"Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays": Demystifying Authority and Constructions of Female Sexuality in T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land*

by

Andrea Catherine Khambalia
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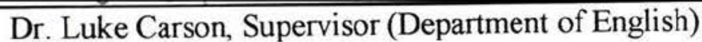

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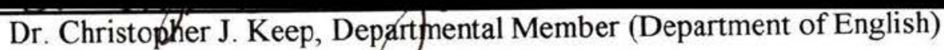

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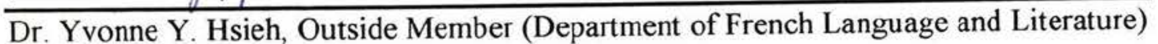

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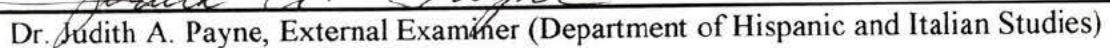

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ABSTRACT

This study attempts to identify the site of *The Waste Land*'s authority. Examining T.S. Eliot's theoretical investments, namely his theory of impersonality articulated in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," results in an awareness of the authority he invests in tradition, which he conceives of as impersonal and objective. However, what appears to be impersonality in fact constitutes a consensual agreement among individuals of a specific social and ideological perspective. The paper then reveals the strategies the poem employs to engineer objectivity and to obscure its subjective perspective. The analysis specifically exposes the poem's use of metaphoric and metonymic devices to project its image of woman and female desire. Consequently, misogyny is inscribed in *The Waste Land* through metonymy, and universalized through metaphor.

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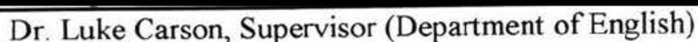

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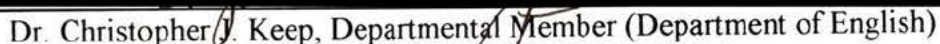

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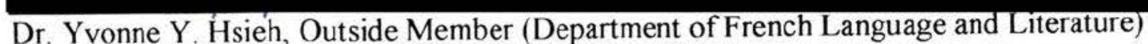

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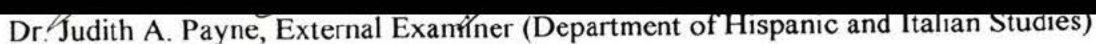

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For my parents, my grandmother,

Amina, and Ry

As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being a part of it, until her teeth were only accidental stars with a talent for squad-drill. I was drawn in by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles. [...] I decided that if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped, some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected, and I concentrated my attention with careful subtlety to this end.

T.S. Eliot, "Hysteria"

Introduction

Criticism of T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* reveals an obsessive concern with the issue of unity. Innumerable pages are devoted to the problem of the poem's cohesiveness or, as Michael Levenson notes, what amounts to be the same thing—the problem of Tiresias (191). The poem invokes Tiresias for his mythic and prophetic status, and moreover appeals to him as an androgynous figure. He appears in part III, "The Fire Sermon," in which he plays the role of both character and observer in the episode with the typist and the clerk. Tiresias would seem an ideal figure in that he reconciles the binary opposition of subject and object by performing both roles, and also erases the distinction between the sexes by being both male and female. Eliot's note on Tiresias suggests that this is precisely the function Eliot had in mind for him. However, Tiresias does not fulfill these expectations of authority primarily because he does not emerge from the lascivious voyeur who follows the typist home and watches her movements inside her apartment. Essentially, Tiresias and the poem's questionable unification circulate around the issue of the poem's authority. *The Waste Land* dispels traditional notions of authority, for there is no presiding voice, no single source of authority. Instead, the poem is dominated by a polyphony of competing voices, many in different languages, which serve to destabilize the poem.

The Waste Land is striking and compelling for many reasons. The poem is partly constructed to inspire this awe, impressing upon the reader an awareness of the author's erudition, for instance; in fact, the multitude of allusions alone is enough to intimidate readers. However, it is not simply the plethora of allusions that contributes to the power of the poem, for *The Waste Land* assumes an authoritative voice despite its allusiveness and chaotic fragmentation.[1] The multiple voices and jarring transitions from one

speaker to the next displace the power from a single source, and even Tiresias' vision, despite his supposed prophetic abilities, is insufficient in providing a convincing source of power. Thus, the poem evades interpretation; it defies easy accessibility, and it is precisely from this evasiveness that it declares its eminence.[2] Hence, from where does its power emanate? In other words, where is the poem's authority located? If the poet's ego does not constitute the governing and controlling force, it must then exist elsewhere.

The poem's notes encourage the reader to locate authority in the allegedly impersonal mythical method, which consists of an elaborate structure that draws on rich allusions from a mythical, classical, and religious tradition as a universalizing force.[3] However, as several critics argue, the mythical method is informed by a subjective perspective. In the following pages, I will provide an explication and critique of debates surrounding the question of the poem's authority: the problem of the mythical method, unity, and Tiresias.[4] In doing so, I hope to show the difficulties that arise when attempting to establish the source of *The Waste Land*'s power.[5]

Franco Moretti addresses the poem's mythic method. His discussion reveals *The Waste Land*'s motivations, specifically what its construction suggests about its intentions, that is, what it desires to accomplish. In Moretti's words:

> The use of the mythic system allows Eliot to develop a poetic programme aimed at healing the split between factual judgements and value-judgements, to establish in its place a form of communication and perception in which the two instances are indistinguishable. (220)

Thus, he emphasizes *The Waste Land*'s 'constructiveness', evoking its desire "to build a cultural microsystem based on mythic arrangement" (209). Erasing the distinction between fact and value judgements facilitates the poem's projection of itself as

impersonal. Furthermore, as I will address in Chapter 1, Eliot relies on his conception of tradition as a means of establishing impersonality, and thereby substantiating his vision of western civilization in *The Waste Land*.

Moretti also argues that *The Waste Land* possesses "a code that allows for the *assimilation* of elements taken from different codes: the 'all-inclusiveness' that appears on the poem's surface is the consequence of this deep formal procedure: and this, in turn, functions substantially as a mythic system [...]" (219). Moretti explains that myth "presents itself as that value-system which pervades and ascribes 'significance', and hence humanizes all manifestations of that existence" (220). Thus, the poem's appeal to myth represents its attempt to universalize the experiences by humanizing them, portraying them as shared and felt by all members of western civilization. He discerns that "the 'fragment' has become a *function*", and what is striking is that it is no longer "dislocated and mangled, but that it possesses a precise meaning and role, and that it contributes effectively towards the composition of a new organized whole" (221). The 'fragment' that transforms into a function is much like the way metonymy operates: part evokes whole and manages to inscribe both old and new meaning. (As I argue in my second chapter, metonymy enables this "*assimilation* of elements" and metaphor facilitates this 'all-inclusiveness'). Therefore, Moretti's argument reflects the poem's reliance on the mythic structure for establishing and substantiating its expression of human experience.

Moretti's reading of the mythical method is useful because it directs the discussion of *The Waste Land* towards the question of authority. Terry Eagleton pursues a similar course of investigation, but unlike Moretti he explains what impersonality conceals in order to accomplish its task. He asserts that myth is imposed as "a totalizing

pattern", and "coherence emerges, not from any genuine exploration of inner structure of Western culture itself—from an attempt to find and render its internal coherence and intelligibility—but from the working through of that experience in terms of an external and predetermined pattern" (156). Eagleton evokes *The Waste Land*'s design, shaped by external influence and hiding under the guise of impersonality. For him, the main objection to Eliot's use of myth lies in his handling of it: myth enables Eliot to "project a whole range of deeply subjective attitudes under the cover of a kind of neutrality"; hence, "it smuggles private attitudes into what postures as impartial wisdom" (158-59). In addition, with regards to Tiresias's supposed vision, Eagleton remarks that he is "both too intimate with and too estranged from what he observes to offer a constructive criticism" (160). Thus, Tiresias is deemed ineffectual, and dismissed as an alternate source of authority in *The Waste Land*.

Eagleton and Moretti both respond to the question of how *The Waste Land* projects meaning, thereby addressing the mythical method. For Eagleton, Eliot's use of myth is suspect, and he deduces that myth is Eliot's agent, offering a means of communicating subjective attitudes while masking them as objective. According to Eagleton, the evidence of this is seen in:

> the belief, for instance, that the cultural decline at issue is primarily 'spiritual' in source, that man has become artificially dislocated from the seasonal cycle, that history re-enacts itself in a futile way, that Margate and Carthage can be relevantly paralleled and contrasted, that a primary need is for an ascetic spiritual wisdom, that aspects of oriental culture have therefore something significant to offer. (159)

Eagleton, thus, provides one account of how the poem eagerly, and yet, surreptitiously orientates the reader towards a certain view of western culture as spiritually vagrant. Myth, then, offers the kind of verisimilitude and impartiality that Eliot desires in order for him to depict the plight of modern culture.

The poem's provocativeness, thus, lies in its insistence on impersonality. Michael Levenson articulates the poem's challenges:

> In the opening movement of *The Waste Land*, the individual subject possesses none of the formal dominance it once enjoyed in Conrad or James. No single consciousness presides; no single voice dominates. A character appears, looming suddenly into prominence, breaks into speech, and then recedes, having bestowed momentary conscious perception on the fragmentary scene. (172)

In other words, authority is not embodied in a sole subject, but is rather disembodied. Levenson's description acutely portrays the poem's ceaseless movement from one voice to another.[6] He remarks that "there is a distinctly disembodied aspect to consciousness in the poem, which watches without being watched and seems not so much to inhabit the world as to float upon it" (174).

However, even if the reader is assailed by the poem's lack of authoritative orientation, this confusion ostensibly will be diminished or perhaps intensified by Eliot's notes. Eliot attempts to rectify the problem of the poem's unity, and simultaneously provide navigational coordinates for the lost reader.[7] In fact, the notes promote themselves as such, for they symbolize strategies employed to solicit specific responses to the poem. Undoubtedly, the most significant note is the one on Tiresias in which Eliot reveals that though he is "a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', [he] is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest". Eliot, moreover,

suggests: "What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (*CPP* 78). However, the note speaks more about Eliot's own anxiety than about the poem's unification (an idea which I address in Chapter 2). Levenson reminds us that "if we rush too quickly to Tiresias as a presiding consciousness [...] then we lose what the text clearly asks us to retain: the plurality of voices that sound in no easy harmony" (191).

Levenson affirms that order can emerge from beneath and that it need not descend from above (189). Thus, he perceives that the "principle of order in *The Waste Land* depends on a plurality of consciousness, an ever-increasing series of points of view, which struggle towards an emergent unity and then continue to struggle past that unity" (193). He formulates the idea of an inclusive "circle of consciousness" that surrounds fragmentation, but without transforming it into coherence (176). Levenson conceptualizes the "circle of consciousness" as "the widening of perspectives" that do not enclose, but rather expand again (204-05). He suggests that order emerges from the "fragments of consciousness", thereby refuting the claim that the poem is built upon the *juxtaposition* of fragments; rather, Levenson proposes that the poem is "built out of their *interpenetration*" (190). Yet, how does *The Waste Land* negotiate all the voices and still manage to attain power? Is, then, the poem's authority contingent on the coalition of fragmentary consciousnesses, as Levenson argues? He emphasizes the poem's movement of expansion and parallelism, encompassing parts into wholes, essentially constructing history and tradition (204). Moreover, he asserts: "Eliot's mythic method extends *parallels*" (200).

Although Levenson's argument is persuasive, I am not entirely convinced. He is tremendously helpful in elucidating the major issues surrounding the poem and addressing the notion of unity, but he does not examine what plural consciousnesses or

voices communicate though he proposes how they operate structurally. Eliot has a vested interest in how *The Waste Land* is perceived and understood. I do not think that Levenson is critical enough of *The Waste Land*'s projections. Furthermore, Tiresias is not as helpless as Levenson concludes. He writes: "The unifying notion here is the theme of the *retrospect*, which pervades the poem and which receives its consummate expression in Tiresias, who is obliged to return to old scenes and to witness old failures—in short, to endure the agony of retrospection helpless to change what it vividly sees" (174). Tiresias possesses more agency than any other character in the poem, which is perhaps why Eliot was adamant that he revealed "the substance of the poem". Tiresias exhibits his agency in his pursuit of the typist and in his estimation of her (through the use of metonymy, in which the chosen metonyms function to judge her and condemn her behaviour as sexually illicit). Criticism has failed to recognize that his activeness is also manifested in the titillation he derives from the scene. Ultimately, however, Tiresias's voice dissolves, and any alleged reigning authority is proven to be shallow.

In short, challenging *The Waste Land*'s authority is complicated by its insistence on impersonality, and therefore, its validity and legitimacy of expression. The poem's universalizing impulse, manifested in myth, transforms these attitudes into common cultural experience, shared by all. *The Waste Land* is so utterly entrenched in myth and allusion that it is difficult to escape the seduction and persuasion of the text's evocation of collapse, despair, and alienation. The text envelops the reader and critic, and the projected images are astonishingly easy to internalize, despite the confusion they elicit. The reader, thus, must resist the poem's provocation. Critics have often discussed how the text transcends boundaries in terms of time and history. Levenson notes that "both

textually and historically", "the poem oversteps boundaries, moving among voices, between bodies, over space and through time" (174). *The Waste Land*, indeed, exceeds boundaries with regards to the reader; he or she is effortlessly swept into the anarchic fragmentation and consequently, loses his or her footing, loses stability. Yet, it is the poem's reliance on tradition that allows it to attain a certain impersonality. In *The Waste Land*, objectivity and impersonality essentially constitute an unspoken agreement, an adherence to shared assumptions. The poem's subjectivity is concealed as long as the projections are absorbed and uninvestigated.

