

T. S. ELIOT'S THE WASTE LAND: THE POET'S SEARCH
FOR CONSCIOUSNESS

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter

| | | |
|-----------------------|---|-----|
| I. | ELIOT AND THE GENESIS OF <u>THE</u> <u>WASTE LAND</u> | 1 |
| II. | CHAUCER'S <u>THE HOUSE OF FAME</u> : A PROTOTYPE OF THE POET'S <u>SEARCH FOR CONSCIOUSNESS</u> | 7 |
| III. | THE NARRATOR IN <u>THE WASTE LAND</u> : THE SEARCH FOR CREATIVITY IN THE WORLD OF LOVE AND LITERATURE | 41 |
| IV. | THE NARRATOR IN <u>THE WASTE LAND</u> : THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS <u>CREATIVITY</u> | 72 |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY. | | 101 |

CHAPTER I

ELIOT AND THE GENESIS OF THE WASTE LAND

To attempt to study the poetry of T. S. Eliot is a challenge, and to venture an interpretation of The Waste Land is a greater challenge. Eliot's name is identified with the modern school of poetry, and this particular work has been a major subject of contemporary criticism. As perhaps the most famous poem of this century, the work has been described variously. Generally, it is viewed as a set of judgments on life, in particular a pronouncement on the sterility of the modern world and the deterioration of religious values. Yet as Eliot has indicated, The Waste Land is a record of a private experience, not a statement about modern civilization:

Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling.¹

¹ Quoted in James E. Miller, T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons (London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1977), p. 9.

It is the personal interpretation of the poem that Eliot insists on. Yet that is what critics tend to ignore. Using his long poem to make a public comment on a disillusionment of a generation was definitely not the intention of Eliot. Instead, he used scenes from everyday life to portray some of his deepest and most personal emotions as a way of expressing himself through poetry without revealing himself to his readers. In On Poetry and Poets, Eliot comments on using a work of art as a medium for expressing a personal emotion:

A poet may believe that he is expressing only his private experience; his lines may be for him only a means of talking about himself without giving himself away; yet for his readers what he has written may come to be the expression both of their own secret feelings and of the exultation or despair of a generation. He need not know what his poetry will come to mean to others; and a prophet need not understand the meaning of his prophetic utterance.²

Nevertheless, despite Eliot's views on poetry, criticism has tended to ignore the private experience in Eliot's

² T. S. Eliot, "Virgil and the Christian World," On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 137.

work until recent years. In 1977 James E. Miller attempted the personal meaning underlying The Waste Land.³ Miller describes the poem as an expression of a love emotion. He uses the original manuscripts of the poem as well as incidents from the life and the experiences of the author to support his interpretation. For Miller, the shattered pieces that constitute The Waste Land reveal a disturbed psyche that suffers from the loss of a beloved, in this case a young man who met his death and for whom the soul of the poet still yearns. The argument that Miller presents is intriguing. In working with the private experience that underlies poetry, Miller opens up The Waste Land to further explorations of the private world which Eliot delineates in the poem.

To offer a different interpretation of The Waste Land which fits Eliot's description of his long poem, it is necessary to search for other personal impulses behind the work. "The waste land" could also be Eliot's epithet or objective correlative to describe the state of consciousness through the use of autobiographical material. At the beginning of the poem Eliot's narrator suffers from sterility and from a severe dryness in his artistic

³ See T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of the Demons (London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press.

productive powers. Described as an impotent Fisher King, the narrator does, however, by the end of the poem move towards creativity.

Although Eliot strives to bring out the personal identification in The Waste Land by inserting autobiographical material whenever possible, he strives also to relate his narrator's consciousness to the consciousness of other poets and to relate his long poem to poems that have stood the test of time. Eliot borrows heavily in The Waste Land from past literary works in order to place his work within an established literary tradition. As Eliot has noted, any "mature" poet has to relate himself to his predecessors, and any good poem has its complete meaning when it is placed within a literary tradition. In "Tradition and Individual Talent," Eliot says: "In the last article I tried to point out the importance of the relation of the poem to other poems by other authors, and suggested the conception of poetry as a living whole of all the poetry that has ever been written."⁴

To read The Waste Land as a search for consciousness and for literary "roots that clutch," thereby interpreting the journey involved in the poem as a search for creativity

⁴ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent," The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (London: Methuen & Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 53.

and a gradual move from emptiness to fruition, places the poem within the mythic tradition. Descriptions of the creative process have occasionally appeared in the long history of poetic development, and from these various descriptions a mythic pattern of the creative process emerges. Certainly, Chaucer's The House of Fame is a good example of that pattern, for Chaucer's narrator too moves from an initial state of emptiness and sterility to a final state of fertility and creativity.

The poet persona in both The Waste Land and The House of Fame first searches for creativity in the world of love and literature, thinking that to be a poet he has to be a lover. Next he searches for love in the world of reality and common experience. He finally realizes that poetry does not come out of the sole experience of love. The subject of poetry is found in the diversity of experiences of men. The poet also learns that his role is to control and shape sounds.

The similarities between The Waste Land and The House of Fame can help reveal the pattern which prevails in both poems, and which if understood in Chaucer's House of Fame can shed light on The Waste Land. The House of Fame has

been described as a journey from sterility to creativity.⁵
But a similar reading of The Waste Land has not been
approached. Such an approach, however, can illuminate the
personal experience which perhaps lies behind The Waste
Land.

⁵ Lavon Buster Fulwiler, "Image Progressions in
Chaucer's Poetry: Exposition of a Theory of Creativity,"
Diss. Michigan State Univ. 1971.

CHAPTER II

CHAUCER'S THE HOUSE OF FAME: A PROTOTYPE OF THE POET'S SEARCH FOR CONSCIOUSNESS

Chaucer's The House of Fame describes a journey of artistic growth undertaken by a narrator poet who moves gradually from a state of sterility towards creativity. At the beginning of his journey, the narrator poet to whom Chaucer gives his own name "Geffrey" is loveless and artistically unproductive. He thinks that in order to get rid of this poetic sterility he has to go to the world of love and literature in search of creativity. Therefore, he goes to the temple of Venus, where he immerses himself in literature that deals with the subject of love and tries to identify himself with famous lovers in order to experience their emotions. He also immerses his sense of sight in the beauty of the images and the portraits that hang on the walls of the temple, thinking that poetry springs out of love and beauty. Moving to the world of love and art is the first step taken by Chaucer's narrator towards creativity. This step constitutes the first book of The House of Fame.

The narrator poet then takes another step towards creativity which is described in Book II of the poem. In this

second step, he tries to know about love through the world of common experience. The narrator poet, still seeking creativity through love and thinking that in order to be a poet he has to be a lover, journeys over the universe to the House of Fame where he can hear "love tydyngs." In the claws of a mythological figure of authority, the golden eagle, the poet takes into his consciousness the whole world with its hills and plains. His heavenly journey takes him to the Palace of Fame and shows him the beauty of God in His creation. Yet this flight, which constitutes the second book of the poem, does not make the narrator write poetry. It only moves him a step further towards creativity and moves him forward on his search for his poetic consciousness.

The third step towards creativity is described in Book III of the poem. The narrator makes a tour around the House of Fame. He sees Lady Fame for whose sake he has taken such a long journey, and he is aware of beautiful images which he stores up in his memory. Yet he comes to realize that beauty, love, and tradition do not make poetry. The material of a poem is derived from everyday affairs: marriages, deaths, sicknesses, and wars. The narrator poet realizes that he has to make poetry out of the ordinary experiences of men. To be a poet he has to be a lover and

to embrace beauty, but above all, he has to come in touch with reality and the experiences of ordinary men. The poet's main advantage, he learns, is his extreme sensitivity to sounds. He must learn how to put those sounds, varied and confused as they are, into a unified pattern. And to do this he must depend, at least during the early stages of his maturity, on a trustworthy figure of authority. Paul G. Ruggiers describes this process of artistic development in "The Unity of Chaucer's House of Fame."¹

Side by side with the theory of creativity which is described in successive and interwoven steps is the concept of maturity of a young poetic consciousness. The narrator poet, as he moves towards creativity, has to overcome all contradictions within himself and in the world around him in order to become a mature poet. At the beginning of his journey he is wallowing in confusions and dualities. Gradually, he learns to reconcile those confusions both in literature and in life. He learns to absorb within himself the east and the west, pagan myths and Christian beliefs, and poetry side by side with science and facts. In order to mature, the poet also has to relate himself to the world of common men as well as to famous classical poets and their

¹ Paul G. Ruggiers, "The Unity of Chaucer's 'House of Fame'," Studies in Philology, 50 (1953), 27.

works. Geffrey knows himself to be a hermit-like scholar completely cut off from his fellow men. He also knows that if he cuts himself off from his literary roots he will not be able to achieve fame. In his journey towards fame, therefore, he attempts to establish his human and artistic roots.

He has to find for himself, too, a trustworthy guide who can lead him towards artistic fulfillment and help him find a pattern in his world of abundant images and confused sounds. Still unsure of his artistic instincts, the poet naturally clings desperately to a strong guide and submits his will totally to the guide's instructions. Geffrey moves from the guidance of a valid body of tradition to the instructions of an authoritative mythological figure and finally to the assured commands of a man of authority.

The narrator poet begins narrating his experience with a paradox that shows his uncertainty of his abilities. In the Proem, Geffrey questions the significance of dreams, their validity, and their relationship to the creation of poetry. He professes his ignorance about the subject of dreams although his long statement about visions, revelations, phantoms, and oracles shows great familiarity with technical terms and concepts related to dreams:²

² James Winny, Chaucer's Dream-Poems (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1973), p. 76.

God turne us every drem to goode!
 For hyt is wonder, be the roode,
 To my wyt, what causeth swevenes
 Eyther on morwes or on evenes;
 And why th' effect folweth of somme,
 And of somme hit shal never come;
 Why that is an avisioun
 And this a revelacioun,
 Why this a drem, why that a sweven,
 And noght to every man lyche even;
 Why this a fantome, why these oracles.³

He questions the reasons for having dreams: do they result from sickness, "gret distresse," curiosity, study, or melancholy? He then decides to leave the subject of dreams to interested scholars: "But why the cause is, noght wot I. / Wel worthe of this thyng, grete clerkys, / That trete of this and other werkes" (I. 52-54). But he is aware of the close relationship between dreams and poetry: "But oonly that the holy roode / Turne us every drem to goode" (I. 57-58). It is the dream that he had on the tenth day of December that he will tell his audience: "The tenthe day now of Decembre, / The which, as I kan now remembre, / I wol you tellen everydel" (I. 63-65).⁴

³ Geoffrey Chaucer, The House of Fame, in The Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, ed. F. N. Robinson, 2nd. ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1957), I. 1-11. All other references to this work will be cited in the body of the text.

