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The Problem of Time in *The Waste Land* of T.S. Eliot

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magister degree in civilization and literature**

Option: Literature

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Et si ce n'est pas sûr, c'est quand même peut-être!

J.Brel

Abstract

The aim of this work is to see the universality of the themes of the poetry of T.S.Eliot: we have been particularly attracted by Eliot's vision of time in *The Waste Land*.

In the first chapter, we have met the poets (like C.Baudelaire, Dante and P.Verlaine), the philosophers (H. Bergson and F.H.Bradley) and the writers (J.Weston and J.Frazer) who influenced T.S.Eliot and made him approach that specific idea of time, especially in *The Waste Land*.

In the second chapter, we have had a look at the main critics from the twenties till nowadays who appreciated or neglected the problem of time as presented in *The Waste Land*.

In the third chapter, we have journeyed with the poet in a complex world where desolated landscapes (represented mainly by cities) made us descent to *The Inferno* where the clock of time constantly reminds us of death, where women "personify" that dull present which is opposed to the past that we have visited through literary texts and historical facts of all times and all places.

Finally, we have discovered that *The Waste Land*, through fragmentation, repetition and music, is a collection of human voices and mythic fragments such as that found in any modern metropolis.

We have realized that, as with the Grail (in The Grail Legends) if we know what questions to ask, a flood of contemporary reference can be struck by the magician's rod from the rock of *The Waste Land*.

Key words: Time, Past, Present, Memory, Myth, Modern cities, *The Waste Land*, Fragmentation.

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I am obliged to the immense support of my family: my husband Châabane, my sons Chakib and Hakim, who have witnessed me being a second "Penelop" whose work could have never been achieved...

To the sublime memory of my father " Si Mostefa" who continues to be the present which animates us...

*Un petit peu de mémoire hante fatalement le présent.
Dans la mémoire, le temps habite en moi.*

Edmund Husserl

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Introduction

Is it possible to present T.S.Eliot without repeating what many others have said? Is it possible to enter the very thick and at the same time desolated world of *The Waste Land* without missing some leading ideas?

T.S.Eliot is an American who made his home in Europe but his interests and questions originated in American life. Everything he wrote has a root in his personal past.(During his Harvard years, Conrad Aiken, a great critic, was his best friend). Immensely learned, he had in mind both the European and the American literary and philosophical traditions. In his perception of the world, his vision of 'time' -the topic we are going to discuss- he borrowed ideas from different writers and schools of thoughts. But he was mainly influenced by Henri Bergson and Francis Herbert Bradley.

For example, Eliot's idea of speech corresponds to Bergson's view of time .On the other side, in *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919), Eliot argues that the voices of the past re-echo even in the writer's destructive idiom.

Bradley's doctrine also influenced him. Bradley typically focuses on opposites, deconstructs them and then reclaims them in a new and unified form. *

In his poetry Eliot "forces the reader to see that everything is systematically connected, that all relations are internal, fragment to fragment, both within history and within the poem; and he compels the reader to connect

these whirling fragments into a unity” (1) .

The spatial structure of *The Waste Land* in which readers are expected to see the entire poem in a moment, simultaneously means that an awareness of Bradley must be in the mind of the reader.

So, in an apparent paradox, the poet receives the past in fragments, often quotations, which come together in a unity. This particular perception of time has attracted us and we have realized that time presses hard in *The Waste Land* as Maud Ellman indicates :“in *The Waste Land*, the writings of the past deracinate themselves and drift among the withered stumps of time” (2).

Also, Eliot’s meeting with different works of poetry, like *The Grail Legends* and *The Divine Comedy*, gave substance to his vision of time. Finally, Sir John Frazer and Jessie Weston helped Eliot in his experiments with time. In fact, Eliot has “deracinated” the writings of the past in meeting Dante’s *Inferno* on London bridge, in juxtaposing the present deeds of the human beings with the myths of Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*, and in sharing the task of the hero of *The Grail Legends* in trying to save the world by asking the right questions. So, we will see how Dante’s *Inferno*, Frazer’s *The Golden Bough* and J.Weston’s *From Ritual to Romance* have helped Eliot in his experiments with time .

The Waste Land is divided into five parts: “*The Burial of the Dead*”, “*A Game of Chess*”, “*The Fire Sermon*”, “*Death by Water*”, and “*What the Thunder Said*”.

In *The Waste Land*, we will be confronted to the sense of time perceived by the individual, the modern inhabitant of Europe in crisis after the First World War; we will be confronted too to the past that must be recaptured through History, but we will experience also the "timelessness" through myth returning to Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Weston's *The Grail Legends*.

Indeed, time is central to the text:

- in questioning of the obligations of the present to the texts of the past: the use of quotations and allusions to define the modern world places it in the context of past traditions.

- in being interested in what stands outside or arrests the process of time: the continuity of the experience of *The Waste Land* across History is at one with the landscape of the vegetation myth (where linear time conditions the process of life) and with the devastated realm of the Fisher King of *The Grail Legend* (where time seems to stop).

- in the yearning of the texts for time to stand still, and meaning to be self-present: the Thames -daughters and *To His Coy Mistress*, for example.

To put forward this complexity and this variety of "times", T.S.Eliot has used poetical figures who will raise also other questions. Tiresias for example, who represents characters of both genders of all ages, is the medium between the past and the present and the future. The Sybil will also, in living within and outside time simultaneously, represent that eternal present which imprisons the

modern human being. Consequently, *The Waste Land* is haunted by the past, ravaged by the present and tormented by the possibility of change.

Through the influences of many poets and philosophers first, then through a return to History revisiting ancient texts, T.S.Eliot has reached a unique perception of time : first a theme, (time is seen as preserver and destroyer), it then becomes a circle where the beginning is the end. In our study, we will examine that circular form which is but the eternal now which is at the centre of time and supersedes it.

The first part of our work then, will present *The Waste Land* in the making, the influences and the thinkers who led Eliot to have that particular vision of time.

In the second part, we will see how the critical views about the problem of time in *The Waste Land* have changed from the twenties to the present day. For most of the critics, especially the classical ones, Eliot's experiment with time is mythical; but after a close study of the modernity of the poem, many others see that Eliot's experiment is more complex.

Finally, we will observe the different natures of time and how they are presented in *The Waste Land*.

Chapter 1 : *The Waste Land* in the making

1.1 Intellectual influences

1.1.1 The way to *The Waste Land*

The reading of poetry is naturally enough what influenced Eliot most. It is the discovery of Jules Laforgue which helped Eliot in his early poetry, to revolt against the conventional lyricism and to write a poetry in which the syntax and the sequence of ideas show a dislocation which he used fittingly to present the desperate situation of Europe after the First World War. At the same time, Eliot turned to tradition to find the way to restoration; because in his idea, a new poetry necessitates a return to the past. So, in his poems we see him establishing a relationship between past and present, in terms of form and content, in order to present a new voice .

From *J.A.Prufröck* to *The Waste Land*, the numerous quotations, references and allusions, reflect the questioning of the obligations of the present through the texts or references of the past. We realize that the problem of time is central to the poetry of T.S.Eliot and crucial to *The Waste Land* which is

“a high enriched time mixture, made of interpenetrating layers of diverse cultural ages represented in a music of allusions, that shows how the intensification of theory and technique together invents a kind of total myth” (1).

In *The Love Song of J. A. Prufrock*, in *Gerontion*, in *The Hollow Men*, in *Journey of the Magi*, the personages of Eliot's poems, all proclaim: "after such knowledge, what forgiveness?", knowledge being the past and forgiveness the present. Action is missing in our modern times. In hesitating and waiting, the human being has lost his heroism and the world of the senses. Human beings nowadays seem "frozen" in a sort of purgatory .

Like Yeats, Eliot expects a change, a spiritual awakening through the inheritance of the past. We remember the thrilling image of "*The Second Coming*":

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert
A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,

And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,

Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born ?

The Second Coming lines 9-22

For both Yeats and Eliot, Western civilization in the Twentieth century has become sterile and hostile to health and flourishing. For them, the basis of cultural unity had disappeared, and the glue that held Western civilization had melted. "The centre cannot hold", and what remains in *The Waste Land* consists of hundred of fragments of the present and of the past but unified by a poetic vision.

All Eliot's writings from 1917 onwards present this theme and are an attempt at providing a sort of salvation through poetry. His verse and his essays all say the same thing .He himself has recognized the relation between his verse and his criticism and he insists on their coherence:

"The best of my literary criticism apart from a few notorious phrases which have had a truly embarrassing success in the world- consists of essays on poets and poetic dramatists who had influenced me. It is a by-product of my private poetry workshop; or the prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse"(2)

Eliot's criticism provides extremely valuable clues about the nature of his poetry and about the specific influences that formed and moulded his style. He stated the starting point from which he set out: "The form in which I began to write in 1908 or 1909, was directly drawn from the study of Laforgue together with the late Elizabethan drama"(3)

The Love Song of J.A. Prufrock (1917), is the most representative of the earliest section of Eliot's poetry, an important event in the history of English poetry; and Eliot's first expression of his fin de siècle anguish; and thus, it is both innovative in terms of versification and technique.

The poem is not a dialogue between two persons but an internal debate between the two sides of the speaker's own mind. Prufrock, the persona of the poem, has been "too much conscious and conscious of too much"; in his greatness he has seen "the eternal footman hold his coat and snicker", and he is afraid. The moment has come to act and to do something! With his basic fear, tragedy begins.

The Love Song can be the preface to Eliot's work; because what Tiresias foreshadows in *The Waste Land* is the final term which actually begins with Prufrock.

Gerontion also (written in 1920 before *The Waste Land*) a poem about "an old man in a dry month", who suffers and is "waiting for rain", was originally intended as a prologue to *The Waste Land*.

Like *The Love Song of J.A. Prufrock*, *The Waste Land* presents contemporary life, but linking it more profoundly with myth. It departs from the reality of the modern world inhabited by “un supplément d’âme” as Bergson said, that Prufrock already perceived in his *Love Song*, to reach a point of view on the human experience which is very large, in which all the ancient and deepest myths of humanity appear. In the poem, particularly in “*The Fire Sermon*” and in “*What the Thunder Said*”, sections three and five of *The Waste Land*, the human experience is presented through different pictures, conversations and personal thoughts, unified by the experience of a protagonist who is commentator, judge and prophet: Eliot himself, or Tiresias. The poet who witnesses and refuses the reality of modern times becomes the judge of the hollowness of human beings.

As in *The Love Song*, *The Waste Land* will transform the commentator in mythical figures, but more deeply than in “*Prufrock*”: when Eliot identifies himself with Tiresias the mythical figure of *The Waste Land*, he becomes one with Phlebas or the shipwrecked prince of *The Tempest*. The result is a complex poem where everything is mingled and opposed and contrasted: men and women, fire and water, beginning and end, life and death.

The tension between life and death appears at the beginning of the poem when, as Nancy Gish affirms, the poet brings “fragments of the past in the heart of our time”(4).

The first lines ask already the questions about life and death, but also about memory and desire, past and future. We realize that *The Waste Land* is a poem about memory and desire, and thus, we realize also that Eliot has brought a new way of thinking about the function of time in poetry. In that poem, Eliot makes a particular use of space and time: as Prufrock, the protagonist goes everywhere and paces about History.

The role of space and time is seen through the numerous repetitions and shows the Bergsonian influence on Eliot whose poem is the result of an immediate experience, which is at the core of the philosophy of Bradley.

It is very clear that Bergson and Bradley influenced Eliot and helped him construct his idea of time which is central to the poem. Because the Bergsonian thought protests against the world of the clocks that punctuate the passing of time and imprison the human beings in an eternal present, it has attracted Eliot who accedes to the sense of time through the complexity made by the mingling of past, present and future. As a philosopher, as a poet, as a creator, Bergson has illuminated Eliot's view on time. (*My thought is that...*)

The contrasting representations of space and time in *The Waste Land* are made through past and present, illustrating thus the use of myth, which has the power of renewing, of reactualizing the past with the aid of Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Weston's *Grail Legends*. It is in examining these intellectual influences and the books that Eliot used that we penetrate the climactic power of *The Waste Land* to "mix memory and desire".

1.1.2 Henri Bergson

For Bergson, the present is in the past, the present can create nothing and the soul cannot detach itself from time. He declares that time is better perceived by poets than by philosophers. As Orpheus the mythical poet has tried to reach Eurydice, the poet (here Eliot) is going to make us experience time through his melody. Music is never far from time: because it communicates a harmonious rhythm, it creates a definite mode of the infinite; the last musical note exists because it contains all that precedes, without being previous; and repeating and repeating, the notes resuscitate something. It is thus, that we are revealed that human essence is to be memory.

To recapture lost time is Bergson's philosophy in *Matiere et Memoire* (1896). To liberate oneself from the oppressive presence of the past and the future, Bergson advises the individual to "abstract himself" from the present moment through the use of what he calls "the imaginative memory".

In *The Waste Land*, the conservation of the past implies the unconscious related to the presence of memory. It is our memory that resuscitates the glory and the decadence of the past through the numerous allusions to particular events, particular individuals or particular texts. The ship of *The Tempest* for example, suggests an object of the past and represents a remembrance discharged on the shores of our memory.

Bachelard, analyzing Bergson's ideas, says :

« on ne peut faire revivre le passé qu'en l'enchaînant à un thème affectif nécessairement présent.(Pas de souvenirs sans ce frémissement affectif, sans ce tremblement du temps) » (5)

Jean Follain in *Le Temps du Poète*, an article published in 1967, reveals to us that “ nous subissons à la fois l'angoisse de savoir perdus ces moments de l'enfance, mais aussi un réconfort du fait que la mémoire nous en restitue l'image”(6). The Memory is present as memory, but it indicates the past. For Bergson, the past is “ no more and always here.” It is present as remembrance and indicates the past. The remembrance is that sort of bridge between past and present.

