, Wis: U of Wisconsin P, 1991.
- Wooton, Carl. "The Mass: Ash Wednesday's Objective Correlative." Arizona Quarterly 17 (1961): 31-42.
- Wright, Elizabeth. Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice. London: Methuen, 1984. Includes extensive bibliography.