In "Eliot's Impact on Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Poetry," Charles Altieri abandons questions of unity, the mythical method, and Tiresias, and instead focuses on the text's potential for cultural transformation. For Altieri, Eliot's greatest impact and genius "lay in the ways he allowed poets to cast technical experiment as significant cultural work struggling to make poetry a dynamic force for cultural change" (191-192). In addition, he retains the belief that perhaps by escaping personality, we may discover different ways of experiencing our dependencies and our powers as historical agents (194). According to Altieri, "Eliot treated the poetic site as a literal construction of possible modes of agency" (195). However, Altieri does not recognize that the promise of Eliot's 'new' poetic site is tainted by the reliance on crystallized beliefs that do not accommodate other views outside a particular social and political class. The poem's misogyny, for example, signifies a movement of compression rather than extension, which one would not expect from this poetic site of supposed possibilities and openness.

To what extent does Altieri idealize Eliot's poetic and cultural activity? If impersonality were not bound to subjective attitudes in *The Waste Land*, it would be

easier to perceive its desirability. The problem, of course, is that the poem *is* informed by agreed upon assumptions. Therefore, Altieri's vision of impersonality as a liberating force of cultural analysis falls short. Even if impersonality offers a means of cultural reflection and a way of freeing the individual from personal pursuit in theory, if it does not follow through with its prescripts in practice, then it is commendable insofar as what it intended to accomplish, but failed to execute. In other words, Altieri recognizes Eliot's efforts, which many critics disregard, but in doing so, becomes so involved in the crusade and recovery of Eliot's worth that he does not address the undercurrents, those projections that are informed by a specific ideological orientation. Thus, contrary to Altieri's intimation, *The Waste Land* is not receptive to new ways of analyzing culture, despite its impersonal approach, precisely because its ideas are already formed. I will continue this argument in the subsequent chapters, and further evaluate Altieri's critical position.

Moretti and Eagleton both assert that myth conceals *The Waste Land*'s subjective perspective. However, the poem also employs metonymic devices for transmitting beliefs. In fact, metonymy is better equipped than myth, or essentially metaphor, for it is most efficacious when precluding an awareness of its presence. Subtlety is required, and because metonymy invokes agreement, it does not draw attention to itself as a literary device. Consequently, it offers a kind of anonymity and makes it possible for inscribed attitudes to remain undetected. Moreover, since metaphor dominates the poem, metonymy is further obscured. Yet ultimately, it is the coupling of metonymic and metaphoric devices that deters the recognition of the poem's projections.

My first chapter consists of an attempt to identify and locate the poem's authority. *The Waste Land* resists the kind of probing that seeks to challenge its power.

Eliot's literary criticism, which preceded the poem's publication, announces and explains impersonality to the reader; in fact, the criticism prepares the reader for the poem's arrival. Eliot's repudiation of personality is the crux of his aesthetic. Tradition and the individual talent develop out of his notion of impersonality. Therefore, Eliot invests his aspirations and beliefs in an objective poetry. The chapter will examine the promise and danger of his theory, in all that it advocates. In a way, the first chapter can be seen as a response to Altieri's discussion of the value of impersonality. Although Altieri perceives the problems of impersonality, he provides an alternative view of the subject, evoking excitement, rather than skepticism. He emphasizes the liberating experience of this new poetry. For Altieri, poetry, freed from subjectivity, is capable of performing work that affects all individuals, not simply the exclusive interests of one group. Yet, why is radical objectivity necessary? Why is it not possible for subjectivity to provide a means of accessing common feelings by expressing the feelings of an individual, that is, through the process of identification?

My second chapter will examine the poem's solicitation of metaphor and metonymy to communicate its attitudes regarding women. Traditionally, the poem has been read almost exclusively through metaphor. However, recent critics such as Cooper, North, and Ellman discern metonymy's pervasive presence in *The Waste Land*. The chapter will explore the metaphoric and metonymic mechanisms that facilitate the poem's view of social classes and women. The chapter will focus specifically on how the poem exploits these devices in its construction of female desire and sexuality. Although I will avoid creating a dichotomy between metaphor and metonymy, I stress metonymy's power as a literary device, how its appeal to impersonality, tradition and agreed assumptions ensures its success. However, metonymy's power, unchallenged

until this moment, is disrupted once the reader recognizes its operation in the poem. The interpretative activity transforms metonymy's silent invocation of assent into explicit meaning. In other words, metonymy's effectiveness depends on the reader's complacency, and once he or she questions what ideas he or she is agreeing to, then the device is subjected to investigation and query, thereby exposing its agenda. Through a specific analysis in Chapter 2 of how gender is constructed by ideological assumptions, what both chapters endeavour to explain is *The Waste Land*'s power and seductivity; its prestige is, of course, irrefutable.

Notes

Introduction

[1] Cooper suggests that the effectiveness of the poem's authoritative voice requires that the historical poem be perceived as chaotic (73).

[2] In his essay " 'Mature Poets Steal' ," James Longenbach writes: "Eliot self-consciously made his poetry difficult, the property of a specialist, in order to increase the status of poets" (178). For a concise analysis of the function of allusion in Eliot's poetic practice see p. 180.

[3] For example, the Fisher King myth forms a significant part of the poem's mythical method, and serves as a means of structuring the poem.

[4] The fact that the notes appear at all signifies a deficiency in the poem, an awareness of a need for supplementary information. The notes also betray Eliot's anxiousness to ensure the reader's 'correct' reception and understanding of the poem.

[5] See also Elisabeth Schneider's *T.S. Eliot: The Pattern in the Carpet.*

[6] Furthermore, only selective parts emerge as 'scenes', like those of a play. The poem's most descriptive passages are, in fact, those that involve women: the scene with the nervous woman and the pub scene with Lil in "A Game of Chess," and the two 'violation' scenes involving the typist, and then the unnamed woman at Moorgate in "The Fire Sermon."

[7] Although the infamous notes first appeared in the published editions in order to distinguish them from the magazine versions, and to avoid the charges of plagiarism that had been aimed at Eliot's earlier poetry (Ackroyd 127), they also suggest a compulsion to elucidate the poem's obscurity.

1. Arriving at the Site of Authority

The Waste Land invokes authority, but from what site does its authoritative voice emerge? This pressing question can be addressed by examining Eliot's literary criticism, which reveals the operative principles upon which the poem is dependent.[1] In his criticism as well as his poetic practice, Eliot reconfigures the site of authority. His critical book *The Sacred Wood* (1920) has significant bearing on the poem, for it is in his notorious essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that he articulates his theory of impersonal poetry.[2] In advocating impersonality, Eliot suggests that the poet's loyalties belong to that which is outside him or herself, namely, tradition. He is adamant about the poet's need to procure tradition, and asserts that "tradition cannot be inherited, and if you [the poet] want it you must obtain it by great labour" (*The Sacred Wood;* hereafter *SW* 49); tremendous effort is required to bring about tradition. Eliot uses the extended metaphor of a mind to conceptualize tradition.[3] Like a mind then, tradition is alive and possesses a consciousness, and as Eliot suggests, it is not stagnant, but rather a mind that evolves. Eliot asserts:

> [The artist] must be aware that the mind of Europe—the mind of his own country—a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind—is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing *en route* [...] (*SW* 51)

In addition, tradition has a large memory, retaining everything throughout its existence. Thus, equipped with the faculty of recollection, tradition maintains a continuity with that which has preceded and with that which follows.

What is striking in Eliot's description of tradition and his depiction of the desired orientation of the artist is the concurrent submissiveness and assertiveness inscribed in

the artist's role. In other words, in recognizing the crucial importance and value of tradition, the artist is expected to respond as both a devoted subject and as an active defender by forsaking all personal preoccupations in order to preserve tradition's existence. Hence, this constitutes the 'individual talent': the individual's ability to continually reinstitute tradition in the present. Tradition appears to be attributed with the strength and resilience of a mind, but like a mind, it is also vulnerable, subject to decay and disintegration. Eliot seems to allude to its fragility in his discussion of the artist's role in relation to tradition: he insists that "the poet must develop or procure the consciousness of the past" and "should continue to develop this consciousness throughout his career" (52). The implication then is that according to Eliot, the artist is responsible for the survival of tradition. Although tradition is characterized as an enduring force, in fact its life is dependent on the artist. However, for Eliot, tradition takes precedence over individual endeavours. He affirms that the artist will eventually learn that the mind of tradition is "much more important than his own private mind" (51). The poet should be engaged in nurturing the life of tradition, rather than pursuing his or her own personal and exclusive interests.

For Eliot, the individual brings tradition into existence by expanding his or her own mind to encompass "the mind of Europe," and by sustaining the historical past. Eliot conceptualizes tradition as a "historical sense," which signifies a communication with the past. The connection with the past, however, requires not only the perception of the "pastness of the past," but the recognition of its appearance in the present (*SW* 49). Thus, the individual resuscitates the past, restoring its life in the present. In a sense, he or she implants the life of tradition (that is "the mind of Europe") within his or her own mind. The artist's mind rectifies the disparity between the past and the present

by unifying them. A double gesture is performed. While the poet's subjectivity is depreciated, reflected in the privileging of "the mind of Europe" and the required act of self-renunciation, in another movement, he or she is elevated through his or her capacity to access the historical consciousness of Europe. Essentially, Eliot prescribes the work of the poet, which is worthy and elevated insofar as it succeeds in instituting tradition in the present. In his essay "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca" (1927), Eliot states that what alone constitutes the life of a poet is the struggle "to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal"(*SE* 137). For Eliot, the appeal to the 'universal' is in fact tradition.

Yet, the issue of the artist's status cannot be dismissed, for the elevation of the artist is manifest in Eliot's belief that through individual talent, tradition is procured. According to Eliot, the poet's awareness of, and orientation towards, the historical past causes him or her to write with a feeling of the solidarity between the past and the present. The writer experiences the sensation of speaking not only from his or her own generation and country, but from the entire literary history of Europe. As Eliot writes, "the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order" (*SW* 49). Thus, the artist is not simply assailed by a feeling of the generational, national, and ancestral, but more significantly by a sense of them coinciding and forming an order. It is the coalescence of the timeless and the temporal that creates the consciousness, or "the historical sense," and that makes a writer "traditional" while simultaneously provoking an acute awareness of his or her "contemporaneity" (49).

Eliot asserts that the value of the work of art cannot be judged in isolation from the past, but only rather from within the context of what has preceded it, within the whole existing order (*SW* 49-50). Levenson states succinctly: "No meaning without relations; no truth, no reality, no value without order, without system. Eliot's tradition, then, is not the product of a mere sentimentalizing nostalgia for the past" (188). The relationship between tradition and the poet is saliently expressed in the final lines of "Tradition and the Individual Talent." To comprehend what constitutes the work to be done, the poet must live not merely in the present, but in "the present moment of the past," conscious of not "what is dead, but of what is already living" (59). In his essay "The Function of Criticism" (1923), Eliot reasserts his view of the relationship between artists and tradition. He perceives the literature of the world, of Europe, of a single country, "not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as 'organic wholes', as systems in relation to which and only in relation to which, individual works of literary art, and the works of individual artists, have their significance"(*SE* 23-4). For Eliot, literary history possesses a context, in which artists work and achieve a sense of meaningfulness. Moreover, Eliot declares that there is something "outside the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position." The artist is obligated to supersede his or her self-indulgences for what Eliot calls a "common cause", that which will unite artists, mostly unconsciously. Eliot appeals to a collective activity, inspiring and instilling solidarity among artists. He affirms moreover that between "true artists of any time" there is an "unconscious community" (*SE* 24).

It is unclear how Eliot's vision of a cohesive artistic community will emerge; however, his investment in the power of the individual mind is irrefutable, since

according to Eliot, the individual mind provides the necessary conditions for tradition. Michael North discerns that what "remains in Eliot's analysis as an unchanging, normative standard is the wholeness of the mind, its ability to fuse new material with the old" (90). North recognizes that in Eliot's view the individual mind is like tradition in its ability to sustain a wholeness and to integrate new and old material. North states: "The real continuity behind history, Eliot suggests, is that of the individual mind. Though its contents change, and must change, the mind remains as a principle of wholeness" (90). While the individual mind is a model for understanding tradition, it also in fact constitutes the place in which tradition survives. The artist's mind is attributed with a sense of continuity and stability which serves not only to identify it with tradition, but finally reveals those qualities that enable tradition to exist.

While the individual's mind is praised, Eliot, in what seems to be a contradictory move, advocates the suppression of the individual's subjectivity. Because of his insistence on the necessity of working within the systematic expanse of literary history, Eliot's notion of tradition represses the inclination towards solipsism. To become "traditional" the poet must forfeit his or her own subjectivity (*SW* 52). He states that the "progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (53). According to Eliot, the artist's task is the unceasing pursuit of self-annihilation, through which any trace of the personal is eradicated. The artist's personality is perceived as a contaminant. According to Eliot the artist must surrender subjectivity in order to seize objectivity. It is "in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science" (53).[4] The quotation highlights Eliot's belief in the objective nature of impersonal poetry: art that accomplishes the effacement of the poet is valid because it is not corrupted by subjectivity.[5]

For Eliot, the acquisition of tradition requires the eradication of personality. However, what does impersonality 'truly' entail, or stated differently, what does Eliot really mean by impersonality? Moreover, to what length does he advocate impersonality? Michael Levenson responds to these questions, explaining Eliot's critical intentions. Levenson states: "His notion of tradition aimed at just such a critical poise, avoiding egoism on the one side and severe dehumanization on the other, not denying the individual ego but severely restricting its claims" (184). Levenson perceives an attempt on Eliot's part to establish an equilibrium. However, in Eliot's anxiety to suppress overwhelming egoism, and thereby to reorient the site of authority, he destroys any possibility for a negotiation between egoism and dehumanization by advocating the annihilation of the ego, the personal. An examination of Eliot's view of the relationship between the artist and tradition, particularly with regards to the issue of authority, reveals the threat of dehumanization and the difficult state of the impersonality that Eliot prescribes for the poet.