⁴ Laurence K. Shook, "The House of Fame," in Companion to Chaucer Studies, ed. Beryl Rowland (Toronto: Oxford Univ. Press, 1968), p. 347.

Relating dreams to creativity is a concept that affects the poet's whole movement towards artistic maturity. Early at the beginning of his journey, he realizes the close relationship between the rich unconscious world of dreams and the barren conscious world of reality. The poet realizes that for inspiration and imagination, he must escape his dull world of reality and travel through the supernatural. He seeks a solution to his problem of artistic sterility in the world of dreams. Therefore, he makes an invocation at the beginning of Book I to the god of sleep: "But at my gynnyng, trusteth wel, / I wol make invocacion, / With special devocion, / Unto the god of slep anon" (I. 66-69).

This invocation to the pagan god of sleep to help him "telle aryght" his dream the narrator immediately couples with an invocation to Christ: ". . . he that mover ys of al / That is and was and ever shal" (I. 81-82). He prays to the Christian God to bless and protect those who take his dream seriously and to bring harm on those who underestimate the importance of his dream. Appealing to pagan deities and putting them side by side with the Christian God is a paradox that the narrator has to learn to live with. In order for him to grow and mature as a whole poetic consciousness, he must learn to absorb all dualities

and contradictions. This aim he sets for himself at the beginning of his journey and puts to his audience at the beginning of his narration. He then moves to describing the details of his experience.

He lays the roots of this experience in the temple of Venus. It is in the temple of love and art that the dreamer seeks to overcome his sterility as a poet and as a lover. Going to the temple of love as a first step in the creative process was a common convention in the Middle Ages: ". . . many medieval poets spoke of themselves as 'lovers' because they felt that to be a lover was in some way to be a poet. . . . If one wishes to be a poet, one becomes a lover, and an Art of Love is in a real sense an Art of Poetry."⁵ To know about love, the serious scholar and loveless poet feasts his eyes on the beauty of Venus and the craftsmanship of her temple:

But as I slepte, me mette I was
 Withyn a temple ymad of glas;
 In which ther were moo ymages
 Of gold, stondnge in sondry stages,
 And moo ryche tabernacles,
 And with perre moo pynacles,
 And moo curiouse portreytures,
 And queynte maner of figures
 Of olde werk, then I saugh ever.
 For certeynly, I nyste never
 Wher that I was, but wel wyste I,
 Hyt was of Venus redely,

⁵ Shook, p. 343.

The temple; for in portreyture,
 I sawgh anoon-ryght hir figure
 Naked fletyng in a see.
 And also as hir hed, pardee,
 Hir rose garlond whit and red,
 And hir comb to kembe hyr hed,
 Hir dowves, and daun Cupido,
 Hir blynde sone, and Vulcano,
 That in his face was tul broun.

(I. 119-39)

The narrator poet indulges in the beauty of art and craftsmanship in order to create. He enjoys the beautiful images of gold, the rich tabernacles, the portraitures of "figures of olde werk," and above all the beauty of naked Venus "fletyng in a see," accompanied by her blind son Cupid and surrounded by doves.

On a table of brass in the temple of Venus, the dreamer finds engraved lines from Virgil's Aeneid which describe the story of Aeneas and Dido. The loveless narrator tries to learn about love by living the details of the erotic love story. Virgil's story, however, concentrates on Aeneas' fate, how he left Troy and abandoned his wife Creusa and how he sought the shelter of Carthage and fell in love with Dido. The narrator lives the scenes of the story and relates them to his audience not as an outsider but as a witness and an interpreter. He introduces every part of the narration with the sentence "Ther saugh I" and

occasionally comments on the incidents.⁶ Yet, when it comes to a detailed description of the love affair, the loveless poet and shy scholar summarizes up facts in a few lines: "And after grave was, how shee / Made of hym shortly at oo word / Hyr lyf, her love, hir lust, hir lord" (I. 256-58). He then shows how Dido was deceived by Aeneas' fair appearance, for Aeneas soon betrayed her. The narrator departs from his narration to give his audience some advice. Forgetting all about his position as a dreamer, the narrator poet indulges in a statement about deceitful appearance:

For, be Cryste, lo, thus yt fareth:
 "Hyt is not al gold that glareth."
 For also browke I well myn hed,
 Ther may be under godlyhed
 Kevered many a shrewed vice.
 (I. 271-75)

In his search for consciousness, the poet's mind moves smoothly from the unconscious world of dreams to the conscious world of reality and back again to the dream world. The narrator poet is a dreamer and a spokesman for reality. He refers his audience to Ovid's account of the love story if they desire to know more about Dido's fate:⁷

⁶ Wolfgang Clemen, Chaucer's Early Poetry (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1963), pp. 80-81.

⁷ Winny, pp. 80-81.

And al the maner how she deyde,
 And alle the wordes that she seyde,
 Whoso to knowe hit hath purpos,
 Rede Virgile in Eneydos
 Or the Epistle of Ovyde,
 What that she wrot or that she dyde.
 (I. 375-80)

In going to Virgil and to Ovid to trace the love story of Aeneas and Dido, the narrator poet is training his maturing consciousness to absorb dualities. He is also trying to relate himself to famous classical poets from whom he can learn and to whom he can refer. For it is only in following the footsteps of his predecessors that the poet can find for himself a place in the House of Fame.

Still searching for maturity in scenes of erotic love, the narrator poet lifts out of his memory samples of love experiences in which women suffered for their love:

Loo, Demophon, duk of Athenys,
 How he forswor hym ful falsly,
 And traysed Phillis wikkidly,
 That kynges doghtre was of Trace,
 And falsly gan hys terme pace;
 And when she wiste that he was fals,
 She heng hirself ryght be the hals,
 For he had doon hir such untrouthe.
 Loo! was not this a woo and routhe?
 (I. 388-96)

Geffrey goes to literature to find examples that parallel Aeneas' treatment of Dido and also to familiarize his hermetical nature with scenes of love and sensuality, which he thinks can lead him to creativity:

Eke lo! how fals and reccheles
 Was to Breseyda Achilles,
 And Paris to Oenone;
 And Jason to Isiphile,
 And eft Jason to Medea;
 And Ercules to Dyanira,
 For he left hir for Yole,
 That made hym cache his deth, parde.
 (I. 397-404)

After he has immersed his loveless soul in scenes of love and literature, feasted his eyes on the beauty of the images in the temple of love, and lifted out of his consciousness fragments that spoke of love, the uncreative poet thinks that he can now leave the temple of Venus:

When I had seen al this syghte
 In this noble temple thus,
 "A, Lord!" thoughte I, "that madest us,
 Yet sawgh I never such noblesse
 Of ymages, ne such richesse,
 As I saugh graven in this chirche.
 (I. 468-73)

Yet, on leaving the temple of Venus to learn where he is, the narrator poet finds himself in an empty desert:

When I out at the dores cam,
 I faste aboute me beheld.
 Then sawgh I but a large feld,
 As fer as that I myghte see,
 Withouten toun, or hous, or tree,
 Or bush, or grass, or eryd lond;
 For al the feld nas but of sond
 As smal as man may se yet lye
 In the desert of Lybye.
 (I. 480-88)

The desert at this stage of the journey symbolizes the state of consciousness the poet is passing through. Going to the temple of Venus does not rid him of his sterility. Yet it is a necessary step in his artistic maturity. The poet realizes that poetry does not come from the world of art and literature. He is also able to see underneath the beauty of Lady Venus and learns that pursuing this beauty does not lead him to fame. He immediately lifts his eyes up to heaven and prays to Christ: "'O Crist,' thoughte I, that art in blysse, / Fro fantome and illusion / Me save'" (I. 492-94). For the growing consciousness of a poet, there is no contradiction between pagan mythology and Christian beliefs: in the desert of Venus, Geffrey turns to Christ. A lesson the poet has to learn at an early stage of his growth is how to find unity in contradictions and how to turn mythology into valid Christian beliefs.

Lifting his eyes up to the heaven of Christ, the narrator is answered by the messenger of the pagan Jove. Jove sends his golden eagle to rescue the poet from his emptiness and to take him to the place where he can learn about the creation of poetry. Jove's eagle is for the poet the trustworthy guide that can lead him on his journey of growth and maturity.

On seeing the eagle, the narrator is at once awed by its appearance and submits himself quickly to its guidance:

Hyt was of gold, and shon so bryghte
 That never sawe men such a syghte,
 But yf the heven had ywonne
 Al newe of gold another sonne;
 So shone the egles fethers bryghte,
 And somewhat dounward gan hyt lyghte.
 (I. 503-08)

The mythological messenger of Jove, the golden eagle, is the strong and confident guide whom the poet needs in his journey towards maturity. The growing poet clings desperately to the claws of the eagle and flies with him in Book II to the second step in his process of growth. Jove's messenger in this part of the poem takes the poet up to the highest heaven and along the stretch of the whole universe. His aim is to instruct the poet about matters he has read only in books and to show him the beauty of the Christian God. In the claws of the golden eagle, the bookish scholar is allowed to take into his consciousness the beauty of the heavens and the earth.

In the Proem to Book II and the second step in the process of growth, the narrator poet begs Venus and the Muses to help him narrate his dream to his audience. In addressing the muses, Geoffrey is imitating the classical

poet Dante in his Inferno and Purgatorio.⁸ The poet learns early at the begining of his journey to cling strongly to his predecessors. Going back to an established literary tradition is for Geffrey the safest way to achieve the favor of Lady Fame, for whose sake he takes such a long journey. To her palace he goes with his guide.