Between the vivid past and the future, lies a dead zone in which the remorse and the feeling of loss are very strong. It is thus that time is revealed to us, through the anguish and the idea of death. Because there is continuity, the present has the power to evoke the past.

Realizing then that time is perceptible in its complexity, we have in mind *The Waste Land* in which time and existence are strangely mingled, expressing that bergsonian continuity.

The Waste Land is, thanks to memory, the experience of a mingling of times: it is a poem where the present seems to have no link with the future, but

it remains deeply rooted in the past. It is the human experience that will suggest that continuity, evoking a situation in which Cleopatra and the modern woman in part two of the poem: "*A Game of Chess*" are at the same time different and alike. The splendour of the past has nothing to do with the sordidness of the present, but the two women represent that continuity where the present has strongly evoked the past.

But instead of exploring the past by means of involuntary associative memory, Eliot refers to the view of George Poulet expressed in *Etudes sur le Temps Humain* where he focuses "on a voluntary memory, on a continuous abnegation, on a patient effort to recover, to reassemble, to readapt under new conditions what was lost" (7).

On focussing on opposites, the present and the past, Eliot betrays the influence of Bradley on his perception of time. This is what we are going to examine now.

1.1.3 Francis Herbert Bradley

The study of the isolation of the self is at the center of Eliot's Ph.D. dissertation entitled: *Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, written in 1915 (completed in 1916 and published in 1964 as *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*). In his dissertation, Eliot wonders on whether it is possible for the self to know

anything outside itself.

Francis Herbert Bradley (1846-1924), who lived in seclusion in Oxford, was considered as the greatest living philosopher at that time. He claimed that "everything is experience, and experience is one", and that there is but one reality:

"Everything is experience, and also experience is one. Experience is the same as reality. The fact that falls elsewhere seems, in my mind, to be a mere word and a failure, or else an attempt at self-contradiction. It is a vicious abstraction whose existence is meaningless nonsense, and is therefore not possible".(8).

For Bradley, experience is the name given to the absolute. For Eliot, the experience mentioned in *The Waste Land* is "immediate experience", a special category within absolute experience. Bradley divides experience into three categories: immediate experience, relational experience, and transcendent experience. Immediate experience is a direct experience of knowing and feeling, and it is very important in Bradley's thought. It is by definition transitory. As one becomes conscious of the self, of the world in itself, for surrounding people, immediate experience breaks up because the intellect suddenly assumes dominance, and experience becomes relational for the structures of the intellect and organizes the elements that had been

undiscriminated in immediate experience.

To Eliot as to Bradley, immediate experience at the beginning and transcendent experience at the end, constitute the reality that makes possible the construction of the relational world, the everyday world of appearances. The movement towards truth involves not only development of one point of view, but also migration from one interpretation to another. In *The Waste Land* for example, Eliot attempts to speak through many voices, from many points of view, from many times and places, all at once.

Immediate experience takes place within what Bradley calls "finite centres"; and only a transcendent experience permits a return to the wholeness and unity of that immediate experience. Since immediate experience can be known only through reflection after it has dissolved, time then, does not exist in it; but immediate experience does exist in time for it does not last. So, only in time can we remember immediate experience, and thereby in a sense, begin to conquer time, as these lines from "Burnt Norton" echo:

Time past and time future

Allows but a little consciousness.

To be conscious is not to be in time

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,

The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,

The moment in the draughty church at smokefall

Be remembered; involved with past and future .

Only through time time is conquered (Burnt Norton II).

Bradley then, profoundly influenced the shape and the content of Eliot's work..Several recent critics have focussed on the relevance of Eliot's early work to Bradley. For example, Sanford Schwartz demonstrates in *The Matrix of Modernism* (1985) that an awareness of Eliot's philosophical studies and his work on Bradley is helpful in understanding T.S.Eliot's position in the modernist revolution. Northrop Frye also declared in his *Introduction to T.S.Eliot* that:

“Eliot's first philosophical interest was in F.H.Bradley. In Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*, appearance is a mass of logically impossible and self-contradictory impressions of time, space, change, causation and the like, where there is a huge fusion between subject and object, mine and this. We have to go on to a reality which is an Absolute, where all the contradictions of appearance are reconciled. The Absolute can only be reached by an immediate experience in which reason, will and feeling all fulfill themselves.Thus , what started as a nineteenth-century idealist's problem about how far we can 'know reality' ends as a kind of mystical primer”(9).

In that way, he opposes H.Kenner who believed that Bradley was important only for flavor: "Bradley has an attractive mind, though he has perhaps nothing to tell us. He is an experience, like the taste of nectarines or the style of Henry James" (10).

Our study of *The Waste Land* will show us that Eliot's use of allusions and juxtapositions, his collapse of time and space, his complexity, are all inseparable from Bradley's ideas. We will see that allusions are self-transcendent fragments, and that recollecting these fragments and reconstructing wholes is the task of the reader.

In *The Waste Land* notes, Eliot tells us that the lines on isolation are associated with a quotation from Bradley's *Appearance and Reality*:

"My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my own feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and , with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it...In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul"(11).

For Bradley, immediate experience is the viewing of a painting in which the viewer is so absorbed that he has no consciousness of self or subject on the

one side, and painting or object, on the other. And this immediate experience takes place within finite centres.

This idea of immediate experience existing in opaque, impenetrable finite centres is of the essence in the passage from Bradley quoted above that appears in *The Waste Land*. Impregnated by that philosophy, Eliot sees a finite centre as rather the whole complex unity uniting the viewer, the painting and all other elements of that situation. The painting we have before us at the beginning of *The Waste Land* is April evoking the passing of the seasons.

The Bradleyan quotation we have referred to above, is closely related to the lines from "*What The Thunder Said*":

We think of the key, each in his prison

Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison (413-14)

"Thinking of the key" is the essence of intellectual consciousness and confirms the prison of the self. One key will unlock the prison: immediate experience. Immediate experience, like April, is cruel, promising probably what it cannot deliver.

1.2. Time and myth : the main sources

John Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance* are the materials of the framework of the poem. In J. Weston's book,

the central theme is taken from the Grail legends: a land became sterile by a curse that maimed the Fisher King. Only a knight could, after the ritual, give fertility back to the country and see the disappearance of the "waste land". In using myth, T.S.Eliot transforms the myth of fertility into intellectual sterility. As Northrop Frye specifies in *Anatomy of Criticism*,

"The vegetable world supplies us of course with the annual cycle of seasons, often identified with or represented by a divine figure which dies in the autumn or is killed with the gathering of the harvest and the vintage, disappears in winter, and revives in spring. The divine figure may be male (Adonis) or female (Proserpine), but the symbolic structures resulting differ somewhat....

Water-symbolism has also its own cycle, from rains to springs, from springs and fountains to brooks and rivers, from rivers to the sea or the winter snow, and back again" (12).

The modern human being has lost essential values and he can "regenerate" only in facing suffering and in experiencing time through the return to History, to his own past.

Tiresias, the mythical figure of *The Waste Land* is going to make of that part of the poem the kernel's of man's "infinite". To have a better idea about Tiresias and myth, we may refer to Mircea Eliade whose works on myth are quite

enlightening.

In *Aspects du Mythe* (1963), Eliade gives a definition of myth: the myth tells us a sacred story, an important event that occurred in the “fabulous time of the beginnings”(13). In other words, the myth tells us that through exploits of supernatural beings, a reality has come into existence. Then, being real and sacred, the myth becomes exemplary, and so, “repeatable” because it has become a model, a justification for all the behaviour of human beings.

In another book, *Mythes, Rêves et Mystères* (1958), Eliade presents the supreme beings as being male and female at the same time; and for him, in primitive religions, to be man and woman expresses the totality, the meeting of contrasts; Tiresias, being supreme, is thus, going to represent totality, strength,

and even autonomy as he proclaims in *The Waste Land*:

And I Tiresias have foresuffered all

Enacted on this same divan or bed;

I who have sat by Thebes below the wall

And walked among the lowest of the dead (243 -46).

H. Kenner in his turn, tells us that the reading of *The Waste Land* emphasizes the sense of the multiplicity of modern consciousness by focussing on the three mythical roles of Tiresias (which derive from Oedipus Rex, the *Odyssey* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*). In fact, “ this brings about an important change in ways of looking at the poem: it draws a new critical attention to the

passage in which Tiresias appears, that which tells us of the seduction of the typist by the young man”(14) This passage becomes absolutely central to readings of the poem, referring to Eliot’s own note:

“Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a character, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees in fact, is the substance of the poem” (15).

The puzzle of *The Waste Land* resides in the opposites that meet and mingle: not only Tiresias but elements of nature too; water, symbolizing usually the flow of time, is also the course of the poem. Changing, time unwinds a permanent diversity. In *The Waste Land*, time flows and unwinds a permanent diversity: from one section to the other, we cross ages and we experience specific “times”. All the cities we visit have their rivers or their seas (London, Alexandria, Carthage, to cite some). The symbol of water is permanent. We have in mind the landscape of water, of boats and reeds that appear at the beginning of Dante’s journey up the mount of Purgatory. And when we reach the section “*Death by water*” we understand the complexity that characterizes

the poem. After the fire of the desert of the first part, there will be water; after anxiety, there will be fear. But for Eliot, water is also salvation. Salvation then, will close *The Waste Land* with the hope brought by "What the Thunder Said", the final section of the poem.

So, after having experienced the anguish of the human being in part one and two through the different techniques used by Eliot as the juxtaposition of contrasts, the use of repetitive processes and specific "sounds" and "words", we will observe in parts three and four the human destiny that the literary and cultural references which measure the present against the past (as Frazer's *The Golden Bough* and Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*) will make universal. Finally, we are going to find hope in part five: the living waters we have been looking for will suggest that redemption will lie beyond time. We realize then, that the imagery used by the poet in his different modes of writing is complex and varied.

Eliot himself helps the reader decline the main sources which are the guiding lights: *The Golden Bough*, *From Ritual to Romance* and *The Divine Comedy*. The obsessive theme of *The Waste Land* appears to be the persistence of the past: Tiresias, the teller, isn't he the knight dead long, long ago?. In *Tradition and the Individual Talent* Eliot declares: "What is to be insisted upon is that the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past and that he should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career"(16).

Eliot defines each one of the ideas of tradition (the past) and the Individual (the present) in relation with the other. Tradition only lives in the “individual” mind that makes a particular use of it; and the individual will fail to develop his own powers unless he is open to “tradition”; so, the past matters in so far as it continues to bear upon the present. For the poet, then, the historical sense commits the poet to a remarkably active relationship with the past: “the poet must be very conscious of the main current”(17); he is not asked to be aware of the totality of the past.

Thus, *Tradition and the Individual Talent* already shows the importance of the problem of time for Eliot. Since what Tiresias foresees in *The Waste Land* is the final term in a series which actually begins with “Prufrock”, we are aware of the “consciousness of the past” which has its roots in myth and in the poet’s personal life. When *The Hollow Men* claim: “after such knowledge, what forgiveness?”, we understand that past, present and future are fused, knowledge being the past and forgiveness being the present is pregnant with the future! So, the limited and fragmentary sense of time experienced by people, men and women who inhabit *The Waste Land*, translate Eliot’s vision of a disintegrating modern world. Eliot’s interest in the wasteland myth lies in the myth’s power to suggest truths about contemporary life and in its claim to support an underlying unity of modern society. World War I London, where Eliot was living when he

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wrote the poem, contains all sorts of people, all sorts of beliefs. As kinds of prisoners or caged city inhabitants, people of *The Waste Land* live out of harmony with the seasons; as inheritors of a Europe devastated by war, they live in the present, aware of their cultural heritage and indifferent to the future; as heirs of the scientific revolution of the Nineteenth Century, they are ignorant of time which transcends human dimensions.

The world of *The Waste Land* is physically above the ground, but it is spiritually subterranean, a world full of shadows, corpses, and lost dead souls. Indeed, the poem suggests, though there is no neat division in it, three different "times": transcendental time, seasonal time, and linear time referring to past, present and future. Each time finds its sources in the universal experience of Dante, of Tiresias, and of the Grail knight.

1.2.1 The Divine Comedy

The Waste Land appeared in 1922, just before Eliot had reached 35, the age of Dante when he began "*The Inferno*". *The Divine Comedy* begins with "*The Inferno*", and ends with "*The Paradiso*", and between the two, there are two intermediate worlds on the surface of this earth: one is the world of experience (for the poet it is Europe in 1300), the other is "*The Purgatorio*". Dante was welcomed in "*The Inferno*" by Virgil, one of the five wise men and philosophers who were waiting for salvation: Homer, Horace, Ovid, and Lucan:

They took me as a member of their company

So that I was a sixth among those great intellect (101-102).

"*The Purgatorio*" describes the ascent of the poet up the mountain of purgatory where the sins are purged, to the garden of Eden at the top. It is here, that we wait for salvation once we have experienced suffering. Translated into human experience, it is, in *The Waste Land*, the moment we wait for rain to fertilize the land. To reach the garden of Eden, then, is to regain the innocence mankind has lost at the fall. The image of Dante entering the garden illustrates the regain of Paradise by a human being. Thus, purgation and innocence are possible for any Christian soul. It is this idea of redemption that attracted Eliot and influenced him. Eliot has turned to Dante to try to find the solution of human loss.

In *The Divine Comedy*, the uncreated Light is perfect simplicity containing and unifying all created things: past, present and future. So, Dante's quest, like that of Eliot, relates the self to both time and eternity.

To render Gerontion's experience, Eliot uses Dante's visionary technique, in which truths arise out of the world of chaos. We see then the universality of such a journey in which man has experienced the transcendental time that will ultimately lead to his spiritual, intellectual and moral conversion.