Eliot appears to rectify the egoistic drive by relocating authority, transferring it from a single source, the individual, to a community of individuals, who are united through a common consciousness. Levenson supplies an insightful and perspicuous articulation of Eliot's way of remedying the individual's inclination towards a kind of self-absorption: "The self was to be positioned among other selves; consciousness was to be corrected by a tradition of consciousness. The vision was not one of individuals versus authority, but of an authority composed of individuals" (186). Eliot's conception of authority is one that all individuals create together, and the result is a composite standard, the composite standard being a way of configuring Eliot's notion of tradition, one which does not derive authority from an individual ego but extends beyond it to a

community of individuals. The artist's talent is demonstrated through his or her involvement with the history of western literature, in his or her accordance to tradition. In Levenson's words, the "totality of individuals—the individual poets, individual poems—*was* the requisite authority" (186). Authority, then, does not develop solely from the individual; he or she is not a dictating force. Perhaps implicit in Levenson's explanation is the notion that the authority that transpires is not one that is imposed upon the artist, nor one that the poet imposes egoistically. Rather, for Eliot, authority evolves from the poet's involvement with tradition. The historical consciousness, an awareness of what is present and what has preceded (that is, tradition), establishes "a scheme into which the new phenomena can fit" (Levenson 187). According to Eliot, tradition is not an "accumulated mass of literary endeavour," but is rather a "meaning-giving system" (187). Levenson reiterates Eliot's assertion that the "value of any particular artist, of any particular work, cannot be determined in isolation—just as no object, no person, no fact, can be perceived in isolation" (187).

Part of Eliot's discussion is concerned with the issue of emotion, and it signifies his attempt to explicate the desired state of impersonality. He invokes a dualistic relationship between the mind and the emotions. Eliot professes that "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material" (*SW* 54). The passage reiterates Eliot's disavowal of the personal as a source of inspiration, and simultaneously reveals the relegated place of the emotions, exiled from the mind and employed as material in the creative process. Eliot protests relentlessly against the release of personal emotion in the work of art: "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of

personality, but an escape from personality" (58). Private emotions are condemned, in favour of an underlying emotion that draws "floating feelings," which have "an affinity to this emotion", to it, in order to combine together to form "a new art emotion" (57). Eliot is characteristically elusive, though perhaps what he is trying to articulate is not easily definable. The kind of emotion that he invokes is that which reaches beyond the personal to an emotive binding force that unites all "floating feelings." In "Eliot's Impact on Twentieth-Century Anglo-American Poetry," Charles Altieri writes that impersonality "provides a means for elaborating and intensifying the fluid intimacy that Eliot achieves by imagining poems as literal sites where complexes of feeling play against fantasies of selfhood" (199). Altieri's image of actual sites suggests openness, possibility and play. He invokes an intimacy and intensity that is fuelled by the confrontation between "complexes of feeling" and self-absorption. Altieri does not define "complexes of feeling." However, the term intimates emotions that come to be identified as cultural patterns; they are complexes in the sense that they reveal how individuals relate to each other socially and emotionally, complexes that are studied as cultural constructs, such as mother-daughter, daughter-father, son-mother. Altieri perceives the two, "complexes of feeling" and "fantasies of selfhood," as being engaged in a play rather than struggle. To perceive them in play seems somewhat to belie what Eliot advocates intensely throughout *The Sacred Wood* which is the repudiation of personality (or, in Altieri's words "fantasies of selfhood"). Eliot is intent on illustrating the extent to which the artist must deny subjectivity, asserting that the "progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (*SW* 53). Altieri's interpretation does not reflect Eliot's privileging of objectivity over subjectivity; his allusion to play does not communicate the theme of domination and the

threat of dehumanization present in Eliot's discussion of emotion. Although Altieri's analysis is insightful, for it reveals the promise of Eliot's theory, it does not evoke the dangers of Eliot's doctrine. Eliot does not invite the play of objective and subjective emotions, but instead banishes subjectivity because he perceives it as leading to solipsism and to the obscuring of "floating feelings."

Emotion that arises from personal specificity, provoked by particular events in the poet's life, has no place in the artistic endeavour. In other words, according to Eliot, isolated feelings that possess no affiliation with surrounding feelings are not valuable to the work of art. Altieri elucidates:

> Poetry then had to be impersonal and complex—not because such attributes secured the authority of culture but because the poet needed means of resisting the illusory authority of both the poet's descriptive capacities and his or her seductive personality. (198)

Altieri reveals the danger of the poet's reliance on his or her own authority as a means of substantiating his or her expression of the state of a culture. He explains that there is this need to resist the "seductive personality" in order to arrive at impersonality and the complexity of emotions that operates there. Eliot addresses the notion of complexity, stating that the emotion in the poet's work will be "a complex thing," but "not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life" (*SW* 57). He is critical about the type of permissible emotion, and argues that expressing the complexity of human emotion constitutes neither a brilliant poet, nor the intricate emotion to which he alludes.

Eliot's conception of emotion is connected to his idea of tradition. The emotion expressed in poetry has to be conducive to the feelings residing in the "present moment

of the past" (*SW* 59). In other words, the emotion arises from an awareness of the history of the past in the mind of the contemporary poet. Thus, Eliot propounds: "The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all" (58). The intangibility of Eliot's ideas is reflected in his statement that the poet expresses "feelings which are not in actual emotions at all." Eliot seems to suggest that the conglomeration of feelings results in a previously unidentifiable emotion, which therefore was not seen to exist in "actual emotions." The individual ego is denounced insofar as his or her fixation is on personal emotions. However, the individual is elevated through his or her ability to access those "feelings" that are shared by a culture. Here Altieri's point resonates powerfully: "Each poet's sufferings were not simply personal; they were representative—impotence conferred power. And each poet's efforts to express the complexity of contemporary life became a possible remaking of what we could take ourselves to be and of what futures we could imagine for the race" (193). What Eliot aspires toward is a concentration of the common feelings that constitute experience: "It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all" (*SW* 58). Eliot seems to suggest that the experiences are not easily identifiable because they are not grounded in personal specificity, that is, they are not derived solely from the poet's experiences. In *The Waste Land*, authority is enforced formally through a poetry of impersonality which achieves the erasure of the poet's presence. Thus, the poem's vision is not in a sense attributed to the poet, but seems to exist outside of the poet's experience; the poem's credibility is derived from its objectivity.

Eliot alludes to what he calls "*significant* emotion," which is "emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet" (59). His nebulous evocation of "*significant* emotion" only serves to reinforce further his view that the emotion arising from the poet is neither valuable nor admissible. For Eliot, the difficulty of this feeling exists mostly in its identification since few are aware of its occurrence (59). His notion of emotion is part of his theory of impersonality, which is tied to his theory of the objective correlative. "*Significant* emotion" is reached by conceiving the poem as an objective correlative for emotions rather than a direct expression of them (Altieri 198).

The objective correlative is a facet of impersonality, and represents another step towards attaining objectivity, the poet's surrender of subjectivity being the other pivotal step to ensuring impersonality and objectivity. Eliot's theory of the objective correlative is intimated in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," and explicitly addressed in his essay "Hamlet and his Problems" in *The Sacred Wood*. Eliot writes:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked. (*SW* 100)

According to him, the 'objective correlative' will trigger the desired emotion. His theory operates on the presupposition that everyone will experience a shared and common feeling. Through the 'objective correlative,' Eliot seeks to express a universal experience. The quotation reveals Eliot's prescription for the expression of emotion in art, which is commensurate with his advocation of an order uniting the whole of literature. Terry Eagleton describes aptly the ostensible results: in "the achieved

moment of the objective correlative," "the poet passes beyond the encapsulating limits of private, partial experience into an impersonally integrated objectivity, a coherence of understanding [...]" (139). Eagleton depicts the individual's movement from the confines of the personal to the expanse of impersonality, and this experience is figured as liberating, for it leads to intelligibility. The quotation reveals how through objectivity, a clarity of vision is achieved, the implication being that subjectivity obscures that which exists beyond the private. Eagleton discerns what exists at the core of Eliot's theory. For him, Eliot's theory suggests "a projection of private feeling into material formula, rather than a revelation of meanings in some way intrinsic to reality," thereby, leading to a kind of premonition that one "can never escape an undermining sense of its own arbitrariness" (153). It is precisely this idea of projection that is the pith of Eliot's vision of impersonality: the individual casts emotion into a situation or chain of events, the objective correlative; thus, it is not an act of revealing, but rather of transmitting; consequently, the artist's status of visionary is revoked.

Eagleton recognizes the inherent problem of Eliot's theory: "Because Eliot sees the real world as a complex of material codes which can carry subjective emotion, a sense of the inevitable externality of emotion to code—the lack of an inward and necessary link between feeling and object—can never quite be avoided" (153). Eagleton addresses one of the difficulties of Eliot's theory, which resides in the artist's position in relation to the work of art. In order to achieve the desired state of objectivity, a distance is required between the work and the individual. Since Eliot's theory is predicated on self-abnegation, the challenge that the individual confronts is the continual pursuit of such a feat.

Altieri, too, recognizes the difficulties of Eliot's theory of the objective correlative, but unlike Eagleton, he is not confounded by them. For Altieri, the result of an objective correlative is "a new immediacy, a new literalness, and a new abstract intimacy for poetry, all of which require resisting traditional ideas of self so that the concrete textures of poetry can provide richer imaginative alternatives" (198). According to Altieri:

> instead of connecting art directly to the expressive desires of its maker, the work is asked to serve as a distinctive mode of thinking. The formal syntax does a good deal of the motivating that moves the text from detail to detail, and it, not some expressive will, has the power to elicit complexes of feeling [...]. (194)

Altieri focuses on the appeal and potential of poetry that derives from impersonality, rather than concentrating on the issue of the artist's disconnectedness. In contrast, Eagleton's criticism leads to a concern with the ego's needs, though he does not directly confront the issue. Part of the appeal of Eliot's theory resides in its orientation away from narcissism, through denunciation of the personal. The self-consumed ego, driven elusively by its own desires, is often unappealing in the way in which it fixates on the particular without recognizing the general. However, it is the extent to which, and the acuity with which Eliot advocates self-deprivation that is problematic. Eliot decrees the death of the ego: "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality" (*SW* 53). That Eliot seeks to suppress egocentricism is ambitious, but that he does not strive for a negotiation of the ego's needs with external, common needs is more than disconcerting, for as addressed in the previous pages, his theory draws close to the precipice of dehumanization. If one imagines how an individual would actually feel if he or she acted in accordance with Eliot's theory, one

might be able to perceive the individual confronted with a sense of impotence and inadequacy, for Eliot claims, "the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its material" (*SW* 54). If one indulges in speculation, one might envision a loss of personal will and investment produced by the continual atrophy of the ego's drive. Objectivity may lead to common feelings and a shared experience that unite and bind individuals, as Eliot intends, but the danger of eradicating the ego is the risk of erasing that which also informs and defines human experience, that fleshy vulnerability that is felt to be acutely personal, but which derives from outer forces acting upon it.

Altieri acknowledges the challenges that Eliot's theory poses, and therefore reminds the reader and critic of the necessary resistance to "traditional ideas of self". He suggests that a poetry of impersonality requires a new orientation towards the work, due to the poetry's new immediacy, literalness and abstract intimacy (198). In the case of *The Waste Land*, Altieri argues that "the entire effort is to get beyond single lyric personality to a mode of reflection treating the scenic level of the poem as the direct rendering of collective experience" (199). In reference to Eagleton's point concerning externality of emotion and the lack of an inward link between feeling and object, Altieri's argument is that the impersonal complexes of feeling represent an attempt to prevent the ego's efforts at imposing itself as "the arbiter for the energies of personality" (199).

How then does Eliot restore authority to a figure that appears to be disempowered? Eliot seems to reconfigure the site of the poet's empowerment, which does not derive from a personal representation of the world, but from an objective

expression of it. To recapitulate, authority does not emerge from an assertion, but from a denial of the ego, which enables an objective expression to be communicated. Eliot locates power in the individual's capacity for objectivity.

Richard Shusterman provides an excellent analysis of Eliot's theory of objectivity. His study is extremely useful because he explains specifically why objectivity is an appealing and serviceable notion for Eliot and yet such a problematic one (204). In his essay "Eliot and the Mutations of Objectivity," he formulates two terms, correspondence and consensuality, to express the two types of objectivity Eliot evokes. Shusterman ascertains that impersonality implies not being governed or distorted by narrowly individual private or personal prejudice, but rather conforming (deliberately or not) to the accepted norms, criteria or methods of regarding and judging things in the given culture. Impersonality, then, essentially constitutes consensual objectivity, namely, that which would be accepted as valid by participants in the given community, tradition or practice. Shusterman asserts that consensual objectivity, this sense of impersonality, signifies the essence of Eliot's advocacy of poetic impersonality and objectivity through adherence to tradition (204). To recapitulate Shusterman's observations, consensual objectivity operates as a kind of conscious or unconscious agreement, an accepted criterion, between individuals of a community. Thus, the aim of impersonal objectivity is the overcoming of the distortive bias, which requires the individual to suppress and abolish all personal elements in perception, the most direct way being complete self-renunciation (205). Eliot's idea of a living tradition is embodied in his conception of poetic objectivity and impersonality, which Shusterman reveals to be a matter of consensual objectivity (206). Hence, tradition demands an

assent to that which is not personally and temporally exclusive, but which is communally and historically inclusive.

The inadequacy of the model of consensual objectivity is revealed for Shusterman in Eliot's introduction of the other aspect of the impersonal theory of poetry midway through "Tradition and the Individual Talent": the declaration of the necessity of the poet's 'depersonalization'. Shusterman refers to this view of objectivity as correspondence (207). Eliot attributes a scientific status to the work of art, for he perceives the possibility of art corresponding to an objective reality. He attempts to base poetic objectivity on correspondence, in order to achieve objects of perception that are maximally free from the vagaries of human interpretation (211). However, the ideal of objectivity, as a correspondence to reality through depersonalization and consequent neutral assimilation, is riddled with problems (211).