The narrator poet begins his dream by describing to his audience how his guide carried him up to the heavens and how safe and secure he felt in his claws. The fright of flying and the confusion of growing are lessened by the confidence the dreamer has in his guide:

And with hys grymme pawes stronge,
 Withyn hys sharpe nayles longe,
 Me, fleynge, in a swap he hente,
 And with hys sours ayen up wente,
 Me carynge in his clawes starke
 As lyghtly as I were a larke,
 How high, I can not telle yow,
 For I cam up, y nyste how,
 For so astonyed and asweved
 Was every vertuin myn heved.
 (II. 541-50)

Jove's eagle is friendly to the poet. He constantly assures him in his fright: Be ful assured, boldely, / I am thy frend" (II. 581- 82) and explains to him why he is taking him on such a long journey. Jove, the god of

⁸ F. N. Robinson, ed., Notes on The House of Fame, in the Works of Geoffrey Chaucer, p. 782.

thunder, has taken pity on the loveless poet, who has worked very hard to please the goddess of love. The poet has written many songs and poems about love without really knowing much about the subject. For this reason, Jove decided to send his messenger to the bookish scholar to teach him about love:

Joves halt hyt gret humblesse,
 And vertu eke, that thou wolt make
 A-nyght ful ofte thyn hed to ake
 In thy studye, so thou writest,
 And ever mo of love enditest,
 In honour of hym and in preysynges.
 (II. 630-35)

The theme of love about which the poet read in books needs to be experienced in life. Therefore, the eagle takes him to the place where he can hear "tydynges of Loves folk." The poet at this stage of his journey is still seeking to write poetry out of the emotion of love. In the House of Fame he is to learn about

Mo discordes, moo jelousies,
 Mo murmures, and moo novelries,
 And moo dissymulacions
 And feyned reparacions;
 And moo berdys in two houres
 Withoute rasour of sisoures
 Ymad, then greynes be of sondes;
 And eke moo holdynge in hondes,
 And also moo renovelaunces
 Of olde forleten aqueyntaunches;
 Mo love-dayes and acordes
 Then on instrumentes be cordes;

And eke of loves moo eschaunges
 Then ever cornes were in graunges.
 (II. 685-98)

The eagle, however, wants to teach the poet about things other than erotic love. He intends to show him the beauty of the whole universe and to make the poet's limited consciousness expand and take in experiences other than love. The eagle teaches him about sounds. He tells him that the House of Fame stands in a place where all sounds meet:

Hir paleys stant, as I shal seye,
 Ryght even in myddes of the weye
 Betwixen hevene, erthe, and see;
 That what so ever at these three
 Is spoken, either privy or apert,
 The way thereto ys so overt,
 And stant eke in so juste a place
 That every soun mot to hyt pace,
 Or what so cometh from any tonge,
 Be hyt rouned, red, or songe,
 Or spoke in suerte or in drede,
 Certeyn, hyt moste thider nede.
 (II. 713-24)

The guide proceeds to make a scientific speech on sounds, how they originate and travel. Everything in nature has its place which it seeks by "kyndely enclynyng." Sounds, whether foul or fair, seek their places in the House of Fame, which stands between heaven, earth, and sea. The eagle goes on to explain to the poet that speech is sound and that sound is nothing but broken air:

Soun ys noght but eyr ybroken,
 And every speeche that ys spoken,
 Lowd or pryvee, foul or fair,
 In his substaunce ys but air.
 (II. 765-68)

The poet's learning about sounds is a vital step in the growth of his poetic consciousness. The eagle's speech on sound, lengthy as it is, teaches the narrator poet a new theory about the creation of poetry. The poet, who thought at the beginning of his journey that to be a poet he only had to be a lover, now learns that to write poetry he must have control over sounds. He now understands that "Poetry's origin is not in the temple or church of love; it is in the temple or house of fame or sound."⁹

Learning about sounds is not all the poet gains from his journey; his sense of sight receives its share of the instruction. In the claws of the eagle, the poet sees the whole universe with its hills and plains:

And y adoun gan loken thoo,
 And beheld felds and playnes,
 And now hilles, and now mountaynes,
 Now valeyes, now forestes,
 And now unnethes grete bestes;
 Now ryveres, now citees,
 Now tounes, and now grete trees,
 Now shippes seylllynge in the see.
 (II. 896-903)

⁹ Shook, p. 350.

The variety of sights that the narrator sees while he is in the claws of the eagle makes him learn to look deeper into the reality of things. Objects that seemed to him too great when he was on earth are now very tiny when he is up in heaven: ". . . al the world, as to myn ye, / No more seemed than a prikke" (II. 906-7).

To relieve him of the fright of perception and to establish for him a sense of tradition, the eagle relates the poet's dream to the dreams of other famous people:

"No wonder nys,"
 Quod he, "for half so high as this
 Nas Alexandre Macedo;
 Ne the kyng, Daun Scipio,
 That saw in drem, at poynt devys,
 Helle and erthe and paradys;
 Ne eke the wrechche Dedalus,
 Ne his child, nyce Ykarus,
 That fleigh so highe that the hete
 Hys wynges malt, and he fel wete
 In myd the see, and ther he dreynte,
 For whom was maked moch compleynte.
 (II. 913-24)

The eagle drives loose the poet's imagination that has been limited so far to books and manuscripts and makes the dreamer soar above the stars and the clouds: "'Now,' quod he thoo,' cast up thyn ye. / Se yonder, loo, the Galaxie, / Which men clepeth the Milky Way" (II. 935-37). He asks the poet to remove all restrictions from his fantasy: "'Lat be,' quod he, 'thy fantasye! / Wilt thou lere of sterres

aught" (II. 992-93). He teaches him about the stars, but he tells him that the main concern of the poet is with:

"The grete soun,"
 Quod he, "that rumbleth up and down
 In Fames Hous, full of tydynges,
 Bothe of feir speche and chidynges,
 And of fals and soth compounded."
 (II. 1025-29)

The eagle finally sets the narrator on his feet and asks him to find his own way in the House of Fame, the real destination of his journey and the place where all speech is made: "Loo, to the House of Fame yonder, / Thou wost now how, cometh every speche" (II. 1070-71). The task of the poet is now defined towards the end of Book II and the second step in the journey. The poet's real concern is with the speech of men; his duty is to put various sounds into the unity of a pattern. For this reason Geoffrey goes to the House of Fame to see how all speech is made:

. . . understond now ryght wel this,
 Whan any speche ycomen ys
 Up to the paleys, anon-ryght
 Hyt wexeth lyk the same wight
 Which that the word in erthe spak,
 By hyt clothed red or blak;
 And hath so verray hys lyknesse
 That spak the word, that thou wilt gesse
 That it the same body be,
 Man or woman, he or she.
 (II. 1073-82)

Book III describes the poet's adventure in the House of Fame and his adoption of a new theory of creativity. He comes to understand how sounds are metamorphosed into poetic images which are given either a permanent or a temporary place in Fame's Palace. Lady Fame picks and chooses among those poetic patterns according to her whimsical mood: some she orders to be blown all around the world; others she blows into forgetfulness. The growing poet learns that he should not put his trust in such a fickle creature as Lady Fame. He should only seek to achieve perfection in his art. He also learns that poetry is not made out of love and beauty alone. A mature poet must make out of everyday matters beautiful artistic pieces. The narrator poet, in the third step of his process of growth, moves closer to creativity and comes nearer to the world of reality and facts. The heavenly flight in Book II takes him to the place where he can embrace trivial and dull matters and make poetry out of them.

The poet begins Book III and the third part of his journey with an invocation to Apollo, the "God of science and of lyght." After invoking Morpheus and Venus in the two previous books, the narrator invokes the God of science and facts. He still goes to his trustworthy guide for direction during the final stage of his experience. The

maturing consciousness of the poet is still in need of a guiding force.

Jove's eagle takes the poet to Fame's Palace, which stands upon a high rock. The ambitious narrator climbs this rock "with all payne," yet he realizes that it is made of ice. The weak foundation of the palace gives the poet his first insight into the danger of trusting the beautiful Lady:¹⁰

But at the laste aspied I,
And found that hit was every del
A roche of yse, and not of stel.
Thoughte I, "By seynt Thomas of Kent!
This were a feble fundament
To bidden on a place hye.
(III. 1128-33)

Geffrey finds the names of "famous folkes" engraved on one side of this rock. Yet out of each name he finds one or two letters erased, which makes him see the short durability of worldly fame: "That of the lettres oon or two / Was molte away of every name, / So unfamous was woxe hir fame. / But men seyn, 'What may ever laste'" (III. 1144-47). On the other side of the rock, the narrator finds engraved the names of famous classical figures; those names, however, are not affected by the passage of time. In the House of Fame, the classical figures have their permanent place,

¹⁰ Clemen, p. 102.

and in the narrator's consciousness they keep their fresh memory:

For on that other syde I say
 Of this hil, that northward lay,
 How hit was writen ful of names
 Of folkes that hadden grete fames
 Of olde tyme, and yet they were
 As fresh as men had writen hem here
 The selve day ryght, or that houre
 That I upon hem gan to poure.
 (III. 1151-58)

The narrator poet then turns to the beauty of the Palace of Fame. In order to achieve artistic growth, the poet tries to make full use of his senses. To feed his imaginative eye, he examines the beauty of the place; to sharpen his sense of hearing, he takes notice of all sounds in the palace. Geffrey first describes the House of Fame with its images and tabernacles:

But natheless al the substance
 I have yit in my remembrance;
 For whi me thoughte, be seynt Gyle!
 Al was of ston of beryle,
 Bothe the castel and the tour,
 And eke the halle and every bour,
 Wythouten peces or joynnynges.
 But many subtil compassinges,
 Babewynnes and pynacles,
 Ymageries and tabernacles,
 I say; and ful eke of wyndowes,
 As flakes falle in grete snowes.
 (III. 1181-92)

He then moves to a listing of the sounds he heard in the Palace:

Ther herde I pleyen on an harpe
 That sowned bothe wel and sharpe,
 Orpheus ful craftely,
 And on his syde, faste by,
 Sat the harper Orion,
 And Eacides Chiron,
 And other harpers many oon,

 And many other maner pipe,
 That craftely begunne to pipe,
 Bothe in doucet and in rede,
 That ben at festes with the brede;
 And many floute and liltyng horn,
 And pipes made of grene corn,
 As han thise lytel herde-gromes,
 That kepen bestis in the bromes.
 (III. 1201-26)

In addition to the players on pipes and trumpets, the narrator finds tumblers, jugglers, magicians, and witches who help to spread the fame of the lucky ones whom the Lady endows with her favors. He then enters the castle and meets crowds of people who hail the beauty of the Lady and ask her to give them fame:

But in I wente, and that anoon.
 Ther mette I cryinge many oon,
 "A larges, larges, hold up wel!
 God save the lady of thys pel,
 Our oune gentil lady Fame,
 And hem that wilnen to have name
 Of us! Thus herde y crien alle.
 (III. 1307-13)

Geffrey keeps moving among beautiful images of sight and sound. He walks through the hall of the Palace until he finally comes face to face with his long-sought "bella-donna":

But al on hye, above a dees,
 Sitte in a see imperiall,
 That mad was of a rubee all,
 Which that a carbuncle ys ycalled,
 Y saught perpetually ystalled,
 A femynyne creature,
 That never formed by Nature
 Nas such another thing yseye.
 (III. 1360-67)

Lady Fame, as the poet comes to perceive, is the most fickle and changeable creature that was ever "formed by Nature." At first he thought "she was so lyte / That the lengthe of a cubite / Was lengere than she semed be" (III. 1369-71). But soon she becomes "so wonderliche streighte / That with hir fet she erthe reighte, / And with hir hed she touched hevene" (III. 1373-75). She is a grotesque creature who has so many "upstondyng eres / And tonges, as on bestes heres." And on her feet, the poet saw "partriches wynges redely."¹¹ The narrator is overwhelmed by the "perry and the richesse" of the goddess and he is thrilled by "the hevenysssh melodye / Of songes, ful of armonye" (III. 1395-96). Yet he learns at this final stage of his journey not to put his trust in such a changeable and fickle creature. The two aspects of his "bella-donnas" in the poem now become inseperable. The vain beauty of Venus that deluded the poet is now coupled with the fickle

¹¹ Clemen, pp. 104-05.

nature of Fame: the two ladies become one source of illusion and deceit.