Dante's journey through Hell begins on Good Friday Evening and emerges on the other side of the Earth on Easter Sunday morning. Christ is buried on Friday

why deal with Gerontion when the subject of the
suffering is the self. 25 W.L. isn't short of
symbols of "time" and "space", spiritual state

evening, descends to Hell on Saturday and rises on Sunday morning say three following days. Similarly, in *The Waste Land*, people who assist *The Burial of the Dead* sink into the lower world of the “unreal city”, and remain in it in the two following sections. In *The Waste Land*, the life of London commuters is a living death; and forcing this, Eliot feels an immediate contact with Dante’s *Inferno*.

Like Dante before him, Eliot wants to be the hero-saviour of his society. J.B. Vickery in *The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough* stresses the task of this hero-saviour who is, in his eyes, “more than an individual; he is the spirit of a community of even of mankind” (18) . As a result, the protagonist of *The Waste Land* is going to be the companion of Dante: the young girl Mathilda Dante meets in Eden is associated to Beatrice who represents “the high dream”, and who can be compared to the hyacinth girl or to Marie of *The Waste Land* who knows a moment of ecstasy:

They called me the hyacinth girl (36).

The girl who now appears before us recalls a luminous moment when Love renamed her and made her a part of the spring. That moment of ecstasy is to be likened to the spiritual light Dante describes. This spiritual light is going then, to awaken the religious consciousness of the protagonist of *The Waste Land*.

C. Brooks tells us that:

"Eliot proceeds to complicate his symbols for the sterility and reality of the modern waste land by associating it with

Baudelaire's 'fourmillante cité' and with Dante's limbo. The references to Dante are most important. The line 'I had not thought death had undone so many' is taken from the Third Canto of the Inferno; the line 'sighs short and infrequent were exhaled', from the Fourth Canto... The people described in the fourth Canto are those who lived virtuously, but who died before the proclamation of the Gospel- they are the unbaptized. They form the second of the two classes of people who inhabit the modern waste land; those who are secularized and those who have no knowledge of the faith. Without a faith, their life is in reality death..." (19).

This quote refers to the waste land

Eliot was overwhelmingly concerned with the pattern of death and resurrection; a concern that Frazer's *The Golden Bough* was going to accentuate through the image of the dying and reviving god. Implicitly, then, Eliot admits the great impact of *The Golden Bough* on his work.

The Golden Bough

1.2.2 The Golden Bough

The Golden Bough is a romance that deals with a quest: the quest of the human being for his identity through his past. The aim of Frazer has been to show us that ^{to be} Nature myth, fertility rituals, mystery cults, and the Grail legends are progressive stages in the gradual evolution of men's religious consciousness.

Frazer made Eliot see the universality and the unification of human experience through the "timeless": the juxtaposition of fragments; in *The Waste Land* there are fragments of contemporary life, of Europe in crisis in 1922, fragments of past life - *Hamlet*, fragments of myth - Tiresias.

In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer uses a scientific method and the material of his work is myth. He generates abstraction through the comparative study of fragments. Frazer merely collects and preserves fragments as he finds them in the present: broken and changed by History and evolution. In the Bradleyan doctrine, no fragment has its meaning alone and exists as part of a unitary and timeless system. As a Bradleyan, Eliot, through *The Golden Bough*, discovers that the past and future are part of our always present pattern.

All myths, in *The Golden Bough*, derive from a single myth, a monomyth. In the parent myth, the vitality of the land and of the people is intertwined with that of the king. When the king is healthy, the land is

prosperous; when he is sick, the land is blighted, becoming a waste land. In using the mythical method, Eliot invites the readers to begin with fragments and generate compressive abstractions, to begin in isolation and end in community. Frazer taught him how to take "a heap of broken images", ruins on the horizon of history, and erect structures perfectly unified; he took fragments and gave back unified ideal edifices; he took chaos and gave back order; he took nonsense and gave back meaning. As a result, for Eliot, the mythical method solves the chaos-unity dilemma by the co-existence of surface-chaos and sub-surface unity. In *The Waste Land*, the myth is already suggested by the title and the notes, and is reinforced by fragments of the myth within the poem. So each reader of *The Waste Land* will construct a variant of Frazer's monomyth.

Through the appearance of the most ancient myths of humanity, Eliot then, pictures a vision of the contemporary world that would embrace the whole history of mankind. As an illustration, Tiresias, man and woman, expresses the major contrasts and the complexity of the human being and of the whole of humanity, and becomes the central figure of *The Waste Land*. At the same time blind and ubiquitous, Tiresias is the perfect image of the contradictions of the world, past and present. The modern protagonist of *The Waste Land* is searching, through Tiresias, the past of his race for a knowledge relevant to his own behaviour and attitude.

Thus, time as a linear process does not really exist, but is a cyclic starting

over again To live the present, we need to return to myth. Eliot has found in Frazer the same point of view, the same vision which brought past and present into juxtaposition through myth and ritual.

Mircea Eliade again tells us that " tout mythe se rapporterait aux origines, nous donnerait aussi la certitude d'un nouveau commencement... Tout recours au mythe ou tout comportement mythique reviendrait à chercher à se guérir de l'œuvre du temps" (20). He joins Jean Burgos, a philosopher who studied also the problem of time and who declares in *Pour une Poétique de l'Imaginaire* :

" L'infinitude est cherchée non plus dans un temps figé en éternel présent, ni dans un refuge hors du temps, mais dans l'œuvre même du temps dont la circularité est délibérément perçue comme créatrice " (21).

Eliot then, uses myth to try to find the way to redemption. At the same time, he will go for the conquest of the Divine and the safeguard of the individual being:

Why the future is so

"The mystery in *The Waste Land* is that of Time; the poet is the protagonist, the diseased, bridging at will the distance between centuries, taking possession of a dead world, breathing the atmosphere of the past and then emerging in time regained" (22).

It's just
dropped
without
any intention
of being
there
it's a
falling
into...

In *The Golden Bough*, Frazer speaks of the kings as men and gods; men because they were living human beings, and gods because their functions were those of magicians and priests. Since magic and religion were inter-related in antiquity, the magical theory of seasons was very important because it enlightened the cyclical character of existence: purgation, purification, regeneration. Regeneration is seen through the image of the dying and reviving god; Attis and Osiris, for example, were associated to kinds of vegetation or animals expressing the principle of fertility and life. This duality man-god is at the core of the ambivalence of life, of the human existence that follows the same cyclical movement through natural forces. The priest of Nemi then, became the prototype of Eliot's Tiresias, with the help of Jessie Weston's speculations on the Grail legends.

1.2.3 The Grail legends

From ritual to Romance offers the readers a voyage of discovery in which we shall visit many strange foreign lands, with strange foreign people, and still strange customs. Through *Romance, Vision and Satire* and *From Ritual to Romance*, we enter the Grail legends based on vegetation myths.

In juxtaposing the experience of the Grail knight and that of the modern quester, Eliot understands here again, the oneness of the human experience through the timeless.

In the legend, a land became sterile by a malediction that fell upon its ruler, the Fisher king. The grail castle was then awaiting the knight who could come and rescue the maimed king in the "Chapel perilous". After the ritual ceremony, fertility will come back to the waste land. The knight was a religious person who fulfilled an ideal of manhood through his adventures dictated by the Round Table, and encouraged by a lady or a maiden. The sword, as a marvellous object, was inseparable from every adventure because it had a strong supernatural power: it destroyed everything it touched and never missed its aim. It was responsible for the fatal wound which put a whole sovereignty in danger: the maimed king was the famous victim of this spear. It was Galahad who restored sovereignty to a realm by asking the fatal questions about the attitude of the virgins and about the wound of the Fisher king. When he had been revealed the religious mystery of the blood running along the sword and of the use of the Grail, he could then bring salvation to the realm and cure the maimed king. It began to rain; fertility came back and the king, soon after, died in a moment of beatific vision.

The myth of the Grail legends is seen by H. Kenner, in a particular relation to the poem. In the legend, what brings fertility back to the waste land is not the actual knowledge that the quester gains at the Chapel Perilous, but the very act of asking for that knowledge, of asking the right questions.

If the culture so blown apart by the experience of modernity is to be revived, then, we must ask the right questions of the "fragments" that have been "shored against ruin":

"The quester arrived at the Chapel Perilous had only to ask the meaning of the things that were shown him. Until he has asked their meaning, they have none; after he has asked, the king's wound is healed and the waters commence again to flow. So in a civilization reduced to a "heap of broken images" all that is requisite is sufficient curiosity; the man who asks what one or another of these fragments means- maybe the agent of regeneration- the past exists in fragments precisely because nobody cares what it meant; it will unite itself and come alive in the mind of anyone who succeeds in caring..." (23).

The cycle of the grail legends which begins in Spring, progresses with Summer and ends in Winter. With rain, fertility, life, is going to "sprout" once again. This vision of death and resurrection recalls the supreme ritual in the life of mankind. J. Weston demonstrates through the Fisher King the cyclical pattern of sacrifice, death and resurrection: fertility and immortality. In that sacrificial death, Eliot sees the way to purge what is corrupt and sterile in the individual.

C.Brooks reminds us that J.Weston points out in the Holy Grail that a section of the Grail manuscripts, tells:

“how the court of the rich Fisher king was withdrawn from the knowledge of men when certain of the maidens who frequented the shrine were raped and had their golden cups taken from them. The curse on the land follows from this act...The violation of a woman makes a very good symbol of the process of secularization...Our contemporary waste land is in large part the result of our complete secularization” (24).

The Drowned Phoenician Sailor also, recalls the drowned god of the fertility cults.

C.Brooks continues to comment on Eliot’s references and allusions:

“Miss Weston tells that each year at Alexandria an effigy of the head of the god was thrown into the water as a symbol of the death of the powers of nature, and that this head was carried by the current to Byblos where it was taken out of the water and exhibited as a symbol of the reborn god...one may suggest that “*Death by Water*” gives an instance of the conquest of death and time...through death itself...”(25).

Finally, for most of the critics, the Grail legends represent the form of the romance of a lost opportunity. And it is to redress that failure that the quest is undertaken.

But for Frank Lentricchia,

“with the aid of Frazer and Weston *The Waste Land* reads as an ironic quest-romance, filtered through a modernist aesthetic of collapse whose effect is to deny narrative progression and change and to insist on a nightmare of temporal simultaneity...It is the pleasure of the plan, the primacy of structure, that has been enhanced over time” (26).

For him, the past is literary and the present is real.

On the other hand, Bernard Bergonzi sees that time has little objective reality in *The Waste Land* since Past and Present co- exist in the poem. For him, the underlying theme of the poem is not the ritual of the barren land but “ myth is a guide that Eliot used in composing the poem just as Joyce employed the *Odyssey* as a scaffolding in writing *Ulysses*”(27).

These different points of view lead us to have a look at what has been said about this problem of time by the critics from the moment *The Waste Land* was offered the readers.

Chapter two: *The Waste Land* and the critics

When *The Waste Land* appeared, many questions were raised about its complexity, its structure, and the ways it had to be read and understood. The criticism at the beginning did not "see" the problem of time as essential. What was evident was the contrast between the past, rich and cultural, and the present, sterile and bringing anxiety.

The image of Tiresias as a positive figure linking the past with the present and the future was the one generally arrested until the contemporary times where some critics saw in him a negative aspect. And so, time, from preserver through tradition, has become destroyer.

This is what we will observe ^{by} having a look at those critics from the twenties till now.

2.1 The twenties and the idea of tradition

In the twenties, just after the publication of *The Waste Land* (in 1922), a critical consensus began to be formed giving the reading of *The Waste Land* as a mythic exploration of modern consciousness. The two major critics of that period, Conrad Aiken and I.A. Richards, saw the mythic "compression" of *The Waste Land* as the key to its understanding. But to express the modern condition through many literary allusions and incoherence is rather troublesome

for C. Aiken who wonders if it is revolutionary or traditional:

“ Mr Eliot is one of the most individual of contemporary poets, and at the same time, anomalously, one of the most ‘traditional’...in *The Waste Land*, Mr Eliot’s sense of the literary past has become so overmastering as almost to constitute the motive of the work. It is as if, in conjunction with the Mr Pound of *Cantos*, he wanted to make a ‘literature of literature’- a poetry actuated not more by life itself than by poetry; as if he had concluded that the characteristic awareness of a poet of the twentieth century must inevitably, or ideally, be a very complex and very literary awareness, able to speak only, or best, in terms of the literary past, the terms which had molded its tongue” (1) .

For Aiken, the poem succeeds, by virtue of some troublesomeness, in expressing the modern condition. The dualities from which the poem generated, as meaningful or meaningless, coherent or incoherent, for example, are felt to be at the heart of modern consciousness:

“I think, therefore, that the poem must be taken- most invitingly offers itself- as a brilliant and kaleidoscopic confusion; as a series of sharp, discrete, slightly related perceptions and feelings, dramatically and lyrically presented, and violently juxtaposed (for

effect of dissonance), so as to give us an impression of an intensely modern, intensely literary consciousness which perceives itself to be not a unit but a chance correlation or conglomerate of mutually discolorative fragments. We are invited into a mind, a world, which is a "broken bundle of mirrors", a "heap of broken images" (2).

And thus, *The Waste Land* succeeds brilliantly because it manages to convey with richness an 'emotional value'.

I.A. Richards was among the first influential in his role of literary critic. In trying to answer the worries about the poem's formal and thematic coherence in his two pieces of criticism : *The Principles of Literary Criticism* (first published in 1924) and an appendix added in 1926, he perceives Eliot as a modern classic:

" Mr Eliot 's poetry has occasioned an unusual amount of irritated or enthusiastic bewilderment. The bewilderment has several sources .