I have argued in this chapter, and Shusterman, too, has argued that the problem with the ideal of objectivity as accurate, uninterpreting correspondence is that it seems beyond possible realization and application. There is also the issue of the poet's creative role which Eliot's notion of objectivity seems to undermine by restricting the individual to an inert, neutral storer of images and feelings (212-13). Moreover, Shusterman recognizes a third problem that is not addressed in the preceding pages. He argues that in the effort to escape from the confinement of the mind and reach objective reality by "stripping our experience of reality from all conventional constructions of language and all interpretation of discursive thought that the mind allegedly has distortingly added", what is finally reached is immediate sensations, which paradoxically seem to thrust the individual back into subjectivity (213). The individual enters the realm of impressions

and the suffocating prison of subjectivism and solipsism that Eliot so anxiously sought to avoid (213-14).

Eliot seems to procure authority through the idea of consensual objectivity, which is manifest essentially in tradition, that is, an agreement of individuals in a practice.[6] However, there is the problem of recognizing and preserving the consensus of tradition (219). The dilemma is perhaps rectified by formulating and codifying the practice in explicit principles or canons, but this presents the risk of "stunting and ossifying a living and developing tradition into dogmatic conservatism and sterile conventionalism" (219). Shusterman discerns a solution for attaining consensual objectivity, though as he acknowledges, not a standard theoretical one:

> Seeing that no 'philosophical' solution seemed available, Eliot tried instead, with significant success, a *practical* solution to the loss of a strongly felt consensus by compelling and creating such consensus through the power and authority of his own critical judgement and poetic practice, reinforced by his institutional power as the editor of *The Criterion* and his authoritative status as regent-protector of Western culture and spokesman for Christianity. (220)

As Shusterman reveals, Eliot's literary criticism was not sufficient for establishing the objective consensus he sought. The lack of an existing consensus compelled Eliot to construct one, and he was able to accomplish his task because of his esteemed status as an authoritative literary figure. Therefore, though Eliot in his critical theory alludes to an authority which exists outside of the artist, one that is objective and impersonal, the site from which *The Waste Land*'s authority transpires, is one that is personally, socially and ideologically informed. As Shusterman lucidly explains, tradition is "used as a principle to establish the community or consensus that is the necessary basis, if not the

very essence, of objectivity"; consequently, Eliot's quest for objectivity is "motivated by the need to escape solipsism and to find something outside the self that could be confirmed as real and could command assent and allegiance" (216). Therefore, Eliot's insistence on impersonality represents his attempt to procure a consensus, a stabilizing force. He perceives tradition as a means of securing this authority, in that, tradition dictates views that a community of individuals assents to, such as notions of women and the lower classes. The views become 'practices' in the sense that they are familiar, habitual, and hence, easily universalized. In my next chapter, I will discuss, with specific reference to gender, how the poem engineers consensus through the use of metonymy and metaphor.

Notes

Chapter 1

[1] See Timothy Materer's essay "T.S. Eliot's Critical Program." Materer suggests that "Eliot saw his literary criticism as a way of improving the appreciation of his own art," and by establishing an order for poets and poetry, Eliot could make a place for his own revolutionary poems (49).

[2] "Tradition and the Individual Talent" has momentous bearing on the poem not only on how the poem procures its compelling force, but also on Eliot's ambitiousness and his desire for canonicity. Strangely, the issue of how the poem establishes its authority and the issue of how the poem represents Eliot's quest for canonicity is the same: they mirror one another. If *The Waste Land* espouses successfully the critical view expressed in *The Sacred Wood*, then presumably for Eliot his place in literary history is imminent. Through his critical writing, Eliot prescribes the constituents for his own canonicity. In defining tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot addresses essentially the issue of the canon, for he outlines the criteria for attaining a valuable literary work.

[3] Brooker observes: "Such studies in cultural and social psychology gave the modernists one of their central metaphors, the mind of Europe. The modernists generally believed that Europe had a mind and that the crisis of their time was equivalent to a mental collapse" (*Mastery and Escape* 12).

[4] Modernist poetry reflects a proliferation of scientific imagery. In his essay "Eliot and the Mutations of Objectivity," Richard Shusterman argues that Eliot in his use of scientific tropes reveals that he has no real grasp of science. For Shusterman, Eliot's understands science as representing "a magical, modern-day philosopher's stone whose invocation could conjure up objectivity in any field and could inspire a transcendental, almost mystical, ideal of a purely objective God-like perception, perfectly corresponding to the real" (212). Scientific rhetoric appealed to the modernists, who saw in it a means of substantiating their literary claims. Thus, science functions as a legitimizing force, inscribing a clarity and accuracy previously missing in art. Shusterman is critical of the modernists' frequent practice of speaking of poetry and criticism in terms of natural science, and for him, "it seems more than a shallow rhetorical ploy to induce a guise of respectable objectivity by linguistic osmosis" (209). Hence, Eliot's delineation of the artistic process through scientific terminology signifies his desire to access objective truth attributed to the realm of science: his act symbolizes his attempt to validate the creative act that he affirms.

Eliot's ideas pertaining to the function of the poet are reiterated in his adoption of the image of the poet as a "medium". According to Eliot, the poet has "not a 'personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" (56). The eradication of ego reduces the poet to a transmitter, which leads consequently to the objectification of the poet. The instrumentalization of the artist is

revealed further in Eliot's discussion of mature and immature poets. The distinction between mature and immature poets is neither the superiority of personality nor the quantity of ideas, but rather "a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied, feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations" (53-4). The images of a "medium" and "receptacle" convey the impersonal poet that Eliot prescribes.

Eliot attempts to construct an objective reality in art by invoking scientific images. The scientific metaphors suggest the poet's inactivity, for art is produced once all the essential "particles" are present to "unite to form a new compound" (*SW* 55). The creation of art is aligned with that of a chemical reaction. The artist does not directly orchestrate the events, but provides only a controlled environment within which they occur of their own accord: in effect, the artist performs the role of a catalyst.

Moreover, by applying a scientific metaphor to the artistic endeavour in the manner of a formula, Eliot exploits the scientific world to establish plausibility.

[5] Though Eliot advocates objectivity, a completely depersonalized artistic product does not seem possible. A part of the ego will always be engaged in the task it performs though it may attempt to dissociate itself in order to attain neutrality. In *T. S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism* (1988), Richard Shusterman notes that the young Eliot of the 1920s zealously professed a radically objective and impersonal theory of criticism (47). Although Eliot's early critical theory is radically objectivist, his later criticism reveals an acceptance of the personal and subjective; he experienced increasing doubts as to the possibility and desirability of a criticism that is solely objective (43-5). For a discussion of Eliot's later theoretical position, see one of his last important essays, "The Frontiers of Criticism" (1956), in which his commitment to the subjective is articulated. Also refer to Shusterman's discussion of Eliot's essay and his critical conversion (pp. 45-52).

[6] See Gilbert and Gubar's *No Man's Land* vol. 1 *The War of the Words* for their account of feminism and modernism. Also see Brooker's criticism of Gilbert and Gubar in *Mastery and Escape* pp. 213-39.

2. Metaphor and Metonymy in Collusion

Metaphor enables *The Waste Land* to project its vision of western civilization's disintegration and despair, for drawing upon symbolism and myth, it inscribes a legitimacy and an authority into its expression of civilization's collapse.[1] Criticism has responded to, and in some ways been seduced by, the poem's metaphorical devices; consequently, it has constructed the poem's diagnosis in terms of metaphor and its 'mythical method'. However, metaphor alone does not ensure the poem's authority. As we have seen in the first chapter, one of the difficulties *The Waste Land* presents is identifying from what site the authoritative voice emerges, for what is baffling about the poem in the first place is its ability to project such a voice given its fragmentary nature, conflicting voices, multiple languages and plethora of allusions.[2] Yet, despite all of these ostensible obstacles, the text, indeed, evokes the bleakness of its vision.[3] The persuasiveness of the text's evocation and diagnosis of western civilization's crisis is partially secured by authorial distancing, and as revealed in the previous chapter, the authority derived from impersonality.[4] Space is created between the poet and the text through impersonality, and it is metonymy that strengthens impersonality by also creating distance to facilitate the emergence of an authoritative voice.

Although the poem employs both metonymy and metaphor, it is through metonymic devices that *The Waste Land* attains a state of impersonality. However, what is partly fascinating about the poem, and which explains why criticism has been absorbed by it, is how the poem does not simply invite but boldly encourages itself to be interpreted metaphorically.[5] *The Waste Land*, in fact, promotes itself as resolutely metaphoric by using various strategies, the most notable one being the famous 'mythical

method'. The poem is structurally grounded in myth, as the notes attest.[6] In "*Ulysses*, Order, and Myth," Eliot rallies for the adoption of myth. He writes:

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, ordering, of giving shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. (*SP* 177) [7]

Elsewhere in the essay, Eliot expresses his belief that the 'mythical method' is "a step toward making the modern world possible for art, toward [...] order and form" (178). The 'mythical method' then roots *The Waste Land* in metaphor.

In contrast, metonymy possesses a much subtler presence in the poem, and consequently is easily glossed over. Another reason that metonymy slips by unnoticed is due to the nature of the device itself. Metonymy functions much like "consensual objectivity," Shusterman's formulation of how Eliot's notion of impersonality operates. As was demonstrated in the previous chapter, Shusterman's terminology is extremely helpful in conceptualizing Eliot's theory of impersonality. To briefly reiterate Shusterman's definition, "consensual objectivity", or what I will call consensual agreement, consists of a consent based on acceptance of ideas by individuals in a given community, tradition or practice. Essentially, consensual agreement is a recognition, adherence and adoption of certain ways of thinking, habitual thinking that becomes belief, for instance the perception of lower class women as promiscuous, which leads to a belief that all lower class women, and women in general, are 'whores'. What

Shusterman alludes to, and what becomes apparent is that these agreed upon ideas eventually are absorbed, and become part of an individual's consciousness; they become norms and hence not are challenged. Metonymy, like impersonality, is based in consensual agreement, and it is metonymy and impersonality that enable the poem to invoke a certain social and cultural attitude.

Operating on a consensual agreement, *The Waste Land* re-establishes ideas surrounding social types and notions regarding the sexuality of women. However, the poem's employment of myth obscures the social perspective from which the poem speaks, and as a result, women become metaphorized in *The Waste Land*. The poem attempts to universalize the experiences represented by amalgamating the various female figures' 'stories' and lives. Myth substantiates the poem's claims and unifies all viewpoints into one, portraying a single vision of woman and female desire. Yet, the poem is informed by Eliot's social position, and thus portrays the fears and anxieties of a particular class: revulsion for the lower classes and fear of female sexuality.

Metonymy provides a context for the poem's view of women and the lower classes by focusing on the mundane details of domesticity and everyday life. Metaphor and metonymy are oppositional in that the former's movement is that of contraction, solidification and unification, whereas, the latter's movement is that of expansion and multiplicity, evoking the whole by providing a part. Yet, both devices are not exclusively oppositional, for they work in conjunction to portray a particular view. An elucidation of metonymy and metaphor is necessary before examining *The Waste Land*'s construction of social types and configuration of female desire. Though the focus will be on a metonymic examination of the poem, a metaphoric reading will not be suppressed because in *The Waste Land* metaphor and metonymy act in collusion to

communicate the poem's desired image of social types and women. Criticism reveals that class and gender issues often receive similar treatment in the text. Although I will address class issues, my argument will concentrate on gender issues, and specifically how metonymy functions to condemn female sexuality. However, as Stephen Scobie astutely reminds, "it is far too easy to fall into the verbal game of describing *everything* in terms of metaphor and/ or metonymy" (107). My argument will follow Scobie's recommendation that the critic needs to use the terms less rigidly, more open-endedly—"to use the distinction itself, that is, more as metonymy than as metaphor" (107).

Roman Jakobson is responsible for re-visioning the relationship between metaphor and metonymy, seeing them as oppositional rather than simply interrelated. His ideas are articulated in his influential essay "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances" (1954), in which his study of aphasia, a brain disorder that affects speech, leads to a distinction between metaphor and metonymy. As Stephen Scobie explains, Jakobson "projects metaphor and metonymy onto the structuralist schema of language as deployed along two axes: a vertical axis of selection by substitution and a horizontal axis of combination by contiguity" (106). Thus, Jakobson "places metaphor on the vertical axis, working by similarity, and metonymy on the horizontal axis, working by contiguity" (106).[8] Metaphor evokes similarity between two figures while simultaneously affirming difference; David Lodge expresses this idea as a similarity that "must be accompanied by a feeling of disparity" (75). Metaphor also implies distance, "a jump from one area of signification to another, across a gap that cannot be encompassed within the normal associations of contiguity" (Scobie 13). Metaphor manages to sustain distance while constructing similitude between two terms. In contrast, metonymy invokes contiguity, generating an awareness of the closeness of

the figure's relationship through their connectedness and contact. Scobie reminds that since "that relationship is very often that of the part for the whole, the commonest form of metonymy is synecdoche" (105). What is striking about metonymy is its efficiency, for as a selected part of a whole, it can exist alone as a compressed version of the whole, producing an understanding of its context without actually having to elucidate it.

Because of the principles upon which metonymy is based (contiguity and synecdoche), metonymy evades interpretation, in essence, slipping by unnoticed. Jakobson perceives that metonymy "easily defies interpretation" (258). However, metaphor, in substituting one term for another, requires a recognition of similarity, essentially interpretation, and because of this, Jakobson identifies metaphor with metalanguage, with criticism. Lodge explains that "the literary text is always metaphoric in the sense that when we interpret it, when we uncover its 'unity' [...] we make it into a total metaphor: the text the vehicle, the world is the tenor" (109). Jakobson observes that metaphor's identification with metalanguage explains why criticism has given more attention to metaphorical than to metonymic tropes (Lodge 109). Thus, it is understandable how metaphor has dominated criticism, and as Lodge succinctly states, "it is easier to see the entire text as a kind of metaphor applied to reality if it is written in the metaphorical mode than if it is written in the metonymic mode" (109). In other words, because metaphor operates by selection and substitution, the critic is prepared to search the symbols for meaning, where metonymy functions more subtly.