Behind the composite portrait of Fame lie several centuries of poetic development. In Petrarch's Trionfi, Fame is one of a series of allegorical personages whose triumphs dramatize man's spiritual life on earth. In progressive order, Cupid triumphs over the world, Chastity over Cupid, Death over Chastity, Fame over Death, Time over Fame--all caught up at length in a kind of eternity that culminates in a beatific vision of heavenly fame. The dreamer views Fame approaching after triumph over death, a "bella-donna" who advances like a star from the East. Accompanying her are all the famous people whose names she has saved from oblivion. Although Fame triumphs over Death in saving men from oblivion, she is conquered by time. The dreamer comes to realize the vanity of putting his trust in anything so ephemeral as Fame.¹²

Geffrey, too, as he moves from one detail to another inside the Palace of Fame, comes to a final perception of the vanity of worldly fame and decides to seek a more valid source of authority. Yet among all the transitory objects his eyes meet in the castle, he notices some stable pillars

¹² B. G. Koonce, Chaucer and The Tradition of Fame: Symbolism in The House of Fame (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Univ. Press, 1969), pp. 39-45.

which carry the figures of the famous classical poets. The poets that help establish the literary tradition have their special significance in Geoffrey's world:

Thoo saugh I stonde on a piler,
That was of tynned yren cler,
The Latyn poete, Virgile,
That bore hath up a longe while
The figure of Pius Eneas.

And next hym on a piler was,
Of coper, Venus clerk, Ovide,
That hath ysowen wonder wide
The grete god of Loves name.

.
Thoo saugh I on a piler by,
Of yren moght ful sternely,
The grete poete, daun Lucan,
And on hys shuldres bar up than,
As high as that y myghte see,
The fame of Julius and Pompe.

.
And next him on a piler stood
Of soulfre, lyk as he were wood,
Daun Claudian, the rothe to telle,
That bar up al the fame of helle,
Of Pluto, and of Proserpyne,
That quene ys of the derke pyne.

What shulde y more telle of this?
The halle was al ful, ywys,
Of hem that writen olde gestes,
As ben on trees rokes nestes;
But hit a ful confus matere
Were alle the gestes for to here,
That they of write, or how they highte.

(III. 1481-1519)

The fame achieved by the classical poets is not affected by the changes in the mood of the Lady. Those poets have their places firm and stable in her palace, while she divided her favors capriciously among other

petitioners. Geffrey watches the nine groups of petitioners as they come and kneel in front of Lady Fame and beg for her favors. To one group she gives extravagantly, from another she withholds unjustly, and she asks Aeolus, the god of the winds, to blow her judgment all around the earth. To some persons she says:

"I graunte," quod she, "for me list
 That now your goode werkes be wist,
 And yet ye shul han better loos,
 Right in dispit of alle your foos,
 Than worthy is, and that anoon.
 Lat now," quod she, "thy trumpe goon,
 Thou Eolus, that is so blak;
 And out thyn other trumpe tak
 That highte Laude and blow yt soo
 That thugh the world her fame goo
 Al esely and not to faste,
 That hyt be knowen atte laste."

(III. 1665-76)

To others she says:

"Nay, wis," quod she, "hyt were a vice.
 Al be ther in me no justice,
 Me lyste not to doo hyt now,
 Ne this nyl I not graunte you."

(III. 1819-22)

The narrator is now sure about the fickleness and the whimsicality of his lady, for whose sake he has taken such a long journey. He decides that as a poet he must perfect his art and must pay no attention to the unjust favors of Lady Fame. When asked if he has come to the palace to achieve the favor of the lady he says:

"Nay, for sothe, frend," quod y;
 "I com noght hyder, graunt mercy,
 For no such cause, by my hed!"
 Sufficeth me, as I were ded,
 That no wight have my name in honde.
 (III. 1873-77)

The poet explains to the friend that he has come to this place to hear tidings about love and wonderous things:

The cause why y stonde here:
 Somme newe tydynges for to lere,
 Somme newe thinges, y not what,
 Tydynges, other this or that,
 Of love, or such thynges glade.
 For certeynly, he that me made
 To comen hyder, seyde me,
 Y shulde bothe here and se,
 In this place, wonder thynges.
 (III. 1885-93)

But the subject of poetry, the narrator poet finally learns, is not "wonderous things." He leaves the marvelous Palace of Fame and proceeds to the House of Rumours, where he gets to learn about the desired tidings. The House of Rumours, the poet notices, is full of "entrees" and holes to let sounds go out:

That, for the swough and for the twygges,
 This hous was also ful of gygges,
 And also ful eke of chirkynges,
 And of many other werkynges;
 And eke this hous hath of entrees
 As fele as of leves ben in trees
 In somer, whan they grene been;
 And on the roof men may yet seen

A thousand holes, and wel moo,
 To leten wel the soun out goo.
 (III. 1941-50)

Tidings of love, hate, marriages, and wars all come to the House of Rumours, and from its holes and windows they leave to the House of Fame. The narrator poet learns to choose the subject of his poems from everyday matters whirling in the House of Rumours:

Ne never rest is in that place
 That hit nys fild ful of tydynges,
 Other loude, or of whisprynges;
 And over alle the houses angles
 Ys ful of roungynges and of jangles
 Of werres, of pes, of mariages,
 Of reste, of labour, of viages,
 Of abood, of deeth, of lyf,
 Of love, of hate, acord, of stryf,
 Of loos, of lore, and of wynnynge,
 Of hele, of secknesse, of bildgynges,
 Of faire wyndes, and of tempestes,
 Of qwalm of folk, and eke of bestes;
 Of dyvers transmutacions
 Of estates, and eke of regions;
 Of trust, of drede, of jelousye,
 Of wit, of wynnynge, of folye,
 Of plente, and of gret famyne,
 Of chepe, of derthe, and of ruyne;
 Of good of mys government,
 Of fyr, and of dyvers accident.
 (III. 1956-76)

Geffrey now knows from where to take the material of his poems: from "every conceivable event and theme in human life. Love is spoken of in The House of Rumours, but

it is by no means the only theme mentioned."¹³ Despite his consciousness, the poet still clings desperately to its trustworthy guide. He begs the eagle to lead him through his journey to the House of Rumors:

How that myn egle, faste by,
Was perched hye upon a stoon;
And I gan streghte to hym gon,
And seyde thus: "Y preye the
That thou a while abide me,
For Goddis love, and lete me seen
What wondres in this place been.
(III. 1990-96)

The eagle is happy to play the role of guide to the growing poet on his journey towards maturity:

And yaf expres commaundement,
To which I am obedient,
To further the with al my myght,
And wisse and teche the aryght
Where thou maist most tidynges here,
Shaltow here anon many oon lere."
(III. 2021-26)

The eagle takes the poet once more between his claws and brings him to the House of Rumours. As soon as the narrator puts his feet inside the House, he notices the crowd of people exchanging news either privately or openly:

. . . which a congregacioun
Of folk, as I saugh some aboute,
Some wythin and some wythoute,

¹³ Clemen, p. 110.

Nas never seen, ne shal ben eft;
 That, certys, in the world nys left
 So many formed be Nature,
 Ne ded so many a creature;
 That wel unnethe in that place
 Hadde y a fote-brede of space.
 And every wight that I saugh there
 Rouned everych in others ere
 A newe tydyng prively,
 Or elles tolde al openly.

(III. 2032-46)

Geffrey has to find his way in the House of Rumours through the crowd and the confusion. Everywhere in the house people are exchanging news whether true or false. The narrator poet has to make his choices and to turn all confusions into a pattern:

Thus north and south
 Went every tydyng fro mouth to mouth,
 And that encresing ever moo,
 As fyr ys wont to quyke and goo
 From a sparke spronge amys,
 Til al a citee brent up ys.

(III. 2075-80)

The various tidings about different kinds of events find their way as multiple sounds out of the windows of the House of Rumours to the House of Fame. Lady Fame then divides her favors playfully, endowing some sounds with eternal fame and throwing others into oblivion: "Thus out at holes gunne wringe / Every tydyng streight to Fame, / And she gan yeven ech hys name, After hir disposicioun" (III. 2110-13). As the poet moves further and further

on the way to maturity, he learns not to put his trust in worldly vanities, whether beauty or fame.

By the end of his journey and the end of the third book of The House of Fame, the poet learns to seek perfection in his art rather than the favor of capricious Lady Fame. He also learns to search for the matter of poetry in the events of everyday life. He realizes that the experience of love is important for a poet but that it is not the sole experience out of which poetry is created. To write poetry the poet has to embrace the heavens as well as the earth; if he begins his journey in heaven, he has to end it on earth. As a poet he must sing of the joy and the suffering of mankind. He has to sympathize with his human brothers and to put their varied emotions into melodious patterns. If a poet is endowed with a special gift, it is an exceptional sensitivity to sounds that rise from created things. His duty is to put those sounds, however confused and contradictory they are, into a unified whole. To establish this pattern, the poet needs the guidance of a strong force of authority. Geoffrey also learns that to mature any poet has to place himself within an established literary tradition. The safest footsteps he takes towards maturity are those in which he follows his predecessors. For Geoffrey, The House of Fame and other poems have their

meaning when they are set side by side with the works of Virgil and Ovid. Throughout The House of Fame, Geoffrey has sought to establish his literary roots. He has moved from one step of growth to another searching for creativity, perfection in art, and trustworthy guidance. This guidance finally comes to him at the end of the poem. A strong figure of authority finally comes to help the poet make a pattern out of his abundant material and varied sounds:

I herde a gret noyse withalle
 In a corner of the halle,
 Ther men of love-tydynges tolde,
 And I gan thiderward beholde;
 For I saugh rennyng every wight,
 As faste as that they hadden myght;
 And everych cried, "What thing is that?"
 And somme sayde, "I not never what."
 And whan they were alle on an hepe,
 Tho behynde begunne up lepe,
 And clamben up on other faste,
 And up the nose and yen kaste,
 And troden fast on others heles,
 And stampen, as men doon aftir eles.
 Atte laste y saugh a man,
 Which that y (nevene) nat ne kan;
 But he seemed for to be
 A man of gret auctorite. . . .