The most formidable is the unobtrusiveness, in some cases the absence, of any coherent intellectual thread upon which the items of the poem are strung . A reader of 'Gerontion', or of 'Preludes', or of *The Waste Land* may, if he will, after repeated readings, introduce such a thread. Another reader after much effort may fail to contrive one. But in either case energy will have been

misapplied. For the items are united by the accord, contrast, and interaction of their emotional effects, not by an intellectual scheme that analysis must work out. The value lies in the unified response which this interaction creates in the right reader. The only intellectual activity required takes place in the realisation of separate items" (3).

By dealing with the poem's density of allusion, by seeing it as a "technical device for compression", by preparing the way for readers to see how the allusions explicate the underlying myths that animate the poem, Richards urges us to see the poem as an aesthetic achievement

2.2 The thirties and "the mythic composition"

Like Richards, the new critics see the poem as worth studying, because it tells us about the modern world through the mythic composition.

From a unity of thought to a plurality of experience, *The Waste Land* crosses ages; Wilson Leavis and Maud Bodkin were among the critics of that period who already saw the conflict between past and present. Wilson sees that *The Waste Land* is a reflection of "the present state of civilization".

For him, the poet documents a decaying culture where national, cultural and literary identities are mingled:

"In *The Waste Land* Eliot carries this tendency to what one

must suppose its extreme possible limit: here, in a poem of only four hundred and three lines, (to which are added however , seven pages of notes), he manages to include quotations from, allusions to, or imitations of, at least thirty five different writers (some of them , such as Shakespeare and Dante, laid under contribution several times)-as well as several popular songs; and to introduce passages in six foreign languages, including Sanskrit... Yet Eliot manages to the most effective precisely –in *The Waste Land* - where he might be expected to be least original- he succeeds in conveying his meaning, in communicating his emotion, in spite of all his learned or mysterious allusions, and whether we understand them or not.....In any case... *The Waste Land* ...enchanted and devastated a whole generation”(4) .

Like him, Leavis thinks that Eliot’s poem has had a deep effect on the sensibilities of a whole generation. He asserts that a proper reading of the poem must see it as a product of its culture: In *The Waste Land*

“ the traditions and cultures are mingled, and the historical imagination makes the past contemporary; no one tradition can digest so great a variety of materials, and the result is a breakdown of forms and the irrevocable loss of that sense of absoluteness which seems necessary to a robust culture...” (5).

Leavis on Eliot

For Leavis, then, the poem is a successful exercise in modernist impersonality since it struggles to escape solipsism. He, with Bodkin, were the ones who based their attitudes towards the poem on the conflict between the historical past and the present moment. For these two critics, the past is rich in cultural experience, and so the myths upon which the poem is built, are very nostalgic :

“Within my own experience of growing familiarity with the poem, I have found the reading over of certain of the lines come to seem like a ritual entrancing the mind with ancient memories...” (6)

Because the myths upon which the poem is sustained are nostalgic (the past offers a more fuller and complete cultural experience), they place the poem within a tradition of ‘classic’ literary texts.

Both Bodkin and Leavis based their attitude towards modernity on the conflict between the historical past and the present moment. We realize then, that these ideas, concurred with Eliot’s own criticism: *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919), *The Function of Criticism* (1923) and *Ulysses, Order and Myth* (1923), to see myth as the powerful means to unify human experience. These works furnished a set of critical doctrines that led to what is known as New Criticism. We assist now to an overhauling of critical values and practices where an increasing attention was given to the role of Tiresias.

2.3 New Criticism : Tiresias, past and present

The ambition of New Criticism was to deliver new ways of reading texts (especially poems) and to offer new understandings of the modern world. New Criticism was particularly dominant in American Criticism in the forties and the fifties.

What goes in a work of literary art especially in a poem? What is it that a poem is uniquely? These are among the questions that the New Criticism was chiefly concerned to answer.

A literary text is seen as a “container of mythic truths about human consciousness”. The work of F. O. Matthiessen on T.S.Eliot’s *The Waste Land* is a major one, because it sees that Eliot’s poem can overcome chaos, through a unity of life asserted by a pattern of myths:

“In such a perception of the nature of myths, of ‘a common principle underlying all manifestations of life’, Eliot found a scaffold for his poem, a background of reference that made possible something in the nature of a musical organization. He found the specific clue to the dramatic shaping of his material when he read in Miss Weston of the frequent representation of the mystery of death and rebirth by the story of a kingdom where the forces of the ruler having been weakened or destroyed by sickness, old age, or the ravages of war, ‘the land becomes Waste, and the task of the hero is that of restoration’, not by pursuing

advantages for himself, but by giving himself to the quest of seeking the health and salvation of the land. The poem thus embodies simultaneously several different planes of experience, for it suggests the likeness between various waste lands. Its quest for salvation in contemporary London is given greater volume and urgency by the additional presence of the haunted realm of medieval legend..." (7)

So for him, past and present are linked, not contrasted.

Cleanth Brooks (who has been an important practitioner of the New Criticism) and Hugh Kenner are two other figures who produced exemplary pieces of literary criticism on *The Waste Land*, in which they privileged thought over emotion. As a result, for Brooks, *The Waste Land* reveals rather than imposes a sense of unity of all periods, and the unity of experience:

"The effect is a sense of the oneness of experience, and of the unity of all periods, and with this, a sense that the general theme of the poem is true. But the theme has not been imposed- it has been revealed".(8)

The doctrine of the impersonality of the artist has been the starting point of H.Kenner's criticism, in , as the title suggests, *The Invisible Poet T.S.Eliot* (1959).

Kenner declares that the poem betrays “The mind of Europe”. Deviating from the formal unity seen by F.O. Matthiessen and C.Brooks, H.Kenner sees in *The Waste Land* a “multiplicity of modern consciousness” through the different roles of the mythical Tiresias. He was the first critic to place Tiresias in the centre of the debate, with the myth of the Grail legend, making thus the parallel between past and present; in the legend, what brings fertility to the waste land is the act of knowledge, of asking the right questions; in the *The Waste Land*, it is the intellectual curiosity, H.Kenner tells, that must ask the right questions of “the fragments that have been shored against ruin”.

This parallel between past and present led Northrop Frye to think about Eliot’s concern with time.

2.4 Northrop Frye

If tradition gives meaning to time, then for man, in his social context, time and space have more meaning.

Northrop Frye saw clearly the impact of F.H.Bradley on Eliot’s “treatment” of time. The appearance of time, the past-present-future continuum belongs to a world of becoming, but a world where the present is very particular:

“Time as we ordinary experience it has three dimensions, past, present and future. None of these dimensions exists: the past is

no longer, the future not yet, the present never quite. The centre of time is now, but there is no such time as now. Similarly, the centre of space is 'here', but there is no such place as here. All places are 'there': the best we can do is to draw a circle around ourselves and say that here is inside it. The result of the egocentric view is loneliness, a sense of alienation from a world that keeps running away from it" (9).

Bradley's conception of the absolute where all contradictions of appearance such as time, space, change,are reconciled, made of Poetry a "direct and total experience, the experience of both a moment and of a life time".(10)

For N. Frye, men who populate *The Waste Land* resemble *The Hollow Men*, who like Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness* are dead, and at the same time experience "horror" and the "boredom" of life.

The co-existence of these two states characterizes then this absolute where time (the present) and space (the underworld) are reconciled :

"In this last of meeting places

We grope together

And avoid speech

Gathered on this beach of the tumid river.

Sightless, unless
The eyes reappear
As the perpetual star
Multifoliate rose
Of death's twilight kingdom
The hope only
Of empty men."

The Hollow Men (57 to 67).

In the first stanza, the present reminds us of our general condition as human beings, and the second stanza transports us in a space where this condition is unified, universal.

This hellish atmosphere in the style of Dante is as deep as endless, as the human unconscious Freud explored, and that illuminated the new approach of *The Waste Land*.

2.5 Psycho analysis Criticism and Contemporary Criticism

By opening up new questions in relation to the poem, criticism of *The Waste Land* has entered a new phase: what version of modernity can we perceive in following Eliot in his notions of mythic composition, impersonality and the individual talent within literary tradition? Now the critics are going to give intense scrutiny to the ways we have to read the poem.

Freudian psychoanalysis completely transformed the reading of T.S.Eliot's poem, and challenged the earlier criticisms. We are now confronted to a modern criticism where nearly all the established ideas about *The Waste Land* have been blown out.

The first interpretations of the poem by W.Leavis, for example (that the poem expresses a disillusioned society) have been dislodged in the sixties by the conceptions of Michael North, David Graig, and Terry Eagleton who proclaimed that what the poem implies is in fact largely charged with cultural meaning. North sees then how the poem, using specific poetic effects, produces a general model of modern society. In focussing on how the poem moves between particularities and generalities, between opposites, between the individual and the crowd, between high and low culture, he is revealed, he says, the hidden political agenda of *The Waste Land* (we are revealed the alienated condition of modern consciousness):

“How does the poet portray immediate, contemporary reality and also the ‘formal destiny’ behind it? How does he relate the present moment to the totality of history? What is the relationship between the perceiving consciousness, both the poet and the character fitfully visible within the poem, and the crowd?” (11).

And so, the past, as being high culture, and the present low culture have no significance for the alienated condition of modern consciousness, referring

to the images of the Typist and Tiresias in *The Waste Land*:

“The typist, that is to say, is just as much a type within the inclusive human consciousness’ represented by Tiresias as she is within the routines of her office. The same thing is true of the typist’s lover. Tiresias is able to understand the young man carbuncular, ‘one of the low’, because he has ‘walked among the lowest of the dead’. He is able to understand human beings, in other words, only so far as they are types... Thus, *The Waste Land* is often read as backing its apparent disorder with some image of an ultimate historical order... In other words, tradition, like Tiresias in the conventional interpretation of him, is a normative whole made up out of the resemblances between particular historical times”(12).

If these critics of the sixties have sought to expose what the poem tacitly implies (political ideology), further development in criticism of the poem will know a new note: the psycho-analytic reading practice which implies subjectivity, will be the basis of the regard on *The Waste Land*.

For the critics of the seventies, *The Waste Land* continues to be seen as important to modern consciousness because it allows us to examine the causes of the anxieties of modernity, through the examination of many passages that

the early criticism avoided. They stressed scenes on which, they argued, the poem is structured; for example, a specific critical attention is given to the passage about Lil and Albert in *A Game of Chess*.

Whereas previous critics have looked to the poem as a means of showing up culture against loss, the new critics of the eighties examined the expression of loss itself and the poem's articulation of that loss. As a result, they were going to employ what is called 'deconstructive' reading practices. The new critics, then, "deconstructed" the text illuminated by new biographical information on Eliot.

Peter Ackroyd published in 1984 a biography of T.S. Eliot in which he noted that Eliot's distress was not simply personal, but a wider sense of distress, too. He tells us that Eliot himself explained that 'past and present were used in *The Waste Land* as different versions of futility' ("*T.S. Eliot*", p. 119). He mentions also that:

"Most of the poem's celebrants saw it as a public statement, an expression of 'the malaise of our time', while its detractors considered it to be the expression of a wholly private sensibility and a kind of literary game". ("*T.S. Eliot*", p. 127).

Indeed, the problem Eliot had with this wife, led critics as Frank Kermode, David Trotter and Maud Ellmann, to use the Freudian psychoanalysis

in their interpretations of the text. Both Trotter and Ellmann argue that the poem is inescapably a product of its culture. So, to analyze the poem is to open up the culture of modernity. In doing so, they read anew modern consciousness. Like Freud, they focus on the neurotic role of women within such a culture. Peter Ackroyd reminds us again, that Vivien said in a letter to Sidney Schiff (the editor of the Criterion) that "the publication of *The Waste Land* had been rather terrible for her since it seemed so much a part of her, and she of it".(13) In doing so, critics went far from the ideas of poetic impersonality and the mythical consciousness of earlier criticism. They realized that the stream of consciousness, proper to modernity, is the perfect expression of fragmentation and loss.

As a result, they know see the text as the neurosis of modern culture, so that individuals have to be psychoanalyzed. Like Freud, these writers focus on the role of women: Marie, the typist and Lil, represent the anxieties of the modern world in crisis, lost in a sordid present and fearing the future. In analyzing, via Freud, the personal losses of these women, we reach the loss that lies at the heart of modern societies. And it is via Freud that Trotter is able to expand upon Kermode's argument that the poem inscribes the loss it desires strongly to overcome. While this loss is deeply personal, it also articulates the sense of loss that lies at the heart of modern culture.

He specifies that :

“*The Waste Land* attempts a rite of passage, a rite which will reconstitute subjectivity in a realm beyond social structure. It is dogged by an awareness that little separates religious from neurotic ceremonial, and that the shematisms imposed on us by society run deep and dividingly. For Eliot’s thinking had by this time become genuinely social in scope, even if its codes and gestures remained defiantly personal. I want now to draw attention to that scope. The second section of the poem, ‘*A Game of Chess*’, is as confessional as anything Eliot ever wrote. It alludes to his disastrous first marriage, and he gave it the interim title of ‘*In The Cage*’. But cages often have people outside them looking in, peering through these particular bars in 1922 might well have recognised the captives” (14) .

When Maud Ellmann published : *The Poetics of Impersonality*, she notes that “the poem is enthralled by the femininity that it reviles, bewitched by this odorous and shoreless flesh”, because:

“ the typist resembles the neurotic woman in ‘ *A Game of Chess*’, who cannot decide to go out or to stay in, as if she were at enmity with their distinction. Eliot himself declares that all the women in *The Waste Land* are one woman, and this is because

they represent the very principle of uniqueness... Yet the misogyny is so ferocious, particularly in the manuscript, that it begins to turn into a blasphemy against itself" (15).