Metonymy's subtlety, or its 'unassuming' nature if you will, produced because of contiguity, possesses an element of danger. Metonymy, more than metaphor, it can be argued, relies more heavily on the reader's acceptance of certain preconceived notions.

Consequently, it appeals to the reader on a level where socially informed suppositions coalesce. Metonymy, like metaphor, presupposes a context which enables connections to be understood. However, what distinguishes the two is that in the case of metonymy, the figures will be understood virtually effortlessly and unthinkingly, while metaphor requires an effort of interpretation. The danger of metonymy, then, is its evasiveness. Metonymy does not carry the burden of projecting similitude (Altieri 448). The metonym 'home' for example might mean 'house, warmth, and family' for a certain readership, but it would evoke a radically different meaning for a nomadic tribe in Africa for instance. Even if an individual in a community does not experience the associations of 'home', perhaps coming from a hostile or different environment, he or she would recognize cultural associations of 'home'. Similarly, even if an individual refuses to subscribe to cultural notions of 'home', the implication is that he or she would identify and understand them. Hence, metonymic devices operate on the basis of awareness, which does not mean to say that it is even conscious: metonymic devices inscribe *in* the text the reader's knowledge of cultural practices that he or she brings to the text.

Jakobson perceived the realist writer's reliance on metonymy, and thus suggested that prose was essentially metonymic and poetry essentially metaphoric (255).[9] It seems fitting that metonymy is aligned with realism, for it relies on details from a 'realistic' context, where the deleted or absent information can be supplied. Lodge elucidates this point: "Metonymy and synecdoche, in short, are produced by deleting one or more items from a natural combination, but not the items it would be most natural to omit: this illogicality is equivalent to the coexistence of similarity and dissimilarity in metaphor" (76). The combination, however, is not so alien that it cannot be grasped almost

instantly. Hence, the comparison of metonymy and realism further removes metonymy from interpretation, for instead of perceiving the metonymic figures as literary devices, they are viewed as realistic details, which aids in excluding them from conscious interpretation.

A poetry of impersonality presents the danger that metonymic figures will be accepted and agreed upon unconditionally. The metonymic devices institute notions that are not governed by impartiality but are informed by personal prejudices and specific ideological perspectives. The threat exists that through metonymy, misogynist images, for instance, are absorbed instead of being challenged, absorbed because of the nature of metonymy itself as was articulated above. Lodge observes that "although the metonymic text retards and resists the act of interpretation which will convert it into a total metaphor, it cannot postpone that act indefinitely" (109). Lodge evokes that critical moment of recognition in which metonymy is seen to be imbued with the symbolism of metaphor; this realization makes interpretation possible. Thus, metonymy is no longer able to defer the process of interpretation. However, as Lodge asserts, metaphor has its own way of making interpretation difficult. Although the metaphoric mode "offers itself eagerly for interpretation, it bewilders us with a plethora of possible meanings"; the "metonymic text, in contrast, deluges us with a plethora of data, which we seek to unite into one meaning" (111). Lodge perceives the distinction between metaphor and metonymy not as two mutually exclusive types of discourse, but as a distinction based on dominance. He argues: "The metaphoric work cannot totally neglect metonymic continuity if it is to be intelligible at all. Correspondingly, the metonymic text cannot eliminate all signs that it is available for metaphorical interpretation" (111). The metaphor-metonymy distinction is curious in that once metonymic devices are

recognized, they are transformed into metaphors with the initiation of the interpretative act. Although they are generated on different axes, the gap between them closes with interpretation and their relationship becomes more fluid, and less divided, rigid and oppositional.

In *The Waste Land*, metonymy works to identify social types and to communicate a certain social attitude. Through metonymic devices, decay is associated with the lower classes, reinforcing the upper class's association of waste with the lower orders. In "A Game of Chess," Lil's rotting teeth both identify her particular place in society and express the state of the lower class, attributing deterioration to her social class through the use of metonymy. Lil's teeth incite both her friend and her husband Albert's disgust: "You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set, / He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you. / And no more can't I, I said" (*The Complete Poems and Plays* 145-47; hereafter *CPP*). The reference to Lil's teeth also functions thematically and metaphorically to symbolize the disintegration and the decline of western civilization. However, the description operates more powerfully on a metonymic level, in which the image speaks to a specific audience and their attitude towards a particular social group.[10] Eliot expresses the bourgeois's repulsion for the lower classes.[11]

The Waste Land identifies other social types. In "The Fire Sermon," the typist is a representative of the working class. As Michael North observes, she is "a worker named metonymically for the machine she tends, so merged with it, in fact, that she is called a 'typist' even at home" (98). The typist's life is characterized by a sense of weariness, which is as a result of the tedious monotony of her days. North asserts that she is identified with her typewriter so thoroughly that she becomes it; her actions become automatic (98). North asserts that the typist is horrifying because she is

"reduced by the conditions of labor to a mere part and because she is infinitely multiple," for her "very status as a 'type' is dependent on a prior reduction from whole to part." She is a member of the "faceless crowd only by being first reduced to a 'hand' " (98). The 'hand' signifies synecdoche, the form of metonymy that evokes the whole by referring to a part. Because the typist is characterized through synecdoche, she does not possess any sense of individuality; she functions metonymically to evoke the social class to which she belongs. As she is part of a whole, the other members resemble her, marked by their mechanistic existence. As Cooper remarks, Eliot is "simply reproducing the conventional recoils of horror of his class at the sudden appearance of these new masses on the political and social scene" (31).

Like the typist, the clerk is named for his social type. A distancing of view makes it easier to communicate the social typing of the clerk and typist (Cooper 32). Referred to as "the young man carbuncular ", the clerk's severely abscessed skin operates metonymically to almost legitimate the bourgeois's disgust for the working class, for his appearance signifies the offensiveness of his class (*CPP* 231). The text presents the audacity of his manner and this further enforces a bourgeois distaste for someone of the lower orders, for someone whom they would perceive as so unrefined attempting to be dignified: "A small house agent's clerk, with one bold stare, / One of the low on whom assurance sits / As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire" (232-34). The description resonates with a sense of mockery, with a sense of a quiet sneer. The clerk's "bold stare" acts as a metonym, triggering the upper classes' associations; the image evokes the lower class's arrogance, rudeness, and aggression.[12] He is presented as a suspicious and unsavory character. Thus, the direct reference to the clerk's social position, as one of the low, represents an explanation, connecting his demeanour with

his social type. Through metonymy, associations of the clerk's "bold stare" consolidate in the mind of the bourgeois reader, thereby producing the desired reaction, which is distaste at the very least. Even if the reader is not a member of the bourgeois, one who would implicitly understand the threat of the clerk, he or she would recognize the reasons for suspicion and dislike because the image draws upon consensual agreement, familiar cultural attitudes, in this case, pertaining to staring. Through association the clerk's stare suggests rudeness, aggression, intrusiveness and even menace. As I expressed earlier, metonymy, is strikingly subtle and efficient, for so much is communicated with the reference to the clerk's pointed look.

Cooper's analysis of the effect of the poem's construction upon the reader is extremely useful:

> The poem's suspension of logic, fragments, silences, and unconventional rhythmic figures more penetratingly invade a reader's consciousness by drawing the reader's own tacit 'prejudices,' principally to the social imagery chosen for its metonymic representativeness. Eliot, the keen reader of Flaubert, knew precisely what kind of impression on the bourgeois mind the 'bold stare' of the 'young carbuncular' would make. Fragmentation in discourse doesn't necessarily interrupt attention; as modern advertising has shown, it can focus and involve by interpellating the tacit and the subrational. (51)

Through metonymic means, the social imagery is absorbed into a reader's consciousness, thereby feeding preexisting prejudices. Cooper examines the political orientation of the text, and in doing so, simultaneously exposes Eliot's social and political position. He reveals Eliot's authorial intentions and the audience to whom Eliot appealed. His discussion is particularly illuminating because he reveals metonymy's

efficacy, its ability to incite social feeling and to infiltrate the subconscious. In short, Cooper reveals Eliot's reliance on consensual agreement and his dependency on myth as a legitimizing force. Cooper argues: "...what begins as typical social contempt is made palatable by linking it to a mythical framework that universalizes it" (39).[13]

In *The Waste Land*, metonymy is able to project attitudes towards social types, and in a similar way, it is capable of communicating attitudes and anxieties surrounding female sexuality.[14] The waste land imagery is conflated with the female body. Maud Ellmann observes that the "text conflates the city with the body and, by analogy, the social with the personal." Consequently, abortions, "carious teeth, and 'female smells' signify the culture's decadence, as well as bodily decrepitude" (93). In "A Game of Chess," Lil's decaying teeth and her haggard appearance evoke her physical deterioration, looking "so antique" at only thirty-one (*CPP* 156-157). Metonymically, the descriptions provoke certain perceptions of her social class, but they also provide a disturbing view of female sexuality. The text in a way encourages the reader to sympathize with Albert (though he is rather a repugnant figure, selfish and oppressive in his sexual demands). The speaker, Lil's companion, understands Albert's needs; she is the voice that criticizes Lil and condemns her behaviour: "think of poor Albert, / He's been in the army for four years, / he wants a good time, / And if you don't give it him, there's others will" (147-149). Lil's teeth metonymically signify her sexual decrepitude and lack of sexual appeal. The text associates women with sexual desire and Lil's ragged state represents her ineffectualness: she is no longer able to fulfil sexual expectations. Lil's body is the site of devastation. Her abortion, taking pills "to bring it off", is made more haunting by the initial ambiguity of the line that follows her confession: "(She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)" (160). For a

fleeting moment, the "five" seems to refer to the number of abortions, but the immediate reference to "young George" resolves the confusion. The line is still disconcerting even when one establishes that the "five" refers to the number of children to whom she has given birth. Perhaps the brackets intensify the line's unsettling quality, as if adding an element of secrecy. The exploitation of her body is reflected in her husband's constant sexual demands that she must appease, and the stress of child bearing. Lil's actions reflect her attempt to gain control over her life and body, and her attempt to end her suffering. She is denied solace. The speaker, Lil's companion, disregards and dismisses her pain: "You *are* a proper fool, I said. / Well, if Albert won't leave you alone, there it is, I said, / What you get married for if you don't want children?" (162-64). The pub sequence reflects how the female becomes a victim of her own sexuality; she participates in destroying her body. The system in which she is trapped dictates the role that she has to perform, preventing her from claiming her body as her own, turning it against her. She must remain sexually attractive and yet continuously subject her body to the trials assigned to her that work to ruin her. It seems that the biological mechanisms prevent her from occupying the predefined position as sex symbol, which is intrinsically at odds with her role as a child manufacturer, as it were. According to Ellmann, the insistent "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME", instead of indicating closing time, "now connotes perfunctory and brutal sexuality: it means that time is catching up with Lil, in the form of dentures and decay, and rushing her culture to apocalypse" (103). The interruption acts as a haunting declaration of Lil's imminent demise. The allusion to Ophelia's suicide, which concludes part II, signifies the ultimate measure of destruction.

The poem works along the horizontal axis of combination with regards to its cast of female figures; through contiguity, women are identified with ruin. The poem simultaneously works along the vertical axis of substitution, in which women are selected based on similarity, and therefore unifying them on the principle of likeness. However, as I mentioned earlier, difference is essential to the metaphorical mode, and thus an examination of the poem's construction of individual female characters is not superfluous, but necessary in order to show how they differ, and yet, ultimately are alike. It is along the substitution axis that the poem evokes female mythic figures, primarily to substantiate its claims about female sexuality. The poem extracts episodes of violence against women from mythology, drawing upon events from cultural history. "A Game of Chess" invokes other female figures whose sexuality comes to destroy them. Philomela's savage rape and the brutal cutting out of her tongue by the king Tereus, her brother-in-law, represent the horrifying extent of female violation and mutilation (*CPP* 99-100). Several critics have commented that the sound of Philomela's crying, reduced to " 'Jug Jug'," penetrates the imagination and expresses a horror and grotesqueness that no description could quite communicate (103). The association with female sexuality and violence is also represented in the allusion to Dido's suicide, in which female desire leads to destruction (92).

Female desire also leads to suffering and unfulfillment in the case of the nervous woman. Her anxious questions are juxtaposed with the silent ruminations of her partner. She is unable to attract his attention despite her agonized efforts: " 'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me. / Speak to me. Why do you never speak. / Speak. / 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What? [...]' " (111-13). She becomes a metonymic figure of a female hysteric with her incessant questions. She is connected to

Lil in that she is not desirable. The description of her boudoir with its throne-like chair, glittering jewels, satin cases and perfumes, intimates the steps she follows to beautify herself, to make herself desirable. Yet, the scene functions to trivialize her, conveying her as a vain and frivolous woman. Like Lil, the role defined for her works to entrap her. Her questions signify her yearning for affirmation and a need for acceptance.