(III. 2143-58)

With the entrance of the man of authority, Geoffrey suddenly ends his narration. No final and decisive interpretation has been offered as to why the poem is left unfinished and what is the true nature of the figure of authority who is suddenly introduced into the world of

abundance and chaos. The poet's quest for consciousness, his journey through the world of artistic maturity and growth, seems to have no definite end. A poet's soul searching for creativity must traverse waste lands and mountains. The narrator poet must seek love in art and life, and he must attempt new theories of creation. He should relate himself to his predecessors in order to learn from them and to develop their literary tradition. Despite all these efforts the search is bound to be limitless because achieving artistic maturity is an indefinite process.

It is this search for consciousness that The Waste Land also describes. The steps involved in the search which are explored in Chaucer's House of Fame are the same steps that Eliot's narrator takes in his own search. He, too, searches for creativity in the world of love and literature and in the world of common experience. He also investigates new theories of creativity, especially those related to sound, and he places himself and his work within a literary tradition.

CHAPTER III

THE NARRATOR IN THE WASTE LAND: THE SEARCH FOR CREATIVITY IN THE WORLD OF LOVE AND LITERATURE

Following Chaucer's footsteps in The House of Fame, Eliot begins his long poem The Waste Land by portraying his narrator poet in a state of lovelessness and poetic sterility. Described as an impotent Fisher King¹ who moves gradually towards a solution to his impotency, the narrator poet in The Waste Land takes gradual steps towards creativity. "The Waste Land" is the epithet Eliot uses to describe the state of consciousness his narrator is passing through before he makes his journey to the world of love and creativity. In the first part of this journey, the narrator poet tries to learn about love through literature and art. Finding no creativity in this world of literature

¹ Here Eliot identifies the narrator with the wounded Fisher King in medieval narratives, a mythic figure who sends his knights on a quest for the Holy Grail that can heal his wounds and him impotency. For example, Chretien de Troyes describes the adventures of Sir Perceval in his search for the Grail, and Malory's "Tale of the Sankgreal," Section VII on Sir Galahad, presents major elements of the Fisher King story. See Chretien de Troyes, Perceval, or the Story of the Grail, in Roger Sherman Loomis and Laura Hibbard Loomis, Medieval Romances (New York: The Modern Library, 1957) and Thomas Malory, Malory Works, ed. Eugene Vinaver, 2nd. ed. (London: Oxford Univ. Press, 1971).

and art, the narrator poet seeks to learn about love in the world of common experience. Yet the narrator poet finds himself unable to create through the sole experience of love. He therefore takes a third step towards artistic growth in which he embraces the world of reality and investigates new theories of creativity. The poet comes to realize the special significance of sounds in the production of poetry. He also learns to absorb all the contradictions inside his consciousness and the dualities in the world around him and to make out of a variety of material a unified pattern.

The dissections and the confusions in the poet's consciousness are first described in "Gerontion," the poem which Eliot meant to prefix to The Waste Land. Gerontion is torn between his many selves, which are portrayed as fleeting images. He is suffering from great frustration and an acute disability to affect the flow of events. He thinks of all the possibilities of actions which he could have made but had failed to make, and he judges himself as a helpless old man: "A dull head among windy spaces."²

² T. S. Eliot, "Gerontion," The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), 1. 16.

Gerontion's distracted mind conspires in a secret betrayal: the liturgical feast translated into a sophisticated joke or game which is conducted by disembodied actors. Gerontion and his many selves are devoured by the tiger, and he is now a resigned old man who acquiesces to death.³

In his despair and frustration, Gerontion addresses a "bella-donna" who has misguided him. He is seeking the love of the capricious lady, and she is constantly fleeing him:

I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
 To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.
 I have lost my passion: why should I need to
 to keep it
 Since what is kept must be adulterated?
 I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste
 and touch:
 How should I use them for your closer contact?
(ll. 56-61)

Gerontion's capricious "bella-donna" appears again in The Waste Land, once more to delude the narrator by her beauty. To gain the favor of the Lady is an important goal for the narrator poet at the beginning of his journey.

To describe the sterile consciousness of the narrator poet at the beginning of his journey, Eliot draws from ancient fertility myths of vegetation. Those myths define

³ San Juan, Jr., "Form and Meaning in 'Gerontion'," Renaissance 22 (1969), 115-26.

the idea of a Being upon whose life and reproductive activities the very existence of nature and its corresponding energies are held to depend, yet he is himself subject to the decline of powers and death like any ordinary mortal. With the death of the fertility God, destruction falls on the land; after his burial, fertility is restored to the animals and the vegetation.⁴ The Waste Land begins with the state of sterility in "The Burial of the Dead." The fertility God is to be buried and the unproductive narrator poet is to begin a journey in the world of fertility and abundance.

The feelings of frustration because of the inability to write and produce are expressed in the paradox which begins the poem: "April is the cruellest month."⁵ April, which is meant to be a month of productivity, life, youth, and spring, is here described as the cruellest month. The reason for this paradox is the difficulty of "breeding lilacs" or creating beautiful poems out of a sterile consciousness, "the dead land." Writing poetry, which is for

⁴ Jessie L. Weston, "Tammuz and Adonis," From Ritual to Romance (New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1957), pp. 34-51.

⁵ T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land, The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt Brace & Co., 1952), l. 1. All other references to this work will be cited in the body of the text.

the narrator poet an act of synthesis, of mixing the old works with the new or creating the new out of the old, is at this stage of the journey very difficult to accomplish. The narrator poet finds it hard to stir "Dull roots with spring rail" (l. 4). He cannot turn what he remembers of old work into something new, and Eliot has written: "Our problem being to form the future, we can only form it on the materials of the past; we must use our heredity, instead of denying it."⁶ In the consciousness of the narrator poet, the relationship between "memory" and "desire" or the "past" and the "future" is very strong. Creation for the narrator poet is a synthetic process of the old into the new. And since he is unproductive and unable to synthesize, the poet prefers winter, which is the season of death, to spring: "Winter kept us warm, covering / Earth in forgetful snow, feeding / A little life with dried tubers" (ll. 5-7).

To identify the narrator poet with himself, Eliot introduces into the poem some autobiographical material. He puts into the mouth of his narrator part of a conversation he had had with the Countess Marie Larisch:

⁶ T. S. Eliot, Essays Ancient and Modern (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1932), pp. 78-79.

Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee
 With a shower of rain; we stopped in the colonnade,
 And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten,
 And drank coffee, and talked for an hour.
 Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch.
 And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,
 My counsins's, he took me out on a sled,
 And I was frightened. He said, Marie,
 Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.
 In the mountains, there you feel free.
 I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter.
 (ll. 8-18)

The main problem facing the narrator poet, who is identified with Eliot himself, is alienation. He knows that in order to mature as a whole poetic consciousness, he must establish his literary roots. He must relate himself to his predecessors to learn from them and to place himself among them. This is a point Eliot also asserts in his essays:

. . . and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; 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. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well

as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.⁷

Lacking this relation with the past is a hindrance to creativity and to maturity: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish?" (ll. 19-20). No branches can grow when there are no roots that clutch; for it is out of old works that new works grow. In order to establish those roots that clutch, the narrator poet goes on his journey. He lifts out of his consciousness fragments from Ezekiel and Ecclesiastes that speak of deserts and waste lands in order to reveal the emotional state of fear and emptiness he is passing through:

Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket
no relief.
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
And I will show you something different from
either
Your shadow at morning striding behind you

⁷ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent," The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism (London: Methuen and Co., Ltd., 1950), p. 49.

Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
 I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
 (ll. 20-30)

Eliot uses the image of a desert as an "objective correlative" for the state of consciousness of his narrator. The "heap of broken images," the dead trees that offer no shelter, and the dry stones that have no sound of water evoke the feelings of emptiness and sterility that Eliot's narrator is experiencing. Eliot describes this use of a concrete object or scene to evoke a particular emotion in his Selected Essays 1917-1932:

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.⁸

Nancy Hargrove also discusses Eliot's use of symbols to communicate feelings and emotions. She shows how Eliot uses the image of the desert in his poetry to convey chaos,

⁸ T. S. Eliot, "Hamlet," Selected Essays 1917-1932 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932), pp. 124-25.

terror, and emptiness.⁹ In his fear and emptiness, the narrator poet in The Waste Land goes to religion as the most valid source of authority. The shelter of "the red rock" is the true comforter for the growing consciousness of the narrator in the first steps he takes on his journey. The close relationship between religion and literature is for Eliot very natural and beneficial:

Since the time of Chaucer, Christian poetry (in the sense in which I shall mean it) has been limited in England almost exclusively to minor poetry.

I repeat that when I am considering Religion and Literature, I speak of these things only to make clear that I am not concerned primarily with Religious Literature. I am concerned with what should be the relation between Religion and all Literature.¹⁰

Moving from the comfort and the trustworthy guidance of religion through which the narrator poet tries to

⁹ "Landscape as Symbol in Eliot, Tennyson, and Baudelaire," Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot (Mississippi: Mississippi Univ. Press, 1978), p. 15.

¹⁰ T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," Essays Ancient and Modern, pp. 97-98.

overcome his feelings of fear and emptiness, he turns to the established literary tradition. From literature he lifts fragments that speak of love, in order to experience something he does not know in his impotency. To learn from Wagner and to live the love story of Tristan and Isolde, the narrator recalls the lines:

Frisch weht der Wind
 Der Heimat zu
 Mein Irisch Kind,
 Wo weilest du?
 (ll. 31-34)

This fragment of love which is stored in the consciousness of the poet, together with other memories of famous love scenes, acts as his source of inspiration:

They are still available fragments of a great and constantly enriched tradition which, even in the broken form in which they are offered to a contemporary poet, may yet serve, by the end of the poem (and not before), to give meaning to what otherwise presents itself as broken, fragmentary chaos.¹¹

¹¹ Derek Traversi, "The Waste Land," T. S. Eliot: The Longer Poems (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1976), pp. 20-21.