Like Trotter before her, Ellmann has turned to Freud in her analysis of the poem. In deconstructing the poem, she was confronted to the duality about women: she was at the same time fascinated with and repulsed by them.

The Waste Land is finally seen as the product of a deep personal and cultural trauma, and it seems impossible to dissociate the anguish of the past when Eliot composed the poem and the despair of a whole generation. Readers now understand why it is so obscure, fragmentary and full of "broken images"; because they finally "see" themselves in one of the "characters" of *The Waste Land*, in deconstructing the poem, filling the gaps and reconstructing again, through the stream of consciousness.

In stream of consciousness writing, time, in a way or other, undergoes dislocation: sometimes, different time segments are brought suddenly together. The modern and contemporary criticism realizes then that Eliot's obsessive theme was the persistence of the past, and the artistic technique could demonstrate that in modern culture, all ages mingle.

Grover Smith signals that the metamorphoses of Tiresias are crucial to the poem because he

“ is the spectator of his private past and also of the universal past, *The Waste Land* depicts a palimpsest or layered mixture of historical times. It does this partly by means of literary juxtapositions and sometimes by tricking out the present in a literary style imitated from the past. The time mixture feats neatly with the unifier function of Tiresias, for as he contemplates (and being the poet, stylistically renders) various times, he enters into the personages who populate them” (16).

So, the realistic and mythic worlds interpenetrate in *The Waste Land* : the life of the poet emerges through a transformation of the reality into myth, and through a rendering of myth, into the symbolic expression of the reality:

“The interaction of past and present, which in *The Waste Land* builds a timeless myth in a modern setting to express for Eliot an image of his point of view, involves several types of thematic cross-reference. In ‘*The Fire Sermon*’ the literary past, for example Spenser’s ‘Prothalamion’, may reproach the present (line 176) or the historical past, as in the ‘Elizabeth and Leicester’ section (line 279) , may suggest that times do not really change, that human conduct is uniform; or else the contemporary scene, in being somehow dignified by the

evocation of such past splendours, may participate in their mythic associations” (17).

But G. Smith sees the use of the myth in *The Waste Land* differently from previous criticism:

“The difference between making myth and using it is essential to the understanding of *The Waste Land* as a work of art..... In *The Waste Land*, the psyche is modern, the content miscellaneous, and the controlling mind transformational; all are necessary. The substance of the poem forms a myth, something wholly new, generated by that mind in a semblance of a timeless point of view or continuum, filled with images and echoes and diverse voices. The presence of traditional mythic personages in the formal scheme is not the mythic principle but only an aspect of it” (18) .

Thus, G.Smith, sees that Eliot’s time mixture confirms the persistence of past meaning in present meaning, when the past criticizes the present. The result is multiple verbal echoes that diversify the themes but that combine with another also. When Phlebas dying relives his life, recalling his existence that ‘passed’, being drawn into the whirlpool, the death of a God is transformed into the death of hope, the descent into Hell. The hell of Hades becomes the underground of “*The Unreal City*”.

Maud Ellmann reminded us of the influence of Bergson on Eliot's perception of time, when saying, "Eliot's idea of speech corresponds to Bergson's view of time," because Eliot sees rhythm as the frontier to the unconscious. Through the music of poetry, Eliot, like Bergson said M.Ellmann, "privileges rhythm as the temporal dimension of the poet's speech", (19) And like Freud, she draws analogies between the psychic and the cultural . In turning to Freud in her analysis of *The Waste Land*, M.Ellman places the sense of loss expressed in the poem in the effects of the First World War.

Indeed , Freud wrote :

"...The same boy whom I had observed at his first game used to take a toy, if he was angry with it, and throw it on the floor, exclaiming: 'Go to the fwont!' He had heard at that time that his absent father was 'at the front', and was far from regretting his absence" (20) .

And M.Ellmann agrees that:

"Like this child, *The Waste Land* is confronting the specific absence that succeeded World War I, and it evinces both the dread and the desire to hear the voices at the 'fwont' again. In fact, the poem can be read as a séance, and its speaker as the medium who tries to raise the dead by quoting them." (21).

The sense of loss has led other critics of the nineties to realize that *The Waste Land* seems to 'escape' that loss through the different cultural references. Frank Lentricchia considered that the poem is animated by the desire to escape or go beyond the limits of its culture. For him, *The Waste Land* can be seen to have passed through a number of cultural mediations in its desire to escape from itself. According to him, the poem mediates "between Eliot's private and public lives by detailing the frustrations of his unhappy marriage while also acting as 'the signature of a lost generation'" (22).

In reading the poem, he tells, we see that desire is central: the desire to overcome loss, the desire to escape the conditions of modernity that the poem frames. He notes that "the driving desire at work in *The Waste Land* is to get out of the waste land" (23). So for him, desire is the key word that permits to mediate between the real world and its imagined conclusion, between the present and the past.

For recent criticism, what makes the mediation between past and present, is Tiresias, "the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest"(24).The critics see him as a 'medium' because his own life is a compendium of all those men and women we are confronted with at every turn in the text. Tiresias is the mind of the individual talent of tradition, and the artist who creates; he lives in the present, turned to the past.

Stan Smith too, in presenting *The Origins of Modernism* in 1994, places Tiresias as the “catalyst” of all the texts we meet in *The Waste Land*. For this critic, past and present co-exist continually since *The Waste Land* is “a call to order which is both timelessly traditional and urgently contemporary” (p.142)

It is true that in Eliot, the literary past is undead. The different references to the literary texts of the past show that the past survives into the present.

Finally, from the publication of *The Waste Land*, the critical essays that examined the poem have based their ideas on Eliot’s own concepts about modernity and poetry. At the beginning, we have seen that the first critics tried to guide us to “read” the poem, enlightened by Eliot’s own criticism: *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, *Ulysses*, *Order and Myth*, and *Hamlet*, where he presented his concepts of the mythic composition of impersonality and the objective correlative. The first critics tried to “explain” Eliot, many finding *The Waste Land* meaningless though *Tradition and the Individual Talent* had demonstrated the relationship between history and literature.

The critical belief and hope that dominated the New Criticism was that such poetry could redeem the loss brought by modern culture. But with time, the successive critics that appeared discovered that *The Waste Land* had neither to be explained nor to be analyzed, but simply, to make the reader involved in the plurality of experience of the century.

We have realized at last, that *The Waste Land* is modern in the way that it is constantly in relation to time: in recuperating “all the past”, in returning to textual and historical sources, we have reached a contemporary reality, making what Walter Benjamm called “ a constellation of the present with innumerable pasts”(25).

The experience of “*The Waste Land*” across these “pasts”, is what we are now going to examine through the Nature of time and its different expressions in the poem.

Chapter 3: *The Waste Land*: the landscape, the human presence and the problem of time

3.1 Landscape as symbol

Eliot's reputation as a modernist poet was well established when he published *The Waste Land* in 1922, whether he was regarded with awe or admiration. The new form of his poetry, composed of disjunctive sequences of images, events and thoughts, of juxtapositions, startled his first readers: this structural innovation is of the essence of *Prufrock*, *Gerontion* and especially *The Waste Land*.

The modernist world view of Eliot reflected the chaos and lack of direction in the twentieth century life where the human being was lost amid the rush of metropolitan existence, the horror of a world war, and the deterioration of established values. These three elements, then, composed the core of the modern sensibility presented in Eliot's poetry. To convey this contemporary sensibility, the poet sought out new modes of expression, new poetic techniques; as F.O. Matthiessen notes, Eliot felt that a new content necessitated a new form (1).

Critic after critic emphasized these new twentieth century novelties, stressing the complete break between Eliot's poetry and that of the nineteenth century. If Eliot totally rejected the attitudes and techniques of previous

Victorian poetry, where had he found his inspiration for his form?

In his essay *American Literature and the American Language*, Eliot recalls the influence of the French symbolists on him. It was Jules Laforgue who offered him the new voice, the new mode of expression which he had been unable to find in English poetry.

Beginning with objects or experiences which are often personal, whether found in literature or in life, the poet transforms them into bearers of universal significance. Eliot's symbols usually have a multiplicity of meanings in their original context, but they also gain in complexity as they appear again and again in the poetry. They become in the poet's hands, a powerful instrument capable of reflecting the complexity of modern human experience. Landscape is one of the most important of Eliot's recurring symbols for it reflects with particular sensitivity, both the outer and inner worlds.

Eliot uses landscape to represent much more than scenery or setting; it is a means of defining or suggesting emotional or moral states, a means of controlling and manipulating feeling. For example, in the two opening lines of "*The Fire Sermon*", the desolate riverside landscape of winter strikingly conveys an agonized state of emptiness and despair:

The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf

Clutch and sink into the wet bank...(lines 173-74).

On the other hand, the winter landscape of section one of *Little Gidding* communicates the complete state of spiritual ecstasy and union with the timeless:

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
In windless cold that is the heart's heat... (Lines 4-6).

In each case, Eliot achieves a masterful suggestion of an inner "état d'âme" through landscape. The particular landscapes that Eliot chooses for symbols come both from his voluminous reading in many literatures and from his experiences in life. In the final essay of *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1964), he states:

And of course only a part of an author's imagery comes from his reading. It comes from the whole of his sensitive life since early childhood. Why, for all of us, out of all that we have heard, seen, felt in a lifetime, do certain images recur, charged with emotion, rather than others? The song of a bird, the leap of one fish, at a particular place and time, the scent of one flower, an old woman on a German mountain path, six ruffians seen through an open window playing cards at night at a small French railway junction, where there was a water-mill: such memories may have symbolic value... (2).

Charles Baudelaire and Tennyson were Eliot's foremost sources, providing him with landscape techniques and with specific scenes. Baudelaire's teeming and decadent metropolitan settings appear often in Eliot's early poetry; Baudelaire's clock strikes in "*The Burial of the Dead*."

Unreal City

Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine (lines 60-68).

Like Baudelaire, Eliot presents the nature of spiritual life in the modern city where "man passes through a forest of symbols".

Dante was also a major source of settings for the poet who had found so much else in him. Some of the images of Dante which Eliot so admired are the dark wood, the winding Mount of Purgatory, and aspects of the rose garden and images of Hell. That each man in "*The Burial of the Dead*" walks with his eyes fixed down sums up the dull despair and the monotony of his daily existence.

These nameless people imprisoned in dull office routine are as dead as the lost souls in Dante's *Inferno*.

Out of this complex of literary and personal landscapes, Eliot has forged powerful symbols both particular and universal, both concrete and abstract. They have a life, a reality, because they are real places: in *The Waste Land* for example, it is the City district of London. The City workers come up out of the tube station, climb a hill, go down King William Street, and pass St Mary Woolnoth, all of which are real parts of London's City area.

King William Street and St Mary Woolnoth suggest the boredom and the monotony in the lives of the workers who daily take the same path; but they also suggest the emptiness of the present. Thus, Eliot's landscape symbols possess many meanings: the city represents boredom, triviality and sterility, the desert, chaos and emptiness, the garden, ecstasy and innocence, and the sea, infinity and change.

The most important elements of landscape: water-desert- earth- town are marked by the same conception of space: they are marked by a dark aspect (winter- town) and a clear aspect (spring- earth), by coldness (sea) and warmth (desert), by night and day, that means by time. There is a confusion between the cold 'inhumanity' of the sea or the desert or the town, and the warmth of the heart of the human being as supposed to be. That is what provokes anguish in the human being . That is why also myth comes to decipher these elements to

create a poetical world.

For example, from the multiplicity of associated images that come out of the poet's memory, St Louis, the city where time has a singular resonance, and the sea, emerge. So, the landscape symbols are based on reality and are described in details, but reach beyond themselves, to express universal human experiences.

The landscapes in the poem are landscapes of the mind, telling the symbolic expression of the spiritually sterile: The Old Testament desert (lines 19-30), The River banks (lines 173-196), The mountainous world (lines 331-394) and "the arid plain" at the close of the poem (line 424).

The "arid plain" is both contemporary and synchronized in the waste lands of all time, that is to say timeless. And also, the idea that time is as endless and pointless as the sea, which never quite surfaces but that is prominent part of "the important question" that Prufrock never manages to ask, has become the main concern of *The Waste Land*.

3.1.1. Water: the sea and the river

Because it is vast, representing danger and fear, the sea has always attracted Eliot. For him, facing that immense "desert of water" is confronting the self.

Water flows all along the poem. There are rivers, there is the sea, there is

rain. The readers follow the changing waters in the different sections of the poem: from the dull Thames in "*The Burial of the Dead*" to the waters that swallowed Ophelia (lines 170-173) and Phlebas (lines 315-318), returning to the banks of the Thames again (line 175). The sea and the river are thus the main symbols of water in *The Waste Land*.

Water and the sea have a variety of meanings for Eliot. The 'physical' beauty of the river reminds him of his childhood and symbolises fertility and rebirth. But in *The Waste Land*, the river we have before us is polluted and thus, symbolises destruction, sterility and even death.

In "*The Fire Sermon*" the waters of the Thames are polluted by "empty bottles, sandwich papers, silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends" (lines 177-78), symbolising then, the general corruption of contemporary civilization, of the present. Opposed to it, just down stream London Bridge, and clearly visible from the Thames, the White Towers, parts of the Tower of London, are the witnesses of the past. And the flow of the river becomes the flow of time:

By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept...
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song;
Sweet Thames, run softly, for I speak not loud or long.
But at my back in a cold blast I hear
The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear (lines 183-187).

The bones of "*The Fire Sermon*" evoke the running flow of time. While

the protagonist complains about the collapse of time and sinks into his melancholy, he is suddenly recalled to reality by the rat which appears behind him in the manner of Marvel's *Times Charriot*:

But at my back I always hear

Times winged Charriot hurrying near

To His Coy Mistress (lines 21-22).