The fire imagery and the evocation of the fiery points of her hair suggest desire, yet as the passage reveals her desire is unfulfilled (109). However, the fire imagery also serves to demonize her. In *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays* (1956), Grover Smith compares the nervous woman with the hyacinth girl; he observes that the fiery points of woman's hair present a Medusa-like contrast to the wet hair of the hyacinth girl. He states that in this passage of the poem, fire is a symbol of lust, and water, a symbol of love (82). The nervous woman's hair reflects her wickedness; it also connects her with the woman alluded to in "What the Thunder Said", whose hair similarly denotes malevolence: "A woman drew her long black hair out tight / And fiddled whisper music on those strings / And bats with baby faces in the violent light / Whistled, and beat their wings" (*CPP* 377-80). The woman's "long black hair" possesses a sinister quality, which is intensified by the unsettling image of the eerie music she creates by playing the strands. She is presented as a malignant enchantress, and the juxtaposition of the grotesque image of the "bats with baby faces" further intimates evil and perversity. Seduced by her music, the bats whistle and "beat their wings" in accompaniment. Like Grover Smith, Calvin Bedient also identifies the nervous woman as a demonic figure, or in his words "an autoerotic she-demon," "a merely sensory enchantress" (81). It is as if Bedient regards her through her husband's eyes and condemns her for what he sees as her shallow attempts to capture male attention, like that of Cleopatra (86). Bedient alone

cannot be condemned for his assessment of the nervous woman, for it can be argued that criticism has participated in this construction of woman as temptress, thereby reinforcing misogynist representations of women. Fearful of female sexuality and the threat of emasculation, 'types' of female 'demons' emerged, the vampiric woman, the succubus, women aligned with mythic figure like Medusa and Circe, threatening to degrade and destroy men.[15]

The opening sequence frames the nervous woman, and in the end, mocks her for her futile attempts at seduction. Although she does not suffer from physical trials like Lil, she is subjected to mental and emotional suffering. In both cases, their efforts defeat them. They are unable to escape the system that confines them. Brooker and Bentley observe that in part II the women are all entrapped, and like the Sibyl (in the poem's epigraph), they are "isolated and withered in their ability to know, to be, and to bear." Like the Sibyl, "these women are enclosed and dangled as decorations or amusements for men." They also note that like Philomela, "most of these women have been violated or betrayed or exploited by men; most have suffered irreversible ruin" (96).[16] In "A Game of Chess," the female figures are victims of their own sexuality. They suffer as both objects of desire and subjects with their own desire.

Impersonality assists the poem in projecting an authoritative view of female figures, and the metaphorical mode, manifested in the evocation of female mythic characters, acts to legitimize and solidify the representation of women in the poem. To re-articulate an earlier point, by appealing to a historical and mythical past in which females suffered atrociously, the poem seeks to unite all women. However, *The Waste Land* presents female sexuality and desire as culprits, responsible for ruin. While the poem positions the women in relation to men and their actions, the poem exhibits the

damaging effects of female sexuality. Woman becomes a misogynist metonym for danger and destruction. The text encourages this association. According to Cooper, Eliot did not at the time "feel he needed to repress or deflect his opinions about the Sweeneys, the Jews, or the sexuality of women"; he was "confident, quite obviously, that his readers would understand the voice speaking to them, and know tacitly from what social place it was speaking" (31).[17]

More specifically, or rather more accurately, *The Waste Land* exploits the association of women and destruction, and it does this explicitly in the Tiresias and typist sequence. It is in this section of "The Fire Sermon," that the poem can be seen to be most actively engaging the reader and soliciting his or her support through consensual agreement. In no other part of the poem is female sexuality as blatantly exploited. One of the reasons for this is the reader's participation: instigated by Tiresias, the reader trails the typist, thus acting as an additional intruder.

In "The Fire Sermon," the viewer's gaze acts to exploit the typist's sexuality. Tiresias invites the reader to follow his activities and the reader becomes implicated in his seedy voyeurism. Through his pursuit of the typist, he emerges not only as a voyeur but as a stalker, tracking her movement from work to home. The scene possesses a cinematic quality, as the reader is not reading so much as watching a movie, seeing through the camera's lens the typist's movements and seeing Tiresias's presence as that of a silent and hovering sexual threat. The scene could be lifted from a sex-thriller, for it is charged with the air of sexual excitement, and the quiet ominousness that characterizes thrillers. In addition, it is the realistic details of the setting and scene, the description of the typist's apartment and her habitual routine, that contribute to the cinematic feel of the section. The anticipation of the completed workday is likened to "a

taxi throbbing waiting" (216-17). Tiresias projects his arousal onto the setting, already with the expectation of sexual quenching. Like the taxi image, he pulsates with a sexual vitality. He appears not as sagacious seer but as a lascivious old man, although he is both male and female in one: "I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives, / Old man with wrinkled female breasts [...]" (*CPP* 218-19). He follows the typist home and watches her evening activities with a kind of relish. Tiresias participates in the violation, watching the young man carbuncular's sexual advances: "The meal is ended, she is bored and tired, / Endeavours to engage her in caresses / Which still are unreproved, if undesired. / Flushed and decided, / he assaults at once; / Exploring hands encounter no defence; / His vanity requires no response [...]" (236-41). The passage possesses a hint of disgust mingled with a voyeuristic pleasure. Tiresias indulges in the sexual exploitation.

The text dismisses the episode in the typist's apartment. Her desire is turned against her, made culpable for her treatment. "Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays", which are piled on the divan, can be seen as a metonym, items combined based on contiguity, which serve to represent female desire (*CPP* 226-27). Any other articles of female lingerie could replace the others and would still communicate the same idea, which on a structural level shows how metonymy operates. More importantly, however, on a critical level, the image reveals the text's subtlety in constructing an equation between the typist's untidy personal items and her open sexuality: her lack of particularity and concern invites sexual exploitation. The poem does not relate the items drying out of her window, but instead fixates on her personal undergarments (225-27). The articles of clothing arouse interest, for they provoke an association with female

seduction and enticement. Furthermore, on a subconscious level, they metonymically communicate temptation, identifying ploys to lure men.

The typist's perspective does not emerge, for the scene is viewed through Tiresias's eyes. He obscures the typist's suffering by suddenly claiming the attention and directing it to himself: "(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). His interruption exposes him as a kind of braggart. He declares his tribulations in order to impress his audience and to inspire awe and pity. The parentheses represent an attempt at discretion. Although he desires empathy, Tiresias does not want to make his impositions on the reader obvious. However, he claims the reader's attention long enough to prevent the reader from learning the events that directly precede the clerk's departure. In seizing the reader's attention, Tiresias dismisses what is occurring in the typist's bedroom as he speaks; he clips off the scene, marking the events as inconsequential. Prior to Tiresias's interruption, aggression seeps into the text in the form of the clerk's advances. He appears flushed and decided, and though the typist is presented as indifferent, he nevertheless eagerly imposes himself upon her. Tiresias's speech concludes as the clerk announces his exit with "one final patronising kiss" before groping his way down the stairway (247-48). He remains incontinent when leaving, and the poem suggests that his sexual aggression continues unabated. His parting kiss is seen to degrade her, a form of payment for services rendered. She performs the role of a prostitute. Tiresias relates the typist's movements when alone. The reference to her "automatic hand" does not only evoke her occupation as a typist, but in the context of what preceded it becomes a metonym for the routine sexual encounter (255). The experience is so familiar that her behaviour is automatic,

assuming a mechanical role. A. D. Moody asserts: "[...] when Tiresias speaks we see only what he sees and hear only his voice. The typist, of all the women in the poem, is the only one to feel nothing; but the tired boredom may be more his than hers" (122). Although Moody's remarks are valid, they are not entirely accurate. If she feels nothing, as Moody suggests, it is because (as Tiresias's image of her "automatic hand" reveals) this kind of sexual encounter transpires so often that she is numb to it. However, the experience is not so mechanistic that she is completely oblivious to it, for according to Tiresias's interpretation, she is grateful when it is over: "Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass: / 'Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over' " (251-52). Despite her relief, there is a sense that the experience will repeat itself, and her reprieve is only temporary, until the next encounter. Although guilt is not expressed, the poem voices its criticism of her behaviour: "When lovely woman stoops to folly" (253). The interjection constitutes a rebuke riddled with condescension. She is judged responsible for the exploitation of her body. The line insinuates that female sexuality commits its own ruin. Female desire, thus, is condemned. The typist is trapped in a kind of destructiveness that perpetuates itself because of her inability to release herself. Degradation is met with acquiescence. Hence, in the poem, female desire and sexuality are held accountable for the victimization of its characters. Moreover, the female characters are denied access to agency; they are seen as acted upon, rather than asserting their own will. The poem conveys their alienation and the bleakness of their lives.

However, the poem's hostility against women, evidenced by the typist episode in "The Fire Sermon," is complicated by Eliot's note on Tiresias. As his note indicates: "Tiresias, although a mere spectator and indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest [...] so all the women are one women, and the

two sexes meet in Tiresias." Eliot concludes: "What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (*CPP* 78). As the typist, Tiresias suffers from boredom and fatigue and from the clerk's groping hands. He is the recipient of sexual exploration, of the clerk's eagerness, and yet, his male sex identifies him as the salacious clerk. Tiresias, in fact, strongly emerges as a male figure in the poem, though he identifies himself as both by alluding to his female breasts. The role that Eliot attributes to Tiresias is extremely problematic. The idea of all women unified into one and meeting within Tiresias does not adequately explain *The Waste Land*'s construction of women. Eliot attempts to employ Tiresias's mythic status and his existence as a hermaphrodite to legitimize the poem's presentation of women. The note attempts to secure the poem's position by amalgamating all women into one and identifying the female perspective in Tiresias, thereby facilitating the ingestion of stereotypes. As a prophetic figure, Tiresias is invoked as an authoritative voice. However, he serves to consolidate ideas pertaining to women's sexuality. As Kenneth Asher states in *T. S. Eliot and Ideology* (1995): "Eliot can employ Tiresias, the man with experience of the sexuality of both genders as a kind of transhistorical consciousness." He also astutely observes:

> We should recall, however, that in the passage Eliot quotes from Ovid, Tiresias' unique knowledge enables him to inform the inquisitive gods that women derive more pleasure from sex than men. This legendary anecdote authorizes Eliot to indulge in a patristic detestation of the female body as the primary locus of corruption. (44)

Thus, Tiresias becomes a strategic tactic employed to transmit misogynist conceptions of the female body and desire. In addition, Tiresias is invoked to rectify the incongruity between subject and object, between observer/ participant and observed, by performing

both roles.[18] However, Tiresias does not completely emerge from the lecherous, voyeuristic figure that arrives on the scene in "The Fire Sermon." Eliot's note betrays his anxiousness to identify a unifying force and an authoritative figure in the poem.

Yet, the issue is further complicated if one is willing to entertain the notion that he is the typist, then the implication is that the typist (Tiresias) allows herself to be objectified. She does nothing to alter the situation, but as was discussed above, she is incapable of freeing herself from the role designated to her as a woman. The unceasing exploitation of her body prevents her from affirming her sexuality and she is caught in a system that uses her desire against her. The female articles, stockings, slippers and camisoles, are not only a metonym for female desire, but subconsciously become a metonym for female exploitation, granting the right to the male gaze to invade a sexuality which is presented as open, absolving the observer of any residual reluctance and guilt. Metonymically, her untidiness with regards to her personal items is evidence of her promiscuity. The image is also a metonym for female seduction, apparel intended to ensnare the male gaze. The metonym signifies the eroticism of the female body through an evocation of the clothing associated with female allurement. Ellmann perceptively discerns that "the poem is enthralled by the femininity that it reviles" (98). In the original manuscript, which is more open in its revulsion of women, the typist's "dirty camisoles, and stays" metonymically communicate her sordid sexual life (*The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript* p. [33], 136; hereafter *facs. WL*). While the poem does not explicitly express loathing toward the female loathing, there are discernible traces that expose its misogyny.

The passage with the typist, Tiresias, and the clerk is one of the most unsettling parts of the poem because of the subtle acuity with which it blames women for their

violation, re-instating the attitude that 'she got what she deserved'. The section is strewn with synecdochic details that provoke cultural associations and attitudes. Jakobson's point about the use of metonymy in realist fiction resonates in this passage. Though he argued that poetry relied on metaphor, his observation that metonymy lends itself to realism is applicable to this passage. Jakobson writes: "Following the path of contiguous relationships, the realist author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space in time. He is fond of synecdochic details" (255-56). The scene with the typist functions much like Jakobson's description of a realist novel, moving from plot to atmosphere and characters to setting (which partly explains Tiresias's digression when he assumes the reader's attention and expresses his own suffering). The passage devotes careful attention to the details of her apartment to communicate her lifestyle. However, as was articulated above, it is the particular details on which the section focuses that are disconcerting. The synecdoches "Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays" anticipate and foreshadow the sexual encounter, because they project allurement. Thus, metonymy offers a certain kind of inconspicuousness, while managing to project female sexuality as pernicious.

The conflation of women with violation, destruction and unfulfilled desire emerges strongly in "A Game of Chess" and "The Fire Sermon", yet Marie in "Burial of the Dead" introduces and anticipates the pain other women will suffer in the poem. She serves as a comparison to the female figures already discussed. Marie's narrative of a thrilling and liberating childhood experience is juxtaposed to a scene of desiccation and alienation. Marie's childhood memory remains with her and communicates her unfulfilled desire. The poem associates her with sexual desire through the evocation of April with its "breeding", "mixing", "stirring", "Dull roots with spring rain" (*CPP* 1-4).

The sexuality presented here is cruel and painful. Like Marie, the hyacinth girl becomes a metonym for female sexuality. She is the object of desire. The image of her return from the hyacinth garden with her "arms full" and her "hair wet" metonymically express her sensuality and sexual appeal (38). She becomes a figure of female allure. However, unlike the nervous woman and the woman with black hair, Marie does not represent a menacing female sexuality because she is presented as the object of desire, rather than a subject possessing desire.

Similarly, in "The Fire Sermon," the Thames nymphs' song of desire is also tainted by images of despair: "Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song. / The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers, / Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends/ Or other testimony of summer nights." (176-79). The opening sequence expresses a sense of abandonment, bleakness and melancholy. In her essay "Improper Desire: Reading *The Waste Land*" (1994), Harriet Davidson notes that the river Thames initially described as sweet, later is depicted as sweating "Oil and tar" in line 267 (129). Thus, desire becomes contaminated, subjected to ruin and violation. The river and typist are connected in that both are sexually violated. The river's sweating of oil and tar can be interpreted as a metaphor symbolizing the experience of sexual aggression and even violence. The image projects a state of devastation and victimization.