The narrator lifts out of his consciousness another fragment that describes a strong emotion of love:

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
"They called me the hyacinth girl."
-Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth
garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
(11. 35-41)

As Miller has noted, "The lines bespeak a perfect bliss, beyond speech, beyond sight, neither life nor death, beyond knowledge."¹² They also stress the motif of transformation which underlines the poem since the art of poetry for the narrator is essentially an act of synthesis and transformation of what is old into something new. And "the study of poetry for Eliot is the study of sequences of unification and levels of synthesis, with the perfection of total experience and the state of the Kingdom of God as its ultimate frame of reference."¹³ The narrator recalls Apollo's transformation into the handsome boy Hyacinthus,

12 T. S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land: Exorcism of
The Demons (London: Pennsylvania State Univ. Press, 1977),
p. 72.

¹³ Fei-Pai Lu, T. S. Eliot: The Dialectical Structure of His Theory of Poetry (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1966), p. 85.

whose name suggests a flower. This transformation resulted from an emotion of love that Apollo had for the handsome boy. In living this experience, the poet tries to teach his barren soul about love and productivity. He then relates this experience of love to the great love which Wagner described in his opera Tristan und Isolde.

To solve his problem of artistic sterility and to get rid of his lovelessness, the narrator poet tries to escape the dull world of reality and search for fruition in the supernatural world of dreams. He leaves his conscious world and seeks the wisdom of prophecy and fortune telling. Madame Sososttris, the "famous clairvoyante," acts as a guide to the narrator poet on his journey through the world of dreams and visions. She is another Sibyl, who no longer is consulted by heroes but is tormented by ordinary people. "The Sibyl in her better days answered questions by flinging from her cave handfuls of leaves bearing letters which the postulant was required to arrange in a suitable order . . ."¹⁴ Madame Sososttris, however, works with a pack of cards on which she reads the protagonist's fate: "Here, said she, / Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor, / (Those are pearls that were his eyes.

¹⁴ Hugh Kenner, "The Waste Land," The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), p. 159.

Look)" (ll. 46-48). It is not strange that the narrator's first card is that of the Phoenician Sailor, since the creation of poetry is in its essence an act of transformation. The Phoenician Sailor is transformed after drowning into something rich and sublime. To parallel this rich transformation, the narrator poet recalls one of the fragments which he has stored up in his consciousness for reference and inspiration. From Shakespeare's The Tempest, the narrator remembers Ariel's song to Ferdinand, describing the changes which happened to his father at his death: "Those are pearls that were his eyes." This line from the play is strongly engraved in the narrator's consciousness. It is a leitmotif that accompanies many of the narrator's movements on his journey of artistic growth. On another card the protagonist sees his "Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, / The Lady of situations" (ll. 49-50). The capricious lady who deluded the protagonist in "Gerontion" and led him nowhere by her vanities, appears once more to deceive the narrator poet in The Waste Land. To win the love of this beautiful lady and to gain her favors, he makes a long journey to the mountains.

This journey has another goal besides meeting "the Lady of the Rocks." The narrator poet will seek a solution to his dilemma as a creator and as a lover. In Eliot's note, the man with the three staves is associated with the

Fisher King, who has to seek a solution to his impotency. The narrator poet, who is another impotent Fisher King, has to make a journey through the world of love and literature in order to create. And he has to submit his work to the powers of fate, which may reward or ignore his hard toil. Next to the "man with the three staves" is "the wheel" which turns haphazardly from one side to another.

Madame Sosostriis, the narrator's guide on his journey towards creativity and growth, gives him another card that describes his role as a poet: "And here is the one-eyed merchant, and this card, / Which is blank, is something he carries on his back, / Which I am forbidden to see"

(ll. 52-54). The narrator poet, says Madame Sosostriis, is destined to suffer for his art. He has a burden that he must carry on his back; the material of that burden she cannot see. To understand the true nature of this burden is part of the narrator's search for consciousness and an important goal he has to achieve through his journey.

Eliot refers to this burden in his book On Poetry and Poets:

He is oppressed by a burden which he must bring to birth in order to obtain relief . . . In other words again, he is going to all that trouble not in order to communicate with anyone, but to gain relief from acute discomfort; and

when the words are finally arranged in the right way--or in what he comes to accept as the best arrangement he can find--he may experience a moment of exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolution, and of something very near annihilation, which is in itself indescribable.¹⁵

After pointing out to the narrator the burden he has to carry on his back, Madame Sosostriis searches for the Hanged Man in the narrator's cards, but she does not find him. The image of the Hanged Man is associated in Eliot's notes with the Hanged God of Frazer and the hooded figure of Christ. Eliot is very careful to embody in the consciousness of his narrator, which he relates to his own, pagan mythology side by side with Christian beliefs:

". . . the last thing I would wish for would be the existence of two literatures, one for Christian consumption and the other for the pagan world."¹⁶ Eliot's narrator must learn how to take all dualities and contradictions into his growing consciousness and make out of them a unified pattern. He absorbs the pagan myths of fertility

¹⁵ T. S. Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry," On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 107.

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," Essays Ancient and Modern, p. 112.

that illustrate the concept of transformation and the pattern of death and rebirth, and he turns them into Christian doctrines of transformation that act as his trustworthy body of authority. Dietrich Hildebrand describes the Christian concept of transformation in Transformation in Christ:

At the beginning and the end of the road we travel in the process of our transformation in Christ, we hear Our Lord speak these mysterious words: "He that shall lose his life for me shall find it" (Matt. 10:39). . . . It is the holy paradox of Death and Resurrection that flares up in these words--the mystery of dying with Christ, and awakening to life again with Him.¹⁷

Not finding the Hanged Man in the narrator's cards, Madame Sosostriis warns the protagonist against "death by water." Being a Phoenician Sailor who has to sacrifice himself in order to give birth to something rich and new, the narrator poet has to accept his fate and to go through his frightful journey in order to give his people good art. For those people the narrator has to work, and with them he

¹⁷ Dietrich von Hildebrand, Transformation in Christ (New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1948), p. 390.

has to sympathize. They are presented on one of his cards which Madame Sosostriis reads for him, and he will meet them at the end of his journey. On his journey towards growth and maturity the poet has to learn to relate himself to his fellow men and to embrace their emotions and their problems.

After guiding the narrator on his journey and explaining to him his fate and his role as a poet, the famous clairvoyante leaves him on his own. With the words "Thank you. If you see dear Mrs. Equitone, / Tell her I bring the horoscope myself: / One must be careful these days"

(ll. 57-59), she leaves the narrator poet to his fate.

Seeking the guidance of Madame Sosostriis and the world of dreams and prophecy is for the growing poet the only solution to his artistic problem at the beginning of his journey. He is still unsure of his artistic instincts, and he is suffering from severe dryness in his powers of productivity. The only way to overcome this fear and that sterility is to seek the trustworthy guidance of mythology and literary tradition. He seeks in literature a land similar to his own state of consciousness in an attempt to relate himself to his predecessors. He relates his unproductive land to Baudelaire's "Fourmillante Cite." He also relates the barren scenes in the city of London, which he uses to reveal his inner feelings of emptiness, to Dante's

limbo in the Inferno, where people are living without praise or blame:

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

The narrator further attempts to relate the whole European present to its past in order to trace the roots that can continue to grow and flourish in new forms: "There saw I one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson! / You who were with me in the ships at Mylae" (ll. 69-70). He merges the Punic war between Rome and Carthage into World War I, in which he and Stetson fought. To see the European culture as a whole is very important for the narrator's maturity. It is also of great significance to Eliot:

We need to remind ourselves that, as Europe is a whole (and still, in its progressive mutilation and disfigurement, the organism out of which any greater world harmony must develop), so European literature is a whole, the several members of which cannot flourish, if the same blood-stream

does not circulate throughout the whole body.

The bloodstream of European literature is Latin and Greek--not as two systems of circulation, but one, for it is through Rome that our parentage in Greece must be traced.¹⁸

W The narrator then asks: "'That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? / 'Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?" (ll. 71-73). He relates his unproductive consciousness to the body of the fertility God which was buried and resurrected. Then he asks for the Dog to be kept away from the corpse: "'Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men, / 'Or with his nails he'll dig it up again" (ll. 74-75). The reference here might be to Anubis, the dog-headed Egyptian god of the underworld. Such pagan fertility myths form a part of the inclusive consciousness of the growing poet.

The poet then relates himself to Baudelaire in order to learn from him because Baudelaire is the major spokesman of his age. In his essay on "Baudelaire," Eliot quotes from Peter Quennell's book Baudelaire and the Symbolists:

¹⁸ T. S. Eliot, What Is a Classic? (London: Faber & Faber Ltd., 1944), p. 31.

He had enjoyed a sense of his own age, had recognized its pattern while the pattern was yet incomplete, and--because it is only our misapprehension of the present which prevents our looking into the immediate future, our ignorance of today and of its real as apart from its spurious tendencies and requirements--had anticipated many problems, both on the aesthetic and on the moral plane, in which the fate of modern poetry is still concerned.¹⁹

Following the footsteps of his predecessors and clinging to the traditional concept that in order to be a poet one has to be a lover, the narrator takes his first step into the world of love. He seeks love first in the world of art and literature. Therefore, he goes to the beautiful temple of his "bella-donna." In "A Game of Chess," the narrator poet immerses his sense of sight in the beauty of art and craftsmanship in order to create. In the world of beauty and love, he looks for material for his poems. The narrator watches his "bella-donna" as she sits alone with her thoughts before the dressing table. The scene produces

¹⁹ T. S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," Selected Essays 1917-1932, p. 336, quoting Peter Quennell Baudelaire and the Symbolists.

in him echoes from Enobarbus' account of Cleopatra on her barge in Shakespeare's Antony and Cleopatra:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
 Glowed on the marble, where the glass
 Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
 From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
 (Another hid his eyes behind his wing)
 Doubled the flames of sevenbranched candelabra
 Reflecting light upon the table as
 The glitter of her jewels rose to meet it,
 From satin cases poured in rich profusion;
 In vials of ivory and coloured glass
 Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes,
 Unguent, powdered, or liquid--troubled, confused
 And drowned the scene in odours; stirred by the air
 That freshened from the window, these ascended
 In fattening the prolonged candle-flames,
 Flung their smoke into the laquearia,
 Stirring the pattern on the coffered ceiling.
 (11. 77-93)

The beauty of the Lady and the artistry of her dwelling place are described in great detail. Her "burnished throne" glows on a surface of marble, reminding the narrator of Cleopatra, the goddess of beauty and love, as her barge glowed on the water of the Nile. The perfumes of the "bella-donna" are kept in "vials of ivory and coloured glass." A golden Cupid peeps out from the "fruited vines" that hold the mirror, and another Cupid hides his eyes behind his wings. The perfumes of the Lady which "fattened" the candle-flames and stirred the pattern on the ceiling remind the narrator of the smoke that rose into laquearia.