In this section, the present contrasts with the past in the way that it is sordid, while the past was capable of splendour though past and present are marked by destructive passions.

In “*Death by Water*” the water functions in its negative capacity as a destructive agent and an erosive force. The description of the drowned body is particularly sinister: the corpse of what has been Phlebas, is washed about the sea and drawn into the whirlpool:

A current under sea

Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell

He passed the stages of his age and youth

Entering the whirlpool. (lines 315-318).

Phlebas who has come out of our memory, our past, warns us about meaningless death. His fate, as a decomposing corpse, as an absolute end, will be our fate if we continue our empty life. This is the death-in-life people of *The*

Waste Land will experience!

The movement of repetition of the sea is at the heart of our topic about time: in every movement of repetition, there is the question of time and space, and in Eliot's *The Waste Land*, it is the guiding line of the poetical process. As water is continuously "refreshed", our memory must be continuously required to reappropriate what is lost or forgotten: the waves or objects rejected by the sea (as the ship in *The Waste Land*) represent something of the past, "souvenirs" shoring our memories:

On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him.
White bodies naked on the low damp ground
And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year. (lines 190-195)

In Eliot's eyes, then, memory is past time, is tradition, good or bad; because the crimes and violence of the past survive in the present; (the shipwreck we have just referred to, coming from *The Tempest*, is a witness of our past, reminding us of the bad deeds of ancient times).

We see then, that water is very symbolic in *The Waste Land* whether it

is fearful as the sea or polluted as the river. Because we move from river to sea, from sea to river, from river to rain, the development of the poem seems to follow the movement of the waves which make things up and down. The course of the poem, following water, expresses then, the flow of time.

What represents the 'fixity' of the present, for example, is the modern cities.

3.1.2 The Town

As we have already seen, images of London after the First World War, the London in which Eliot lived most of the time when he was writing *The Waste Land*, provide then, a recurring present tense for the poem. The inhabitants of *The Waste Land* just know "a heap of broken images".

The specific setting is the City, the financial district of London well-known to Eliot the businessman while he was working in a bank. This is the world experienced by Eliot, at rush hour each work-day for many years. Eliot's own copy of the 1908 edition of Baedeker's guide to London, contains the following description: people who cross London Bridge daily are so huge in number that "they may give the stranger some idea of the prodigious traffic carried on this part of the City. Newcomers should pay a visit to London bridge on a week-day during business hours to see and hear the steady stream of noisy traffic". (3)

Being ourselves part of the collective isolation of rush hour in any city is enough to make us appreciate the way all the individuals are alone with their own fate.

The density of such a crowd is typical of the urban rush hour: the fate of her inhabitants is a living death in the Hell of the City; and their sighs “short and infrequent”, may owe as much to smog to Dante. The inhabitants of *The Waste Land*, that crowd flowing over the bridge, are as stagnant, grey and polluted as the Thames which flows under it. What connects then, the modern scene with Dante’s *Inferno* is the poet’s insight into the nature of Hell.

3.1.2. a The Inferno

Section 1 of *The Waste Land* ends with a terrifying vision of the *Inferno* of modern life revealed through a London landscape. In that section, Eliot presents the world now. And what represents the fixity of the present is the town which seems “to be frozen” in an Inferno where dead souls are endlessly walking, probably looking for redemption. Here, time seems to be stopped. In “*The Burial of the Dead*”, the spectral appearance of the city in the “dirty fog” evokes the solitude of the existence of the inhabitants because “under” suggests indeed that these people are buried beneath the fog and this is in a very real sense the burial of the dead.

This section presents a nightmare scene, suggested by Baudelaire's lines :

Fourmillante cité, pleine de rêves

Ou le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant. (4)

The brown fog is similar to Baudelaire's « brouillard sale et jaune qui inondait tout l'espace ».

This « fourmillante cité » is appropriate enough to any modern metropolis at rush hour when “the identical black-clad hordes, pince-nez agleam and umbrellas brand dished like antennae, pour into or out of underground tunnels and the vast anthills of banks” (5).

It seems that people in towns invade spaces in order to forget time. As Jean Burgos in *Pour une Poétique de l'Imaginaire* (1982) has noticed , « le refus du temps qui passe trouve réponse à l'angoisse...dans la quête de lieux clos...afin de se mettre à l'abri du temps dégradant des horloges » (6).

In *The Waste Land*, these spaces are the subways in which people “plunge” in a hurry, trying to freeze time for a moment, to fix it in an eternal present. The inhabitants of *The Waste Land* try to find an answer to their anguish in front of time, in looking for “closed spaces” (undergrounds) or in mapping out their own spaces (financial areas). They build refuges in which they try to “enclose” time, by opposing them to the external and alienated world. To assist in the burial of the dead makes them remember their fate, their future death, accompanied by the sounds of the clock. To assist in the burial

marks then the present, sordid and dull:

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,

I had not thought death had undone so many.

Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled. (lines 62-64)

Going up and down the bridge, rushing in the undergrounds or delimitating their spaces in “fixing their eyes” to follow the burial, these people transform the external spaces into closed spaces.

Like Bergson, Eliot does not like the world of the clocks as described here in *The Burial of the Dead*.

3.1.2. b The clock

The presence of the clock is very significant in *The Waste Land* : it heavily clangs out the hour of 9.a.m., marking the moment of man’s daily burial in the sordidness of office routine:

And each man fixed his eyes before his feet

Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,

To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours

With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine (lines 65-68)

Usually, the clock expresses the passing of time, symbolizing thus, the temporal time. But here, in *The Waste Land*, the clock of the church is

paradoxically going to symbolize man's imprisonment in time, and is indeed, a significant landmark of London and its "timekept City" as Eliot calls it in *Choruses from The Rock*:

I journeyed to London, to the timekept City,
Where the River flows, with foreign flotations,
There I was told: we have too many churches,
And too few chop-houses. There I was told:
Let the vicars retire. Men do not need the Church
In the place where they work, but where they spend their Sundays.
In the City, we need no bells... *Chorus 1* (lines 19-26).

So, the clock has an ambiguous meaning: it marks the eternal present of the inhabitants of the City and mainly the worker, and at the same time it marks the end of that present by "the final stroke of nine".

These people imprisoned in dull office routines are as dead as the lost souls in Dante's *Inferno*. Escaping the clock of the church, inhabiting Hell, they represent "the static" present; their sense of the past is fragmentary, disconnected and insignificant. They know only "a heap of broken images". The only sense of the future they can have is through the obscure ritual of figures like Madame Sosostriis who "play at prophecy".

Finally, that clock which is very present in the London landscape seems to hammer the fate of the inhabitants of *The Waste Land* enclosing them in a seemingly eternal present.

Present, past and future will be introduced by the human presence in *The Waste Land*. Women, greatly representing anxiety, will take a particular place to “be” that eternal present.

3.2 The human presence

3.2.1 Women

The image of a woman trapped in a permanent state of suffering is captured in the new latin epigraph- a picture of the Sybil of Cumae-translated according to me as follows:

For I myself saw with my own eyes a certain Sybil of Cumae
Hanging in a cage, and when the boys said to her, “Sybil, what
Do you desire?” she answered, “I wish to die”.

Sybil was actually the pen name used by Eliot’s first wife Vivien. Although she has been identified by a friend of Eliot as his “muse” or source of poetic inspiration, her own unhappiness was also a major cause of his sense of personal failure. It is the Sybil of Cumae, compelled to suffer to eternity, who introduces the poem and sets its tone. She speaks, perhaps, for all the sad, wasted and trapped women in Eliot’s *Waste Land*.

In the story of the Sybil of Cumae, Eliot found an image which both encapsulated the dislocation of the present, past and future time which he saw as symptomatic of the cultural plight of modern man and which paralleled his own plight as a modern poet.

In Greek mythology, the Sybil of Cumae was famed for her beauty and for her prophecy. When she refused Apollo's advances, she was asked to be granted anything she wanted without conditions. She chose "a year of life for each grain of sand it contained". But she did not look for the future, and as she grew older and older, her memory and her prophetic power faded. "Imprisoned" in the present, she was only aware of her mythical past and quite indifferent to the future. She can see but cannot move: hanging in a cage, unable to die, she looks into the future but can do nothing to change or alter it:

"Like the angel, she suffers the pain of witnessing human events while being unable to participate in them, segregated by a knowledge which is experienced only as suffering seeing only a chaos of enigmatic fragments in the passage of human history". (7)

As such, living in a seemingly eternal present, her fate anticipates the fates of the inhabitants of *The Waste Land*.

Most of the women we meet in *The Waste Land* are sad and anxious.

There is a procession of women through different voices. As Hugh Kenner enumerates:

“A deranged voice speaks of being the hyacinth girl, a moment later, a fortune-teller hints a drowning and hanging and someone else at a buried corpse, then a lady (“My nerves are bad tonight. Yes bad .Stay with me, speak to me”) offers to rush out with her hair down and is suddenly metamorphosed into the mad Ophelia”(8).

We realize all along *The Waste Land* that all the women suffer: as Marie the aristocrat, as Lil the working class woman of the pub, ravaged and unlovely, and as Madame Sosostris “the famous clairvoyante” who sees so many sorrowful things. The only hope is probably in the hyacinth girl, opposed to those listed women. As sad characters, women express anxiety. They are always asking questions with a sense of panic:

What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? (113)

What is that noise now? What is the wind doing? (119)

Marie, is a person whose apparently flourishing existence is, in fact, rootless. The past represented through the aristocracy contrasts with the dull present:

And when we were children, staying at the arch-duke’s,

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.

In the mountains, there you feel free.

I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter. (lines 13-18)

The words which sprout out from Lil, the woman in *A Game of Chess* express a nervous dissatisfaction :

My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me.

Speak to me. Why do you never speak . Speak.(111-112)

The questions that follow dramatize a scene between the woman and her husband, revealing the enormous gulf that separates them. To the abrupt barrage of words betraying the tension of the woman, the husband opposes a slow, melancholic thought mourning a meaningless death:

I think we are in the rat's alley

Where the dead men lost their bones.(115-116)

Unable to evade the horror of the emptiness caused by the absence of dialogue, the woman screams in hysteria:

What is that noise?

The wind under the door
What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?
Nothing again nothing.

'Do
You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you Remember
Nothing? (117-123)

Lil is an object of pity: with time remorsefully against her, she cannot look for happiness in the corrupting world of sensuality and her vision of the future is restrictive:

The hot water at ten.

And if it rains, a closed car at four.

And we shall play a game of chess,

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the
door. (lines 135-138)

Eliot has created “silent” answers to reveal the meaninglessness of the situation, but in which the speaker (here the woman), demonstrates a panicked awareness of the other’s indifference. The very arrangement of the lines on the page suggests clearly the gap between the two figures, questions being balanced against replies which are not replies. This passage is in fact, an interior monologue that translates a complete dislocation of time, since all the indications leave us with a desire for dialogue rather than its realization. The four negatives: “not”, “neither”, “nor”, “nothing”, serve to intensify the anxiety of the present time, characterized by that dislocation.

The use of the future tense shows the paucity of the present and then, the

menace of the future:

What shall I do now? What shall I do?

I shall not rush out as I am, and walk the street

With my hair down,so. What shall we do tomorrow?

What shall we ever do? (lines34).

The paucity of the present is pictured by the futility of an existence made up of comfortable, time-passing rituals where the menace of the future continues to be persistent.

The woman in *A Game of Chess*, bored in her excessive surroundings and by the social routine accepts that she “shall play a game of chess”. Like Prufrock, she takes refuge into the safety of the monotonous daily life in which water means not rebirth, but a morning bath or a “safety” walk in the afternoon. But still, the menace of the future is great:

Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon the door (138).

The obsessive repetition of “nothing” (lines 120-123) tells the obsession of emptiness and unreality at the height of its tension among the couple who seems to be in a “void”, in a present cut off from past and future. The sense of the squalid present is enhanced by the contrast that Eliot develops between it and images drawn from History, and the mythology, the culture and the literature of the past. For example, the contrast between past and present situations is used here to intensify the hollowness of the speakers. But we can perceive a hopeful

future: the fertility can return from the moment we think of the Grail legends. In the Grail Legends, the ritual feet-washing is accompanied by the singing of children and is a prelude to the Fisher King's recovery. In that passage, the reference to *The Tempest* suggests the same idea, since Ferdinand has found his father.

But for the moment, the present is the mouth of Hell in its ultimate horror: it is one clock-tick after the other. This is clearly perceived in the repetition of "HURRY UP, PLEASE, IT'S TIME". Thus a sense of urgency is created by that cry which already tolled for the burial of the dead and urges now the inhabitants of *The Waste Land* to redeem this time, so that fertility can return.

So, through women, we have realized the emptiness of the present: the neurosis of the modern woman is the same as Sybil's. All, have learned the painful lesson: it is death that inspires life. In her wish for immortality, Sybil succumbs to the lure of the Imagery.

Living within and outside life simultaneously, Sybil resembles Tiresias the other mythical and poetical figure who also gained knowledge but lost his passion. It is he who will unite past and future thanks to his suffering and knowledge. It is he who will represent then, the consciousness of time.

3.2.2 Tiresias

Tiresias is fully introduced in *The Fire Sermon* through three self references.

In the first, he is ..blind, throbbing between two lives,

Old man with wrinkled female breasts...(lines 218-19)

In the second, he repeats himself, only changing “female breasts” into “dugs”(line 218). In the third, he declares that he has “foresuffered all”:

I who have sat by Thebes below the wall

And walked among the lowest of the dead.(lines 245-46)

We have already met a Tiresias figure in *Gerontion* drawn from the blind Edward Fitzgerald being “read to by a boy”.(Eliot had the description out of the life of Fitzgerald by A.C.Benson).