While there is an intimation of rape in the case of the river, and perhaps in the typist's, female victimization strongly emerges in final sequences of "The Fire Sermon". The woman has been raped. Her trauma is communicated in the loss of her mental faculties: " 'I can connect / Nothing with nothing' " (301-02). She experiences the shock and disorientation of the aftermath. The section is dominated by synecdochic details, one of the most potent being, "broken fingernails of dirty hands" which

identifies the violent assault of her body by alluding to a part of it. While the "broken fingernails" speak of the horrifying experience and of her degradation, the image also evokes struggle, the attempts made to break free. Ultimately, the image represents her physical mutilation. Ellmann asserts that both the woman and the city are raped (99). However, her recollection of the events seems to invoke the city as a participant in the rape, rather than as a victim. She recounts: " 'Trams and dusty trees. / Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew / Undid me. By Richmond I raised my knees / Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe' " (202-95). She is 'undone' by the city, as much as by her violator. Her love is as mutilated as her body: " 'my heart / Under my feet' " (296). Here again, female love and desire is met with violence. However, unlike the other scenes with women in the poem, the violator in this passage expresses his remorse and attempts to make amends, though feeble: " 'After the event / He wept. He promised "a new start." / I made no comment. What should I resent' " (297-99). Ellmann asserts that the victim "consents to degradation as if it were foredoomed"; she quotes Ian Hamilton's remark that "no one in *The Waste Land* raises her knees in any other spirit than that of dumb complaisance" (99). In view of these observations, the woman appears as an even more tragic figure. Yet, raising her knees can also be seen as an assertion of her desire, rather than complaisance. However, like other women in the poem, her passion is consigned to ruin. Like the typist, she accepts her situation, which seems inevitable and irrevocable. Consequently, his behaviour does not incite her anger or resentment. A masochistic element emerges, for the woman seems to embrace the pain and humiliation of the sexual encounter. The female figures in *The Waste Land* are resigned to their misery, as if complying with an inscribed destiny of suffering and unfulfillment. Their male counterparts, Albert and the clerk, are not subjected to similar

trials; they pursue their desires ruthlessly. "The Fire Sermon," concludes with an evocation of hell: "Burning burning burning burning" (308). Grover Smith interprets the fire imagery as a lust that consumes and ravages love (91). According to the poem's configuration, female sexuality precipitates its wreckage. Perhaps whispered in the background is the judgement, 'she raised her knees; she asked for it.' The woman's body crumbles in a synecdochic heap of knees, heart, feet, and broken fingernails (Ellmann 99). The disintegration of the woman's body transfigures the scene into a cubist collage: fragmented parts evoke wholes. Jakobson observes the metonymical orientation of cubism, in which the object is transformed into a set of synecdoches (256). The cubist quality of the scene signifies the movement to abstraction, where the female body becomes almost unrecognizable because of the violence it experienced. Stephen Scobie's point that Cubism "always retained its stubborn grip on the outside world, its representational refusal of abstraction—and it did so by means of synecdoche" is applicable to the reading of this passage (113). The cubist orientation of the passage pushes the scene to the edges of abstraction, but without losing its hold on reality. In fact, the scene's 'cubism' mirrors the woman's rape, and communicates the horrific experience.[19]

In *The Waste Land*, anxiety surrounding women also surfaces with references to female smells. Female scents become a metonym for the threat of female sexuality. The suspiciousness and uneasiness that they incite represents fear of women. Both Ellmann and Asher discern this apprehensiveness, and more significantly, they note that the scents are only the residues of the "stench" that is evoked in the original manuscript. Ellmann states: "Eliot to some extent repressed this hearty female stench when he excised it from the manuscript: but it survives in the strange synthetic perfumes of the

lady in "A Game of Chess" […]" (106). Ellmann and Asher refer to the Fresca sequence that appeared in the original draft of "The Fire Sermon", in which female smell provokes disgust. The satiric element does not succeed in concealing the intense loathing of the female body with its "good old" "hearty female stench", disguised by the "odours" "confected by the French" (*fasc. WL* p. [23], 40-1). The Fresca passage is characterized by a scathing misogyny.[20] Many critics argue that Pound's excisions were motivated by his attempt to obscure the poem's contempt of women. Davidson observes that the excised passages contain "Eliot's rawer side", and "scenes of drunkenness, whoring, urinating, defecating, and bigotry are removed from the poem and from Eliot's emerging public persona" (124). In the Fresca section, for example, the text portrays the female figure defecating: "Fresca slips softly to the needful stool, / Where the pathetic tale of Richardson / Eases her labour till the deed is done" (*fasc. WL* p. [23], 12-14). Similarly, Cooper suggests that Pound responded to the tone of the excised lines, in which there is "an intensity of contempt, even hatred" that "stands out too lividly, too immediately, as merely social abuse, the hatred of one class toward another" (38).

In the poem's final version of "A Game of Chess", the lady's perfumes infiltrate the room: "In vials of ivory and coloured glass / Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes, / Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused / And drowned the sense in odours; stirred by the air / That freshened from the window" (*CPP* 86-90). The female scent is configured as a stealthy invasion and its dangerous presence is expressed by the imagery of intrusion. The poem projects its own fear of the "strange synthetic perfumes" by revealing them as unstable—"troubled, confused". The scents are not only figured as a contaminant, but become aligned with death through the evocation of drowning (89). The text connects women with destruction. The smell

endangers the subject who actually imbibes the object smelled (Ellmann 106). The reference to the perfume's synthetic nature functions to implicate and condemn women as if contriving to debilitate men. Also, the perfume's potency is connected to the representation of woman as temptress, in which she is viewed as employing various forms of seduction to overpower and entrap men.

The Waste Land repudiates any possibility for a healthy female sexuality. Female desire is denounced by exposing the destruction that it provokes. Women become the victims of their own sexuality, reflected in the ways in which they participate in their violation. The poem projects the stereotypes employed to condemn female sexuality—woman as prostitute in the case of the typist, woman as hysteric and demonic in the case of the nervous woman, woman as inadequate wife and mother in the case of Lil. All women appear debased and physically dilapidated.

In analyzing the pervasive figure of metonymy in Eliot's poetry, Altieri discerns the value and promise of Eliot's metonymic devices.[21] He argues that because the kind of analysis metonymy offers is an impersonal one, it creates the possibility that if the poem can "reach beyond the speaker's intentions to grasp some of the forces shaping them, it can claim to make present transhistorical factors at the core of that subjective activity" (149). Altieri proposes the potential of transcending historical specificity in order to arrive at the place where fundamental human impulses are shaped, informed by needs that cannot be denied. According to Altieri, an attempt is made to "absorb the speaker's historical context into "patterns of desire and need that seem to articulate constitutive forces basic to the life of any ego in modern culture" (149). Altieri's definition of metonymy and metaphor particularly highlights metonymy's potential as a cultural force. He perceives the metonymy as "dramatizing a gulf between particulars

and informing universals," and metaphor as "stressing the capacity of certain rhetorical figures to sustain elaborate synthetic structures such as mythic systems" (147). Therefore, Altieri sees Eliot's use of metonymy as an attempt to exceed the boundaries and limitations of a particular social position in order to present the condition of all individuals. He asserts that a poetry able to concentrate on metonymy may be able to achieve a different kind of impersonality, "one devoted, not to escaping from personality, but to understanding the experience of every modern psyche as it becomes aware of how vulnerable its subjective life is" (150). In referring to "every modern psyche", Altieri evokes a universal condition, individuals united insofar as their lives are vulnerable. His argument is extremely insightful, for he identifies the essential force of a metonymic poetry, its attempt to comprehend the common feelings that inform each subjective life. Furthermore, Altieri discerns that metonymy, as an "elemental abstraction," enables the text "to propose itself as a fundamental vehicle for cultural analysis" (148). While his argument is compelling, it fails to address how metonymy also works to construct its audience, consequently, re-enforcing the acceptance of projected images. His emphasis on the metonymic text's capacity for facilitating cultural analysis is valuable. *The Waste Land*, indeed, attempts to exceed the boundaries of its social position, as Altieri suggests, but it falls back into itself, thereby exposing its personal anxieties and afflictions surrounding the lower classes and women.

The poem is able to project the destructiveness of female sexuality because it secures an authoritative voice through impersonality, metonymy, and, as a final resort, Tiresias. Metaphor is depended on for constructing a unified vision. Both metaphor and metonymy act as a universalizing force. In *The Waste Land*, metonymy's capacity to project universals derives from its appeal to a consensual agreement: by identifying a

culturally agreed upon idea, it then seeks to universalize it, in view of what I previously discussed, condemning female desire as pernicious. Metaphor is its accomplice: the solicitation of myth represents the poem's attempt to ground universals in the mythical and historical past. Eliot's personal and class anxieties emerge when the critic applies the same rigorous interpretative activity that characterizes metaphorical investigation to metonymy. Metonymy inscribes the threat of the lower classes and the fear of female sexuality into the text. Contiguity and synecdoche facilitate the recognition and acceptance of images—this is precisely the nature of the devices. They rely on the principle of familiarity for the reception of ideas and cultural attitudes.

Notes

Chapter 2

[1] For an excellent and detailed analysis of *The Waste Land* and its references see Brooker and Bentley's *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*.

[2] Terry Eagleton asserts: "*The Waste Land*'s fragmentary content listlessly mimes the experience of cultural disintegration, while its totalizing mythological forms silently allude to a transcendence of such collapse. The poem is opaque both because of its verbal complicity in that collapse, and in the esoteric allusions which attempt to construct an ideal order across it" (*Criticism and Ideology* 148).

[3] Brooker suggests one explanation for the power of Eliot's poetry: "One reason why these poems continue to speak to us so powerfully is that we are still in this crisis. We still live in the possibility that contemporary people will destroy their universe and everything in it, that they will literally annihilate themselves and their civilization" (*Mastery and Escape* 233-34).

[4] *The Waste Land* projects a shared experience and there is the assumption that all suffer, confronted with the horror of their modern existence. The poem, thus, universalizes the condition of cultural decay.

[5] In *T. S. Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in The Waste Land* (1985), Harriet Davidson, when discussing metaphor and metonymy in the context of Jakobson's theory, observes that metonymy "places things in meaningful relation and thus in a world," and it also presents time (109). Davidson also states that *The Waste Land*'s criticism has been dominated by interpretations of metaphor and symbolism, and there has been a lack of investigations into the presence of metonymy in the poem (109).

[6] In the notes, Eliot devotes a lengthy paragraph to explaining where a large part of the poem's symbolism comes from. He points the reader's attention to Jessie L. Weston's book on grail legend, *From Ritual to Romance*, and James Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, specifically his sections on vegetation ceremonies. Eliot no doubt anticipated the wild goose chase critics would embark on, and perhaps he knew that his bits of information, though useful, would only tantalize his expeditious and agonized critics and propel them to scour the poem for further symbolic references in the form of allusions.

[7] Moretti argues that Eliot's evocation of control, order and giving shape translates to a desire to force the course of history in only one direction and to pave the "regulatable and controllable future", thereby revealing the basic needs of a new phase of capitalist development (192).

[8] Jakobson compares the two figures of speech to the two kinds of aphasia; each is viewed as a 'disorder', functioning on the opposite axis. Metonymy is a disorder of

similarity functioning on the axis of metaphor, and metaphor is a disorder of contiguity, operating on the axis of metonymy (Scobie 106). Jakobson notes how the study of aphasia is especially illuminating for the linguist: "In normal verbal behaviour both processes are continually operative, but careful observation will reveal that under the influence of a cultural pattern, personality, and verbal style, preference is given to one of the two processes over the other" (254).

[9] Jakobson sees Romanticism and Symbolism's reliance on metaphor, and Realism's dependency on metonymy (255). He notes that "it is generally realized that romanticism is closely linked with metaphor, whereas the generally intimate ties of realism with metonymy usually remain unnoticed" (258). He further proposes that the principle of similarity underlies poetry, while prose, in contrast, is generated essentially by contiguity (258-59).

[10] Cooper notes that during the period of *The Waste Land* "Eliot consistently characterized people from the lower classes and other marginalized groups either as subhuman or nonhuman" (30). Eliot's representation of Jews, for instance, is appalling, and critics like Christopher Ricks attempt to address the issue of Eliot's anti-Semitism.

[11] In *T. S. Eliot and the Politics of Voice: The Argument of The Waste Land* (1987), John Xiros Cooper relates that a survey of *Poems*, 1920, reveals unrelenting revulsion towards people outside the middle and upper-class norms in which Eliot was bred (30).

[12] Cooper argues that Eliot is "making his readers, members of his own class, look into the unrefined, unprepared, inexperienced masks of the newupstarts from below with their demands on the socioeconomic settlements of the nineteenth century" (31).

[13] I am indebted to Cooper, for his insightful remarks have helped me to formulate my ideas pertaining to *The Waste Land*'s construction of women. Although Cooper focuses primarily on class issues, similar issues arise with regards to gender.

[14] See Wayne Koestenbaum's essay "*The Waste Land*: T.S. Eliot's and Ezra's Pound's Collaboration on Hysteria." He argues that Eliot's misogyny stems from his anxieties about himself, his effeminacy, and his hysteria. He discusses Pound's role of midwife of *The Waste Land*. (Though there are many critical accounts attempting to explain Eliot's misogyny, I have not encountered one so inventive as this one).

[15] See Susan L. Roberson's essay "T.S. Eliot's Symbolical Woman: From Temptress to Priestess."

[16] In an attempt to understand Eliot's portrayal of women, in his essay "Some Notes on Eliot's Gallery of Women" (1988), Bentley states that women are not only presented as unhappy and unfulfilled, but so are men. Though he admits that it is embarrassingly simple, he proposes that Eliot is "concerned with a situation comprehending both sexes and that his theme must be the perennial idea that life cannot be happy without a harmonious relation between the sexes." He reflects that his thesis is useful is promising because it addresses the issue of relation itself, which constantly preoccupied Eliot (39).