The narrator indulges in the beauty of the lady and the artistry of her boudoir in order to know about love and beauty, which he thinks can make him write poetry. He relates himself to Virgil and The Aeneid in an attempt to establish the literary "roots that clutch." Virgil has a special place in the narrator's consciousness and a similar place in Eliot's own consciousness:

. . . no poet has ever shown a finer sense of proportion than Virgil, in the uses he made of Greek and of earlier Latin poetry. It is this development of one literature, or one civilisation, in relation to another, which gives a peculiar significance to the subject of Virgil's epic . . . behind the story of Aeneas is the consciousness of a more radical distinction, a distinction, which is at the same time a statement of relatedness, between two great cultures, and, finally, of their reconciliation under an all-embracing destiny.²⁰

It is this relatedness, the duality, and the sense of history that the narrator poet is trying to establish as he moves on from one part of his journey to another. The

²⁰ T. S. Eliot, What Is a Classic?, pp. 19-20.

growing poet realizes that he cannot reach maturity unless he relates himself to famous poets before him and to an established literary tradition. He then lifts out of his consciousness a fragment from Milton's Paradise Lost, which he relates to the sylvan scene he sees engraved on the ceiling of the temple of love:

Huge sea-wood fed with copper
 Burned green and orange, framed by the coloured
 stone,
 In which sad light a carved dolphin swam.
 Above the antique mantel was displayed
 As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
 The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
 So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
 Filled all the desert with inviolable voice
 And still she cried, and still the world
 pursues,
 "Jug Jug" to dirty ears.
 And other withered stumps of time
 Were told upon the walls; staring forms
 Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
(ll. 94-106)

Among the beautiful images carved on the walls of the temple is that of the rape of Philomel and her transformation. This fragment is reminiscent of Ovid, a poet the narrator admires and tries to learn from.²¹ It is of special importance to the narrator, though, because of the close connection he sees between poetry and metamorphosis.

²¹ That Chaucer was closely familiar with the works of Ovid has long been recognized. See Edgar Finley Shannon, Chaucer and the Roman Poets (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1922), p. 371.

The poet shows how the nightingale "Filled all the desert with inviolable voice / And still she cried, and still the world pursues, / 'Jug Jug' to dirty ears" (ll. 101-03). He moves from the past to the present tense quite smoothly; for in his inclusive consciousness there exists no strict demarkation between past, present, or future.

A lesson Eliot has learned from Dante is the "width of emotional range." The poet "should perceive vibrations beyond the range of ordinary men, and be able to make men see and hear more at each end than they could ever see without his help."²² From the consciousness of his narrator, therefore, Eliot removes all barriers of time or place: "And other withered stumps of time / Were told upon the walls; staring forms / Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed" (ll. 104-06). The narrator watches his "bella-donna" sitting in the midst of all this artistry and craftsmanship "Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair / Spread out in fiery points / Glowed into words, then would be savagely still" (ll. 108-110). He is once more struck by the lady's capricious nature. He notices the "fiery" quality about her hair that "glowed into words" and then became savagely still." The narrator comes to realize

²² T. S. Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," To Criticize the Critic and other Writings (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 134.

for the second time that the beauty of his lady will not make a poet out of him. The "bella-donna" that deceived Gerontion now deceives the narrator as he takes his first step into the world of creativity. The narrator poet learns that beauty and art, though necessary to develop his poetic consciousness, are not the only material out of which poetry is made. The emotions of frustration and the persisting feelings of emptiness and fear the narrator poet reveals in symbols of deserts and scenes of barrenness. On leaving the world of art and beauty, the poet finds that in his consciousness there still exists a "rat's alley," where the dead men lost their bones:

"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?
 "I never know what you are thinking. Think."

I think we are in rats' alley
 Where the dead men lost their bones.

"What is that noise?"
 The wind under the door.
 "What is that noise now? What is the wind doing?"
 Nothing again nothing.
 "Do
 "You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you
 remember
 "Nothing?"

(ll. 111-123)

The feelings of sterility in the consciousness of the narrator are turned into disembodied characters and voices

that engage in bitter fighting. The wife keeps nagging at her silent husband, "Do you see nothing? / Do you remember nothing?" And the husband realizes that they are in a "rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones." Hugh Kenner refers to the narrator of The Waste Land: "The perceiver is describable only as the zone of the consciousness where that which he perceives can coexist; but the perceived, conversely, can't be accorded independent status; it is, precisely, all that can coexist in this particular zone of consciousness."²³ The nagging wife and the silent husband, therefore, describe the state of annihilation and frustration the narrator experiences as he leaves the temple of love and beauty.

Luckily, the narrator poet has images of fertility and rich transformations stored into his consciousness. Out of these fragments, he lifts a line from Shakespeare's The Tempest, which he tries to impose on his own sterility: "Those are pearls that were his eyes." The richness of the transformation is what the narrator needs desperately: "O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag-- / It's so elegant / So intelligent" (ll. 128-30). The narrator poet also desired to relate his consciousness to Shakespeare's. Shakespeare

²³ The Invisible Poet: T. S. Eliot (New York: McDowell, Obolensky, 1959), p. 149.

is one of the classical roots that the narrator tries to clutch to his poetic consciousness as he moves on his journey towards maturity and creativity, despite the fact that Shakespeare's classical knowledge is limited as Eliot notes:

Shakespeare's classical knowledge appears to have been derived largely from translations. But he lived in a world in which the wisdom of the ancients was respected, and their poetry admired and enjoyed; he was less well educated than many of his colleagues, but this was education of the same kind--and it is almost more important, for a man of letters, that his associates should be well educated than that he should be well educated himself.²⁴

Part of the dilemma of the narrator poet or of any modern poet is the lack of an educated public who can understand and respond to his literary references. The narrator, as he moves towards artistic fulfillment, has to come to terms with his fellow men. He has to write about them and for them. And their inability to relate to his references

²⁴ T. S. Eliot, "The Classics and the Man of Letters," To Criticize The Critic and Other Writings, p. 149.

causes a great problem to the narrator poet as he moves from one stage of creativity to another.

The helpless narrator is uncertain as to how he should act once he has left the world of art and love. Inner voices in his shattered consciousness express his loss and uncertainty:

"What shall I do now? What shall I do?"
 "I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street
 "With my hair down, so. What shall we do to-morrow?
 "What shall we ever do?"

The hot water at ten.
 And if it rains, a closed car at four.
 And we whall play a game of chess,
 Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock upon
 the door.

(ll. 131-38)

The boredom and the emptiness the narrator is experiencing are depicted in the conflicting voices inside him. They are also revealed through scenes of barrenness and images of sterility projected in his consciousness. In his sterile consciousness two cockney women engage in a discussion of sterile and abortive love:

When Lil's husband got demobbed, I said--
 I didn't mince my words, I said to her myself,
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
 Now Albert's coming back, make yourself a bit smart.
 He'll want to know what you done with that money he
 gave you
 To get yourself some teeth. He did, I was there.
 You have them all out, Lil, and get a nice set,
 He said, I swear, I can't bear to look at you.

.

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?
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
 Well, that Sunday Albert was home, they had a hot
 gammon,
 And they asked me in to dinner, to get the beauty of
 it hot--
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME
 HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME.

(11. 139-69)

The scene portrays vulgarity in emotions and ideas and a sick conception of the relation of marriage; thus the scene is a projection of the sterility and unproductivity of the narrator poet. As Gertrude Patterson states in T. S. Eliot: Poems in the Making:

The poem includes a vision, but is something larger than that. The 'criticism of life' is one thing but is only part of the greatest art form which contains it and transcends it. The emotions embodied in the poem are capable of rationalization into an interpretation of life, but rationalization is not a part of the poem.²⁵

To get over the emptiness inside him, the narrator poet pulls out of his store of fragments lines from Hamlet:

²⁵ Gertrude Patterson, "Fragments into Poems," T. S. Eliot: Poems in the Making (New York: Manchester Univ. Press, Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1971), p. 93.

"Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, / good night" (ll. 172-73). These words conclude Ophelia's mad speech before her suicide. Her drowning is a result of true love and is bound to produce a rich transformation. Living those fragments of rich transformations, the narrator poet tries to get rid of his own sterility. And by following the footsteps of his predecessors, he seeks to achieve his own poetic fulfillment.

* Yet the first step which the poet takes towards creativity and maturity does not help him achieve his goals. Going to the world of art and love in search of creativity does not provide the poet with the material of his poems. To know beauty in the world of art and in literature that deals with love, though vital in shaping the consciousness of a poet, still needs to be complemented by other experiences. The narrator poet, therefore, goes to the second step of his journey, looking for love in the world of common experience. He still tries to write poetry out of the emotion of love. Yet the love experiences he seeks in the second part of his journey are those of common men and women. The narrator poet moves to his second stage of maturity, seeking the trustworthy guidance of a figure of authority that can help him find unity in his fragmented images. He is still confused among his abundant material,

and he is still suffering from contradictions within himself and in the outside world. To find a trustworthy body of authority is of great importance to the narrator poet. He therefore moves on the second step of his journey in search of love, creativity, and guidance.

CHAPTER IV

THE NARRATOR IN THE WASTE LAND: THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS CREATIVITY

Like Chaucer's narrator in The House of Fame, as the narrator of The Waste Land, now identified with the loveless Fisher King, moves into the second phase of his journey looking for love and creativity, he enters the world of common experience. He realizes that in order to be a poet he has to embrace reality. He therefore moves from one part of London to another, taking into his consciousness scenes of love as practiced by people of various social classes. To the second part of the narrator's journey, Eliot gives the title "The Fire Sermon." He draws from Buddha's sermon in which he exhorts his priests to control the fires of passion, hatred, and infatuation. He also draws from St. Augustine's confessions. He thus puts into the inclusive consciousness of his narrator the two philosophies of the east and the west side by side.

Eliot's narrator stops by the River Thames in the second part of his journey; he finds that "The river's tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf / Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind / Crosses the brown land, unheard.