Eliot himself tells us that:

“Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a ‘character’, is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem”. (note to line 218)

From that note, we understand that the poet’s mind is the mind of

Tiresias, the “inclusive consciousness” (to use Leavis’ words) that has “foresufferd all”.

In giving a brief reminder of his own mythical past:

I who have sat by Thebes below the wall

And walked among the lowest of the dead (245-46).

Tiresias juxtaposes the insignificant episode of the typist’s seduction with one of the Greek myths which continue to haunt the imagination of Western Europe; so, the present is juxtaposed to the mythical past. In *The Waste Land*, Tiresias is the spectator of his private past but also of the universal past. The poem depicts a layered mixture of historical times. It does this partly by means of literary juxtapositions and sometimes by tricking out the present in a literary style imitated from the past. For example, as we have already mentioned, in *The Fire Sermon*, lines 185-86 link Marvell’s *To His Coy Mistress* and its imagery of the grave where none embrace, to the “chuckle” underground in Eliot’s lines 185-186.

The time mixture fits with the unifier function of Tiresias, because as he contemplates various times, he enters the characters who populate them. He is at the same time The Fisher King, the Hanged man, the Phoenician Sailor and the modern man. We think that Tiresias, who uses only his knowledge of the past in *The Waste Land*, symbolises the consciousness of time and permits a continuity between past and future. Here in the poem, Eliot highlights the

question of 'passages': we move from one text to the other, from one time to the other, from one citation to the other, from one state of consciousness to the other.

So, Eliot's time mixture confirms the persistence of the past meaning in present meaning. The interaction of past and present builds then, in *The Waste Land*, a timeless myth in a modern setting.

As Grover Smith says

"The peculiar mythic doom of Tiresias in his traditional hermaphroditism or bisexuality must have been seen by Eliot as analogous to the castration of the Fisher King. For this reason, Tiresias is the Fisher King, or takes the place of the Fisher King, in *The Waste Land*". (9).

The transformations of Tiresias are however seen differently by another critic. In fact, Tony Pinkney sees in Tiresias a container of opposites that makes him passive or even 'empty'. Being blind, Tiresias sees nothing and his nothingness is his very mode of being. For this critic, "throbbing between two lives", Tiresias is no longer a man but is not yet a woman; he is no longer a classical Greek, yet neither is he fully contemporary! Pinkney thinks that:

"To survive the post-war crisis, Tiresias must understand all particular viewpoints but give himself to none, and

he turns himself into a Hollow Man in doing so. He must be indifferent to all the other characters so that he can 'unite them all'. If Tiresias *had* united all the other characters, the poem would have stopped there and then, triumphantly" (10).

In being neither X or Y, Tiresias has to pay the high price for his effort to achieve a universal consciousness.

We have noticed that past times were continuously present in *The Waste Land* since Tiresias has existed across all time and space as both the epitome and the observer of mankind's suffering. As Stephen Cote notes

"The great age of Tiresias, who has lived through all this experience, makes him the epitome not just of the personal histories of contemporary men and women, but of all mankind across the ages". (11)

So, though the image of Tiresias has changed from the early critics to now, its role as achieving a universal consciousness through past is accepted by all the readers. We have had in *The Waste Land* an overall picture of the present through the city and its inhabitants, of the past through Tiresias, and glimpses of the future through some characters.

Our task now is to see how all these different moments of time are presented in the poem.

3.3 The different moments of time in *The Waste Land*

The first lines of *The Waste Land* bring the questions of life and death, memory and oblivion, and past and future. We are already confronted to a constant movement of repetition: time is an incantative word in Eliot's poetry from *Prufrock* to *The Four Quartets*. When, in *The Waste Land*, we are addressed sharply by the barman's cry "HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME!" We realize that time is at the centre of the poem and thus, becomes the main preoccupation of the poet. As a result, *The Waste Land* expresses the ravages of the First World War through "a heap of broken images", saying the anguish of man in the present day. As *The Fisher King*, we are witnessing the paralysis, and lamenting because "the nymphs are departed". Ravaged by the present then, tormented by the future and walking back to the past turned to tradition, the poet presents us a poem where time "moves".

Like Walter Benjamin, Eliot is "attending to the debris of the modern world, finding in its melancholy ruins and violent eruptions of feeble traces of a lost order and the possibility of redemption" (12). Like him also, profoundly concerned with time, he thinks that it is necessary to recharge human consciousness with a radical awareness of time and temporal change which History writing prevents.

The Waste Land is divided into different times: the temporal time perceived through the seasons, the transcendental time evoked by the idea of redemption,

the mythical time brought by mythical figures; and every time is a sort of movement built on a contrast, a juxtaposition, an opposition, between a series of fragments that join in a sort of circle, illustrating then, the mythical system itself.

Despite the linear progression, time is really circular, and each moment in *The Waste Land* curves back to its point of origin, giving us “broken images” we have to unify.

The Waste Land is full of different things and juxtaposes different places, times and cultures. We move back and forth between scenes of suffering and despair. There are echoes of the past through the troubling Cleopatra. Time itself is troubled: nothing connects with nothing. There are rapid cuttings and instantaneous shifts in space and time. We move in seconds from Margate Sands to Carthage and from The Fisher King to the mad Hieronymo via the Prince of Aquitaine. The modern interpenetrates the ancient as Tiresias surveys the typist.

We are constantly jostled by quotations:

This music crept by me upon the waters (line 257)

Or

Trams and dusty trees.

Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew

Indid me. By Richmond I raised my knees

Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe (lines 301-304).

Allusions blur the boundaries of the poem by revealing the interplay between texts: at many places in the poem the boundaries between identities are unclear as voices change or mutate, as for example, in “*A Game of Chess*”, ‘Goonight’ mutates into Ophelia’s ‘good night, sweet ladies’.

We see that time presses hard in *The Waste Land* because the poem impels its characters and readers backward in time to recuperate the past into the present and forward to the fulfillment of desire. For example, the opening of *The Waste Land* confounds together the human and vegetable as lilacs breed, snow is forgetful and April cruel. The poem moves forward to temporal indicators as “winter kept us warm”—“summer surprised us”.. but it is impossible to “see” any single place ; desire thus, is uncertain and memory disconnected.

All along the poem, there is a permanent juxtaposition of images of the modern world that creates on the one hand, the empty time characterized by the clock-card, and on the other, the possibility of change since we turn to tradition. (The human being has to comprehend the past to look to the future).

There is “*The Burial of the Dead*” expressing the harrowing present of the modern human being through the clock of the church that “strikes at 9”. But there is also “*What the Thunder Said*” which brings a hope for redemption and a better future through the wider voice of tradition:

Datta ... Dayadhvam... Damyata... (lines 401, 411,418) .

So, we see that these troubling juxtapositions result in a fragmentary stylistic syntax which, like cubism, holds together different perceptions of time and space: Stetson at Mylae (lines 69-70), dead souls on London bridge (lines 62-63).

This collage technique of modernist Art expresses the “closing of the circle” where beginning and ending are confused. Here our work of art is *The Waste Land* where time is perceived as ending and beginning.

3.3.1 Time as ending and beginning

In “*The Burial of the Dead*”, dawn marks the end of a life and the beginning of a day. In “*The Fire Sermon*”, noon evokes the end of a day and the beginning of hope through the image of Tiresias the “unifier”. Images of life and death, beginning and end, appear in the poem’s opening: “a little life with dried tubers” puts us in a desert wasteland, and contrast with life giving rain and the drowned sea.

Series of pairs are numerous in *The Waste Land*, especially in “*Death by Water*”: “profit and loss”- “rose and fell”- “age and youth”- “Gentile or Jew”- “turn the wheel and look to windward”. The rocking pattern of these pairs suggests the sea waves who represent the currents of life and death. Repetition suggests also a pointless circularity that characterizes the whole poem.

Because Eliot envisages the universe as a turning circle with God as its unmoving center, we move in his great poems from time to eternity through the ever contrasting image of night and day. Night and day are presented particularly in "*The Fire Sermon*" through the "violet hour":

At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
Turn upward from the desk, when the human engine waits
Like a taxi throbbing waiting,
I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see
At the violet hour, the evening hour that strives
Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,
The typist home at teatime, clears her breakfast, lights
Her stove, and lays out food in tins (lines 215-223).

The violet hour evokes the twilight. Metaphorically, we can see here the twilight of Western Civilization. But 'realistically' described, the twilight which marks the end of the day, may signify the beginning within the end (to quote Eliot's own words: "in my end is my beginning").

Every day, the sun dies and revives. The twilight is fragile and worrying because it announces at the same time, the death of the sun and the sign of a light to come. That particular moment which is full of emotion, is also full of anguish because it reminds the human being of his death to come.

In *The Waste Land*, modern man lives in a “paradoxical space” represented either by the desert of the waste land or by the town. The ‘violet hour’, the twilight, is such a moment to opt for a specific moment of time which resembles eternity, because charged with enigmatic power. An example of the movement of time in which brief moments of eternity are caught is perceptible in the following lines from “*The Burial of the Dead*”:

-Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence. (lines 37-41)

Crystallizing such a moment of time, we can enter now the timeless. The timeless moment recalls our memory which has the capacity to retain all things temporal. As Eliot himself claims:

“The operation of memory is retention and representation not only of things present, corporeal, and temporal, but also of past and future things, simple and eternal. For memory retains the past by recalling it, the present by receiving it, the future by foreseeing”. (13)

According to Bergson, as we have quoted before, the power of memory is to liberate the individual from the future as well as the past. Memory permits us

to move in imagination. Thanks to memory, time is viewed in sequences. Memory is the key metaphor for the process of gathering in Eliot's work. It is a sort of storehouse which involves the activity of the mind since to think means to re-collect scattered images and to re-arrange them in the memory.

Indeed, for Eliot, the poet's mind is a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, images which remain there until all the elements that can unite are present together. Gathering elements is precisely what Eliot did in *The Waste Land*. We can say that *The Waste Land* moves between memory and oblivion. The numerous fragments and citations are an interrogation addressing our oblivion: to save the past, we have to transpose it in the present. At the end of part I of *The Waste Land*, we are among those with "lidless eyes" who can do nothing but remember. Ophelia's sad pathetic farewell at the end of part II revives the traces of the past.

In the poem, we have on the one hand, the memory of time regulating the cycle of seasons in "*The Burial of the Dead*"

April is the crullest month, breeding

Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing

Memory and desire, stirring

Dull roots with spring rain.

Winter kept us warm, covering

Earth in forgetful snow, feeding

A little life with dried tubers.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee

With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,

And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,

And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.(lines 1-11).

And on the other hand, the revival of literary fragments measure the importance of forgetfulness. Even the notes function as a sort of memory of the poem itself (we have to refer to them constantly). In doing so, Eliot once again, joins Benjamin in seeing the past through the stream of citations, quotations and literary texts as “a series of moments of revelations”. (14) That dizziness has originated in the repetitions which are the thread of the poetical process.

In fact, the literary world appears to be more real than the ordinary world because the ideas of the past and future are true through the coherence between them and the present moment. Hence, the poet becomes a kind of ‘collector’ and moves along these pieces he has collected. The main pieces of the collection are the literary texts guiding us to History.

The opening lines of “*A Game of Chess*” for example, are a parody of Shakespeare’s account (based on Plutarch) of the first meeting between Anthony and Cleopatra :

I am again for Cydnus

To meet Mark Anthony

(V.2 228-229)

In Shakespeare's play this is a moment where present, past and future meet to transcend time: it occurs midway on the river Cydnus.

A more general and complex contrast between present and past centres on the symbol of the river Thames as it flows through "*The Fire Sermon*":

The river's tent is broken; the last fingers of leaf
Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song.
The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
Silk handkerchieves, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed.
And their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors;
Departed, have left no addresses. (lines 173-181)

The source of the line "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song" is Spenser's "Prothalamion" in which a magical 'silver streaming Thames' flows through the poem. In Eliot's poem, the Thames is filthy and the 'nymphs are departed'.

3.3.2 The Historical texts: time as preserver and destroyer

We have said that Eliot's early poetry is full of concern with time.

History in Eliot's verse exists in traces appearing at a moment of danger: after the rapes of the Thames –daughters in " *The Fire Sermon*", the sight of the 'hooded hordes' which swarm 'over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth' (lines 368-369) is followed by the falling towers of Jerusalem, Alexandria, Athens in "*What the Thunder Said*" :

What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London (lines 366-75).

These fragments invoke civilizations indistinguishable from barbarism.

The poet receives then the past in fragments: he believes that an authentic apprehension of time and History requires, in the contemporary crisis, the interrogation of fragments, and that the cultural history requires both an obligation to the past and a recognition of the violence that it bears with it.

The past, or an idealized version of it, for example, has often been thought the safest place to hide from the suffering of the present. Generally, the past has been presented as the 'tradition' or 'heritage' of a country,

emptying it of contradictions and conflict and linking it with the interests of the rich and powerful. The past is not 'there' waiting to be discovered or revealed in the patient accumulation of detail, but appears at moments of crisis in a fragmentary form.

Once again, Benjamin illuminates Eliot's view:

"For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably... To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' ... It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger".(15)

The Waste Land will not celebrate only Western culture, it is a catalogue of horrors, of rape and destruction as well: there is the rape of the Thames daughters in "*The Fire Sermon*", we hear the voice of St Augustine facing the barbarians: 'To Carthage then I came' (line 307), rumours "Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus" (line 416). And all the major Empires of Europe figure in the poem:

- There is the Austro-Hungarian in the figure of Marie who must hold on tight not to fall in "*The Burial of the Dead*",
- We meet the Ottoman through the Smyrna merchant who offers a dirty week-end in Brighton:

Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street hotel

Followed by a week end at the Metropole (lines 209-214)

- We are disturbed by the Russian in 'the hooded hordes' (368) who stumble 'in cracked earth',

- We have a vision of the British in the evocation of London where London Bridge is at the point of falling down.