Bentley advises against seeing the poet as a connoisseur of female misery, for he suggests this conclusion "ignores the way his figures are placed into carefully designed relations with men and the way most of them suffer because of masculine ineptitude or exploitation" (40).

Although one can concede that Eliot's male figures experience their own suffering, as Bentley suggests, his essay does not sufficiently address why Eliot's female figures meet with such violence.

[17] Eagleton reminds that "every literary text in some sense internalizes its social relations of production—that every text intimates by its very conventions the way it is to be consumed, encodes within itself its own ideology of how, by whom and for whom it was produced. Every text obliquely posits a putative reader, defining its producibility in terms of a certain capacity for consumption" (*Criticism and Ideology* 48).

[18] Brooker and Bentley also articulate this idea of Tiresias as both subject and object:

> Tiresias defines a binary perspective that serves as the point of view of the poem. He is a figure from the ideal order of myth; yet he is spying on the sordidly historical typist and clerk. By saying that Tiresias is spying on all the characters, Eliot is suggesting that the reader make an effort to perceive them in an equivalent way, from both internal and external perspectives. From a position inside the modern world, the characters are distinct and separate, but from the Tiresias or mythic position, the characters 'melt' into each other. (53)

[19] Not only does the woman raped emerge as a cubist figure, but Brooker and Bentley argue that the poem transforms all the female figures into a single "cubist woman." They write: "The focus in "A Game of Chess" is primarily on women. Taking doomed female characters from art, history, myth, and contemporary life, Eliot creates a cubist woman, a multiperspectival portrait of women in waste lands, of wasted women in history and nature" (95).

[20] The Fresca sequence is incredibly disturbing because it exposes the extent of Eliot's hatred of women:

> Fresca ! in other time or place had been
> A meek and lowly weeping Magdalene;
> The lazy laughing Jenny of the bard.
> (The same eternal and consuming itch
> Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
> Or prudent sly domestic puss puss cat,
> Or autumn's favourite in a furnished flat,
> Or strolling slattern in a tawdry gown,
> A doorstep dunged by every dog in town.
> For varying forms, one definition's right:
> Unreal emotions, and real appetite. (*facs. WL* p. [27], 42-53)

Fresca is mocked and taunted with a stunning cruelty for her sexual encounters. The line "Can make a martyr, or a plain simple bitch" resonates.

[21] Although Altieri's discussion of metonymy primarily revolves around the character Prufrock, his arguments are helpful for reflecting upon the way metonymy operates in *The Waste Land*.

Conclusion

As I suggested in the last chapter, metonymy's efficacy is embodied in its subtle nature, its equanimity, which betrays little. Unlike metaphor, which invites the reader to interpret its literary construction, metonymy conceals and compresses itself, and instead invokes contiguity to transmit meaning. Metaphor appeals to the reader to create meaning and thus, he or she participates in the creative and interpretative process. In contrast, metonymy asserts meaning, operating on the presupposition of consensual agreement; therefore, there is no need for the reader's active involvement. Contiguity and synecdoche anticipate the reader's acceptance, and consequently, the reader involuntarily consents to the images by not contesting them.

Quite simply, metonymy functions inconspicuously, evading the reader's attention. Yet, in *The Waste Land*, it cannot contain all of Eliot's anxieties indefinitely. As a part of a whole, it presents itself as a compressed version of the greater whole. In the reader's mind, metonymy's initial movement can be seen as that of expansion, enlarging only enough to communicate select associations, those that could be construed as impersonal because they are generally agreed upon. Its final movement can be seen as that of contraction, in which it restores itself to its original existence as a part. However, with the critic's insistent probing, metonymy can reach a state in which it can no longer contract and conceal the ideas it implicitly invokes. Thus, through contiguity, the poem's multiple meanings and insinuations are revealed. In other words, interpretation will betray the metonymic activity, and in doing so, betray the author's social investments.

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot seeks to express a cultural, rather than personal attitude, and metonymy suits his purpose since the device itself appeals to a particular

context and orientation. However, metonymy is not solely objective and when investigated reveals its subjectivity, for it cannot deny what essentially it is—a literary device, a literary construct. It obscures its subjectivity because it thrives on emaciation: it need only evoke a few details, minor parts, to secure the desired effect. Metonymy's effectiveness and efficiency is best revealed in the episode with the typist. The metonyms "Stockings, slippers, camisoles, and stays" communicate the typist's sexual appetite (*CPP* 227). The line originally appeared in the manuscript as "stockings, dirty camisoles, and stays" (*facs. WL* p. [33], 136). However, Pound recognized that adding "dirty" was superfluous, the typist's licentiousness would be expressed without evoking the adjective. Also, Pound most likely felt that gesturing to the typist's 'soiled' sexuality was too obvious and based on the evidence of his revisions, he sought to make the text more elusive. Eliot obviously understood Pound's point of view and "dirty" did not appear in the poem's final version. Metonymy is not innocently objective, and hence the writer is accountable for the ways in which he or she employs the device.

Eliot would no doubt perceive metonymy's reliance on both personality and impersonality as problematic and in his attempt to achieve impersonality he might deny metonymy's subjectivity. However, metonymy's appeal only diminishes if one is under the illusion that it offers an objective expression in the first place. Because it invokes a cultural context, it becomes not only a reflection of the writer's personal views, but of a cultural attitude. Metonymy is valuable then because it identifies assumptions, fears and anxieties of a certain culture and particular ideology.

As I illustrated in Chapter 2, a metonymic investigation of the poem's configuration of female sexuality revealed beliefs that informed its projection of women. It may be fruitful to also apply a metonymic reading to race in *The Waste Land*. Critics

like Christopher Ricks, John Xiros Cooper, Michael Tratner, Bryan Cheyette, and Anthony Julius explore the issue of race in Eliot's poetry and prose.[1] In *The Waste Land*, Eliot represents the Jew in the figure of "Phlebas the Phoenician" in "Death by Water" and in the "Dirge" section, which appeared in the original manuscript version. Ricks is not alone when he states that the "ugliest touch of anti-Semitism in Eliot's poetry" is the "Dirge" (38). The poem reveals Bleistein's "dead man jew's eyes", and his body at the bottom of the sea with his eye-lids eaten by crabs lower "than the wharf rats dive" (*facs. WL* p. [119], 3-5). The scene is infused with a horrifying cruelty. Rats are evoked as a further means of degradation. Julius explains that in anti-Semitic lore, Jews are attributed with a strange smell, like that of sewers and defecation (20).[2] Thus, rats become a metonym for Semites, and through contiguity and synecdoche, racism festers.[3] Furthermore, Julius observes:

> Bleistein's face is a Jewish physiognomy out of an anti-Semite's album—protruding eyes, prominent nose, gold-filled teeth. As a picture or caricature, the face has appeared on innumerable occasions in leaflets and newspapers, on posters, and as illustrations in books. Hostile descriptions of such faces incorporate these features in their inventions of Jewish traits. (123)

"Dirge" depicts the decomposition of Bleistein's body with gruesome detail; not only have his eye-lids been torn away, but bones "peep through the ragged toes" (*facs. WL* p. [119], 13). The poem invites the reader to witness his corporal disintegration, encouraging the reader to "See upon his back he lies" (9), and "See the lips unfold unfold" (14). Sea creatures participate in the ravaging; lobsters, for example, anxiously wait to scratch his gold-filled teeth (15-17). "Dirge" signifies hatred towards Jews by its hideous enactment of Bleistein's death.[4]

Eliot's early poem "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," similarly expresses a desire to destroy Jews. The poem describes Bleistein as a "Chicago Semite Viennese" with a "lustreless protrusive eye", and staring from "the protozoic slime" (*CPP* 16-18). Though the poem draws upon racist details, the most disturbing and blatant evidence of anti-Semitism surfaces in the third last stanza: "The rats are underneath the piles. / The Jew is underneath the lot" (22-23). Thus, the poem reveals an impulse to kill the Jews, not simply banish them. They are loathed, feared and perceived as a threat.

Eliot's conceptualization of Jews is similar to his configuration of women.[5] Jews and women are both treated with hostility, and encounter destruction in his poetry. However, while Jews incite disgust, they are represented as inert. Conversely, women are depicted as actively participating in their ruin. In "Gerontion," the Jew "squats on the window still", marginalized from society, alienated (8). Julius discerns that "while Eliot's poetry delightedly conceives of Jews as dead, it broods on the killing of women" (23). Eliot does not simply adopt cultural clichés surrounding Jewish representations, he transforms the clichés into metonyms, infusing and invigorating them with his own personal anti-Semitism. Thus, the tropes are not "ethically neutral" (Julius 11). I think this compression of anti-Semitism in the form of metonymy is what Julius is responding to when he asserts: "Anti-Semitism did not disfigure Eliot's work, it animated it. It was, on occasion, both his refuge and his inspiration, and his exploitation of its literary potential was virtuose. One consequence of this virtuosity is that distinct modulations of anti-Semitism in his work may be identified" (173). Hence, in *The Waste Land*, the power of metonymy is manifested in its capacity to elicit a certain feeling (contempt, in the case of women and Jews). Furthermore, the extent to which the reader is previously

indoctrinated with this feeling will affect the extent to which the metonyms are assimilated; thus, the more unaware the reader is, the more effective and pernicious metonymy's impact.

The issue of Eliot and anti-Semitism is a burgeoning area of critical investigation, specifically because it challenges the reader's relationship to Eliot's work and to the man himself. I think that Anthony Julius provides the most thorough and significant study of Eliot's Semitic orientation. As he explains in his introduction, he is not so much interested in the biographical question, was Eliot an anti-Semite? Rather, he asks: "of what was Eliot's anti-Semitism made, and what did Eliot make out of his anti-Semitism?" (11). Julius provides a useful methodology for approaching the complex issue of Eliot and anti-Semitism. In addition, his theoretical orientation would facilitate an examination of *The Waste Land*'s reliance on mechanisms, such as metonymy, as a means of legitimizing its constructions of Jews.

The Waste Land's authoritative voice is difficult to resist, and therefore, it becomes more problematic when one attempts to demystify and challenge its position. The first chapter addresses and analyzes Eliot's theoretical investments, articulated in *The Sacred Wood*, in an attempt to identify the site of authority that Eliot affirms in his critical writing. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot develops his theory of impersonality and advocates the need for the poet's objectivity, for "a continual self-sacrifice," "a continual extinction of personality" (53). Impersonality thus is the essence of Eliot's aesthetic. Chapter 1 concludes with the recognition that Eliot uses tradition as a means of establishing impersonality. However, what appears to be impersonality in fact constitutes a consensual agreement among individuals of a specific social and ideological perspective. As I attempt to demonstrate in Chapter 2, *The Waste Land*

employs strategies to achieve objectivity and to obscure its subjective perspective. The mythical method and Tiresias signify tactical moves to totalize, unify, and universalize the poem's vision of western culture's disintegration. Consequently, the poem's female figures suffer from this universalizing force, which seeks to identify all women as the same, threatening and destructive. The second chapter examines the function of metonymy and metaphor in the configuration of female desire and sexuality, and how these literary mechanisms enable the poem to project its image of women. Instead, I attempt to explain how misogyny is inscribed in the poem through metonymy, which invokes consensual agreement, and through metaphor, which imposes a universalized image of woman. Thus, my analysis exposes how *The Waste Land* exploits the sources of power that metonymy and metaphor offer in order to attain an impersonal and authoritative voice.

Notes

Conclusion:

[1] In terms of Eliot's prose, *After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy* (1933) is the most notorious expression of Eliot's hostility towards Jews. Eliot would not allow the book to be republished. The book is often studied for what it discloses about the author, rather than the subject (Julius 150).

[2] The conflation of Jews and rats witnesses its greatest exploitation in Nazi propaganda.

[3] Lentricchia expresses Eliot's relationship to multiculturalism: "Eliot clearly could not admire the multicultural diversity of the United States, and did not believe that diversity could become 'culture' in any sense of the word that he understood" (*Modernist Quartet* 281). Also see Cooper, Materer, and Tratner for a discussion of Eliot's fear of mixed races.

[4] Ricks, among other critics, notes Pound's reaction to "Dirge" in the form of his inscription " ? ? doubtful", which appeared on the manuscript. Ricks expresses his uneasiness regarding one's use of the manuscript's as evidence for Eliot's anti-Semitism: "It is all too easy to make disingenuous use of a convenient fact about manuscript material: that it may with equal plausibility, in principle though not in instance, be cited as evidence of what the writer really did or really think and feel" (38-39). Ricks is reluctant to condemn Eliot as anti-Semitic, and Julius, for instance, criticizes Ricks for trivializing anti-Semitism by figuring it in terms of a prejudice which "reduces it to a contingency of personality, when it is in reality a component of our culture" (10).

[5] Julius writes:

> In late ninetieth-century Europe, misogyny and anti-Semitism were frequent partners. This alliance represented a reaction, in part, to a certain coincidence in demand by women and Jews for emancipation, especially in Germany and Austria. In France, it was proposed that 'the Semitic race' had the weakness of women, who were emotional, superstitious, rapacious, and catlike. One may trace this overlapping hatred of women onto hatred of Jews in certain leading personalities of the period. (19)

His account is extremely helpful in positioning anti-Semitism and misogyny in a cultural context and not solely personal one.

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VITA

Surname: Khambalia Given Names: Andrea Catherine

Place of Birth: Hamilton, Ontario, Canada

Educational Institutions Attended:

University of Victoria	1997 to 1999
McMaster University	1993 to 1997

Degrees Awarded:

B.A. (Honours)	McMaster University 1997

Honours and Awards:

University of Victoria Graduate Teaching Fellowship

Publications:

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Author

Andrea Catherine Khambalia

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