The moments of danger in *The Waste Land* appear all along the poem: Marie must hold tight not to fall, The Smyrna merchant, that we have already mentioned, who is presented as such:

Mr Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant

Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants

C.i.f. London: documents at sight,

Asked me in demotic French

To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel

Followed by a week end at the metropole (lines 209-214).

The hooded hordes swarm 'over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth' (line 369); London Bridge is falling down.

The fragments evoke at the same time civilizations and acts of barbarism.

We have in mind Benjamin's image where the 'angel' of history sees "one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls in front of his feet".(16)

Parallely, in *The Waste Land*, the reader, like Benjamin's angel, sees in human history and culture no chain of events but a single catastrophe piling rubble upon rubble. Regarded that way, the literary texts will not help us construct something new, but they are here just to make us observe the remnants of a lost civilization destroyed.

So, in *The Waste Land*, we find finally two different historical landmarks: one in the past, the other in the present .To represent simultaneously different aspects of History of mankind, Eliot has used Bradley's conception: reality being the sum of appearances, the representation of that reality cannot be 'unique', it has to be presented in 'fragments'. Fragmentation then, leads us to see the "physical aspect" of the poem which is very original.

3.3.3 The form of the poem: fragmentation

The Waste Land is a modern poem where the plurality of characters, voices and quotations puzzle the reader. We have many images, dialogues and dramatic representation of 'personages'.

Stan Smith in *The Origins of Modernism* presents *The Waste Land* as "a

barren tract of meaning, where connections lose themselves in trailing sentences, lapse into silence, incantation or gibberish ultimately into animal noises and the mad discourse of Hieronymo, Hamlet or Ophelia" (16).

The form of the poem is given by the two lines that illustrate that fragmentation and that are placed at the beginning and the end of the poem:

From "*The Burial of the Dead*"

You cannot say, or guess, for you know only

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats (lines 22-23)

From "*What the Thunder Said*"

These fragments I have shored against my ruins (line 430)

"These fragments" in *The Waste Land* are quotations from Nerval, Dante and Baudelaire. As example, ^{of Nerval} we find Dante's "*Inferno*" on London Bridge (line 63) and we end the night at the pub with the words of Ophelia (line 172).

Because Eliot believes that the apprehension of time requires in the contemporary crisis the interrogation of fragments, he will juxtapose the present with the past through these fragments. Indeed, the sterility of the modern waste land is emphasised through a range of parallels and contrasts as the poet draws on his magpie-like knowledge of European culture and world

religions. Many of the quotations from European writers which contribute to the collage-like form of the poem are not in English: we find fragments from *Tritan and Isolde*, lines from Verlaine, Baudelaire and Dante as we have mentioned. Other fragments are embedded in the text as translations or near translations. Added to the quotations from English poetry, all these fragments establish a rich network of references that Eliot uses throughout the poem to highlight the sterility of London and its inhabitants, and of London life.

Eliot provides, for example in “*A Game of Chess*” and in “*Death by Water*”, a series of “close-ups” anatomising the spiritual condition of London and Londoners. The neurosis of the woman in “*A Game of Chess*” is closely related to time because the couple sees no future through the repetition for instance of “nothing” or of “what shall we do”?; and the barman’s repeated calls, printed in capitals, take on a prophetic urgency hinting at an imminent doom:

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME

HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME (Lines 152,165,169,170)

This technique of repetition used by the poet in *The Waste Land* achieves a poetical and musical effect.

a). Repetition

Repetition is the guiding line of the poem . There is a proliferation of fragments which have the form of a bundle of quotations, citations, and literary texts that come from our memory, our past we have to present now, in the present.

The technique of citations, quotations, bringing the events from their place of origin and re-ordering them in new approaches, is a sort of “collage”, a sort of mosaics, inspired from Jules Laforgue. These citations and references to many other literary texts are privileged “passages” which help us move from one place to the next, from one epoch to the other. All the references are used by the poet to highlight the sterility of London and of London life. For example, the words “ Unreal City” are taken from Baudelaire while the line “I had not thought death had undone so many” is a direct echo of the moment in Dante’s *Inferno* where Dante first sees the souls of the dead.

Repetition is here the key word in the poetical process: the poet always cites the past, he often returns to the previous line. Time then, has an important role in every movement of repetition, because in the temporal and in the intemporal there is a continuity in time and out of it.

The best illustration of this process of repetition is the final section “*What the Thunder Said*” . The key words of that section are: “water- road- mountains- rock”:

Here is no water but only rock

Rock and no water and the sandy road

The road winding above mountains of rock without water

Which are mountains of rock without water

If there were water we should stop and drink

Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think

Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand

If there were only water amongst the rock

Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that cannot spit (331-339)

Even the “w” is repeated in the same line 335, and the repetitive “you” and “I” is very striking in lines 359-365:

Who is the third who walks beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you

Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded

I do not know whether a man or a woman

--But who is that on the other side of you?

Alliterations are particularly used at the beginning of the poem:

Mouth...mixing...memory - Lilacs...land -Dead... desire...dull

Winter...war - Forgetful...feeding -Summer...surprised

These alliterations achieve the musicality of the poem which is surprisingly great in *The Waste Land*.

b). Musicality

We have seen that *The Waste Land* is composed of a series of projections of “states of feelings” having no fixed centre, but their common origin is in the depths of one’s mind. The poem traces in rhythms, in its music, and the sequence of its images, the events of that mind at a particular time.

The music being the technique of the form, it is the means by which diverse times and memories interact.

The music of *The Waste Land* is a music of allusions, a combination of source materials with images and linguistic transformations as we will observe in the main musical passages.

The main passages that express the musicality of the poem are found in

“*The Fire Sermon*” and in “*What the Thunder Said*”.

In “*The Fire Sermon*”, we find the most beautiful lyric passages in the poem:

This music crept by me upon the waters’

And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street

O City city, I can sometimes hear
Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street
The pleasant whining of a mandoline
And a clatter and a chatter from within
Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
Of Magnus Martyr hold
Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold (lines. 257-265)

This passage creates an image of a particular state of mind . This image is composed out of the indissoluble union of, on the one hand, a particular poetic music, and on the other hand, a recreation of the experience of a specific time and place. The state is one of melancholy and loneliness in a city, the mind aware of itself alone, yet on the fringes of human society, noise and action. It is a state of self pity and self pleasure. The consciousness of the poem focusses first on music which passes it by “upon the waters”; then on the noises of the pub which it leaves behind; and comes to rest finally on the “inexplicable splendour” of the silent, visible object. Tiresias, the poem’s ‘inclusive consciousness’, is sensitive to human degradation. The poet’s mind is the mind of Tiresias that “has foresuffered all”. And in its intimate participation of the event, that mind is released; and in this act of release, Eliot’s music achieves perfect ease of movement.

In “*The Fire Sermon*”, the river winds its way through London past and

present, carrying not only “a testimony of summer nights”, but also a continuously mutating scenes where women “can connect nothing with nothing”. We find here the paradoxes dear to Eliot, in the function of water itself. The polluted Thames and the drowning water also carry music.

Eliot’s notes to “*The Fire Sermon*” ensure us that we see the pattern of music in that section : Spenser’s song “Sweet Thames run softly till I end my song”, the ballad of Mrs Porter, the voice of children singing from Verlaine’s *Parsifal*, the degraded song of the nightingale, the song of the Rhine-daughters from Wagner’s *Ring*, and Eliot’s songs of the Thames -daughters. The songs here represent a continuation of desire. Language itself is purified and reduced in the final four lines of repetition and reduction to the single word ‘burning’

To Carthage then I came

Burning burning burning burning (307-8).

Burning comes again in the next section “*Death by Water*”.

At the beginning of “*What the Thunder Said*” , burning moves us back to a barren waste and inhuman landscape where repetition suggests finally a pointless circularity through the remarkable musicality of the passage:

If there were water

And no rock

If there were rock

And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
If there were the sound of water only
Not the cicada
And dry grass singing
But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
Dip drop drip drop drop drop drop
But there is no water (347-358)

In this passage, the desire for water leads again to music as the section culminates in hearing the singing of the hermit-thrush in the pine trees. But the voice of the desert claims: "But there is no water". Immediately after this line, the clarity of the desert dissolves and visions begin to proliferate wildly.

This whole opening to section V has the quality of a dream.

So we have realized that repetition makes us "close the circle": the musicality of the poem confirms and affirms the cyclic movement of Eliot's writing.

The poem ends where it started, always about to begin, with a question

which is desperate: "what shall we do tomorrow?"

All the voices of *The Waste Land* are uprooted from a narrative community which would make sense of and give substance to their personal narratives.

At the end of *Tradition and the Individual Talent* Eliot observes that the poet "is not likely to know what is to be done... unless he is conscious not of what is dead, but of what is already living". And as Stan Smith said, "the desperate refrain that runs through *The Waste Land* asks repeatedly that urgently modern question: "What is to be done?"(17).

Conclusion

At the end of our modest study, we have to say that many aspects continue to be “obscure”; it is due in part, ^{to} on our difficulty to find all the updated bibliographical material necessary to unveil some opacities, and in the other part, because Eliot, probably, wants deliberately, as a modern poet, to leave us with some questions. We will try now, to make a synthesis of the analysis we have undertaken to do.

Proceeding by a destruction of the linear “narrative”, Eliot has created a *Waste Land* where the “spacio-temporal” framework is willingly broken.

And so, the main question we have asked concerning our topic is:

Where is the clock-time of *The Waste Land*?

It passes through the past itself. As in Proust, it exists in the connection of the events once experienced. This is what we have tried to examine in our work.

We have discovered that *The Waste Land* is a meditation on the long experience of spiritual life, through a sense of tradition in which the modern world is at one with the past.

T.S.Eliot has found in J. Frazer the same point of view, the same vision which brings past and present into juxtaposition through myth and ritual. *The*

Waste Land takes place half in London (the real world) and half in a haunted wilderness: the waste land of the medieval world described and analyzed by J. Weston. Walking the desert of London, Eliot has journeyed with Dante to the *Inferno*.

Guided also by the perception of time of H. Bergson and by the philosophical ideas of F.H. Bradley, Eliot has thus written a universal poem common to different epochs and different times.

We have seen that from the moment *The Waste Land* was published, the critics were divided about its complexity. For many, it was a poetical document about the twenties. For some, it was so puzzling that they considered that it just expressed the poet's own crisis. For others, it was difficult to be understood. But those who taught a generation to read a poem, who taught to pay attention to what a work of literary art means are The New critics. Indeed, New Criticism's tendency was to see the poem as a timeless structure of meanings which can be analyzed without reference to the specific meanings of words at a specific moment of time.

Finally, enlightened by the psycho-analytic "deconstruction" of poems, modern critics made us perceive the particular anguish of the poet before time.

To grasp Eliot's poem we have realized then that the one thing we need is some sense of what has gone before us as a means of seeing clearly what is around us now. Because time accumulates all the past, bears the memory of the

acts already committed, it is also present. In fact, the poem, like the spring which welcomes us at the beginning of *The Waste Land*, mixes memory and desire, impelling the characters and the readers backward in time to recuperate the past into present, and forward to the fulfillment of desire. Temporal indicators- autumn- spring- in the winter- a year ago- are constantly invoked but remain unassimilable to any unified field: "winter kept us warm- summer surprised us" (lines 5-8); but it is impossible to assimilate these statements to a single place or coherent story. Thus, we have understood that *The Waste Land* ranges freely in time and place, oscillating between past and present, memory and desire, showing that for Eliot, the meaning of time is discovered through memory.

To present such a vision, Eliot has used myth as the framework of the poem, the human experience to illustrate it and a specific "orchestration".

The method of Eliot, we have seen, suggests that through myth Art may express a sense of the present. His method has been also to juxtapose fragmented glimpses of the present as a moment in the Hofgarten, a visit to a Tarot reader, closing time in a pub, with memories of the past.

This broken structure of the poem has made us think of certain kinds of film which proceed by rapid cuttings and instantaneous shifts in time and space. This fragmentation expresses the poet's experience of modern urban life which made him interested in the relationship between abnormal states of mind. This

new mode of writing, Eliot shares it with Baudelaire, guided also by the fine hand of S. Mallarmé. We have noticed that the dissolving of the boundaries between prose and poetry, the lack of rhythm and rhyme, the sudden juxtapositions are appropriate to the shock of urban experiences and make of Baudelaire, Eliot and the reader, brothers:

“You! Hypocrite lecteur, mon semblable, mon frère!” (line 76).

The result we have witnessed, in *The Waste Land*, is a disorganized syntax where the characters refuse the cycle of seasons, the seasonal time. Consequently, the human experience will make us confront that anguish before the linear time: past- present- future illustrated by the timeless persona of Tiresias. Tiresias will be then, in *The Waste Land* the way of “manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity”.

We have through some examples, seen that timeless moments in time have provided for Eliot the means, to conquer time. As the example memorialized by the moment in the garden which becomes the first of many examples of a “point of intersection” between time and timeless of a fragment of time that makes its meaning from and gives its meaning to a pattern, a pattern at one with time and out of time. That pattern is continuously changing through the musical repetition created by specific words or alliterations.

Since man continues to be without renouncing his past, without losing the

memory of his faults and the faults of all mankind, he is one with time. And it is the last section of the poem "*What The Thunder Said*" which tells us that time is associated with the dogma of Redemption.

Paul Valery in his *Art of Poetry* said: " human words, because uttered in time, are unable to express a timeless reality". In Eliot's poetry, words are on a pilgrimage from time to eternity because they are moments of sudden illumination, in and out of time, associated in the word-made-art, that is to say poetry. Poetry has been for Eliot the magnificent possibility of saying everything , as time is the perpetual possibility of salvation and damnation.

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