The nymphs are departed" (ll. 174-76). He begins the second part of his journey with feelings of alienation and nostalgia for ghosts from the past, the departed nymphs. The poet persona realizes that without a sense of tradition, without "roots that clutch," and without nymphs from the past, he cannot mature as a poet. He therefore lifts out of his consciousness a fragment he has stored from the past. From Spenser's "Prothalamion" he quotes: "Sweet Thames, run softly till I end my song" (l. 183). He is also relating the modern Thames to the sixteenth-century Thames in order to relate England's past to its present. For Eliot realizes that "No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead."¹

The scene on the Thames, which depicts the consciousness of the narrator, is one of total emptiness and isolation. Not only the nymphs have departed, but also "their friends, the loitering heirs of city directors; / Departed, have left no addresses" (ll. 180-81). Eliot then relates the consciousness of his narrator to his own: "By the

¹ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual Talent," Selected Essays 1917-1932 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1932), p. 4.

waters of Leman I sat down and wept . . ." (l. 182). Leman is the Swiss name for Lake Geneva, near which, in Lausanne, Eliot was convalescing when he was completing The Waste Land. Eliot's narrator, who is closely identified with Eliot himself, then lifts a fragment from Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress," describing an experience of love. Yet the emptiness and the sterility in the poet's soul persist: "A rat crept softly through the vegetation / Dragging its slimy belly on the bank" (ll. 187-88). The rat is associated with death and emptiness. And to get rid of this emptiness, the narrator recalls a fragment from Shakespeare's The Tempest: "Musing upon the king my brother's wreck / And on the king my father's death before him" (ll. 191-92). This fragment describes a rich transformation which the narrator uses to rub against his inner sterility. As he watches the Thames, the narrator continues to pull out of his consciousness fragments from literature which he uses to contrast with and to set off against his inner sterility:

White bodies naked on the low damp ground
 And bones cast in a little low dry garret,
 Rattled by the rat's foot only, year to year.
 But at my back from time to time I hear
 The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
 Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.
 O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter
 And on her daughter
 They wash their feet in soda water
Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!

Twit twit twit
 Jug jug jug jug jug jug
 So rudely forc'd.
 Tereu.

(ll. 193-206)

The narrator poet then moves on to describe the city of London. Scenes of sterility and homosexuality persist in his consciousness:

Unreal City
 Under the brown fog of a winter noon
 Mr. Eugenides, the Smyrna merchant
 Unshaven, with a pocket full of currants
 C.i.f. London: documents at sight,
 Asked me in demotic French
 To luncheon at the Cannon Street Hotel
 Followed by a weekend at the Metropole.
 (ll. 207-14)

The narrator poet, for his first time identified as Tiresias, turns his eyes "at the violet hour" to scenes in the city of London. Like a camera, his mind's eye can see the sailor coming home from sea and the typist coming home at tea time. In the inclusive consciousness of Tiresias, Eliot embodies a number of scenes. He endows his narrator poet with a wide perceptive and emotional range. And in his notes to the poem, Eliot emphasizes and explains the transformation of Tiresias because the concept of transformation is crucial in the understanding of the poem, poetry being an act of transformation, and because Tiresias' transformation enabled him to understand the emotions of both sexes:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a "character," is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.²

Eliot then quotes a passage in Ovid's Metamorphoses (III. 316-38) that describes Tiresias' transformation. Tiresias was changed into a woman after he struck and separated two coupling snakes. When he saw them again eight years later and struck them once more, he was changed back into a man. Jupiter and Juno asked him, since he had been both man and woman, to judge in a dispute between them as to whether men or women more enjoyed sexual intercourse. Tiresias infuriated Juno by saying that women did, and he was blinded. Jupiter, however, granted him the gift of prophecy.

² T. S. Eliot, Notes on The Waste Land, The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952), p. 52.

The poet-prophet Tiresias now witnesses a scene of erotic love on the middle class level. The typist and "the young man carbuncular" indulge in sexuality that is void of any signs of love: "The time is now propitious, as he guesses, / The meal is ended, She is bored and tired, / Endeavours to engage her in caresses / Which still are unreproved, if undesired" (ll. 235-38). The prophet Tiresias foresuffers all, he identifies himself with both the typist and her lover, and he recalls his experiences among the dead: "I who have sat by Thebes below the wall / And walked among the lowest of the dead" (ll. 245-46). His unlimited consciousness moves from the present to the past and takes one scene after the other, acknowledging no distinctions. This merging of one scene into the other is described by C. M. Bowra in The Creative Experiment:

Scene fades into scene and character into character, because ultimately there is only one scene and not more than three characters. The setting and its persons exist in some mental and imaginative condition which does not belong to ordinary space or time and is identifiable only through its essential nature.³

³ C. M. Bowra, The Creative Experiment (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1967), p. 164.

Thus, Tiresias moves about London, taking sights and sounds into his consciousness, setting one passion against another, and merging all into unity:

"This music crept by me upon the waters"
 And along the Strand, up Queen Victoria Street.
 O City city, I can sometimes hear
 Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,
 The pleasant whining of a mandoline
 And a clatter and a chatter from within
 Where fishmen lounge at noon: where the walls
 Of Magnus Martyr hold
 Inexplicable splendour of Ionian white and gold.
 (ll. 257-65)

Eliot's merging of images and passions into the consciousness of his narrator poet fits his description of the poetic process in "Tradition and Individual Talent," where he goes to chemistry to illustrate the creative process:

When the two gasses previously mentioned are mixed in the presence of a filament of platinum, they form sulphurous acid. This combination takes place only if the platinum is present; nevertheless the newly formed acid contains no trace of platinum, and the platinum itself is apparently unaffected; has remained inert, neutral, and unchanged. The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but, 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.⁴

In a similar manner, the mind of Eliot's narrator digests and transmutes passions. It recalls and connects; it merges the past into the present. Tiresias also relates parts of the European culture. Reconignizing no distinctions in the world of literature, ignoring all obstacles of time and space in his journey, and accepting variety as a step towards unity, Tiresias lifts out of his consciousness a fragment from Wagner's opera The Twilight of the Gods in order to merge the English Thames into the German Rhine. In the opera, the three maidens try in vain to get back their gold which is stolen; as a result of its theft, the beauty of their river is gone. Tiresias recalls the refrain of their song: "Weialala leia / Wallala leialala" (ll. 277-78). He then recalls the love scene between Elizabeth and Leicester:

Elizabeth and Leicester
Beating oars

⁴ T. S. Eliot, "Tradition and Individual and Individual Talent," Selected Essays 1917-1932, pp. 7-8.

The stern was formed
 A gilded shell
 Red and gold
 The brisk swell
 Rippled both shores
 Southwest wind
 Carried down stream
 The peal of bells
 White towers.

(ll. 279-89)

He wraps up the scene between Elizabeth and Leicester by repeating the refrain of Wagner's maidens: "Weilala liea / Wallala leiala" (ll. 277-78). Then he weaves Wagner's lines into the song of the Thames daughters, since both songs have for their theme erotic love and violation of innocence. The first daughter of the Thames echoes the spirit of Pia de' Tolomei of Siena, who tells Dante "Siena made me, Maremma unmade me," a reference to her violent death in Maremma at her husband's hands. Eliot's constant reference to Dante's Divine Comedy to describe the state of consciousness of his narrator and his intangible emotions is not a coincidence:

The Divine Comedy expresses everything in the way of emotion, between depravity's despair and the beatific vision, that man is capable of experiencing. It is therefore a constant reminder to the poet, of the obligation to explore, to find words for the inarticulate, to capture those

feelings which people can hardly even feel,
because they have no words for them.⁵

Relating the Thames to the Rhine, going to the Divine Comedy to express the feelings of the narrator in The Waste Land, and engulfing all within Buddha's sermon on erotic love are Eliot's ways to move his narrator smoothly from the east to the west and from one generation to another. Tiresias' consciousness finds no distinctions, realizes no contradictions, and embraces everything in the world of experience and emotions. Finally, he indulges in memories until he loses himself "'On Margate Sands. I can connect / Nothing with nothing" (ll. 300-02). Yet the sterility in his soul persists. The vicarious experience of love does not make the narrator write poetry.

Eliot ends this segment of his narrator's journey with a statement from St. Augustine's Confessions: "O Lord Thou pluckest me out" (l. 309). He also alludes to Buddha's Fire Sermon warning against the fire of lust. And in his note to this section of the poem he states that "the collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is

⁵ T. S. Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1965), p. 134.

not an accident."⁶ Bringing the east together with the west in the consciousness of his narrator is Eliot's way of building and developing the narrator's consciousness. The narrator poet also realizes that the sole experience of love does not make him write poetry. He therefore moves to the last part of his journey trying other ways that may lead him to creativity.

To get rid of his sterility, the narrator surrenders to his fate, earlier described to him by the famous fortune teller. He has to drown, symbolically, in order to undergo the transformation that is necessary for the creation of poetry. "Phlebas the Phoenician," who is another image of Tiresias, has to accept his fate "death by water":

Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead,
Forgot the cry of gulls, and the deep sea swell
And the profit and loss.

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

(ll. 312-18)

Rich transformation is bound to result from the drowning of Phlebas. And this rebirth of the pagan fertility god corresponds to, or perhaps leads to, a Christian

⁶ T. S. Eliot, Notes on The Waste Land, The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950, p. 53.

spiritual rebirth. Eliot includes both Christian and pagan rebirths in the inclusive consciousness of his narrator. He even wraps up Phlebas' drowning in the Christian concept of humility and avoiding worldly vanities: "Consider Phlebas, who was once handsome and tall as you" (l. 321).

Taking all dualities into his growing consciousness, the narrator poet, the impotent Fisher King, continues his journey to the mountains, searching for a solution to his impotency. He investigates other theories of creativity. And he considers the importance of sounds in the creation of poetry. Like "Geoffrey" in The House of Fame, he pays special attention, towards the end of his journey, to various sounds that rise from created things. Tiresias finally realizes that the poet's role is to sift, organize, and control sounds. Eliot, therefore, puts his emphasis in the last part of The Waste Land on the variety and multitude of sounds.

Eliot begins the last section in the poem "What the Thunder Said" by introducing a thunder of sounds after a frosty silence:

After the torchlight red on sweaty faces
 After the frosty silence in the gardens
 After the agony in stony places
 The shouting and the crying
 Prison and palace and reverberation
 Of thunder of spring over distant mountains.
(ll. 322-27)

His narrator poet moves from considering the emotion of love and its importance in the creation of poetry to investigating sounds and their significance in writing poetry. He continues to absorb, however, till the very end of his journey, the dualities between ancient pagan myths of vegetation and the Christian concepts of resurrection. When Tiresias considers that "He who was living is now dead / We who were living are now dying" (ll. 328-29), he is thinking not only of Christ but also of the pagan fertility god. As Matthiessen states in The Achievement of T. S. Eliot,

Reminiscence here is not only of the final scenes in the life of Christ and of the gnawing bafflement of his disciples before his appearance at Emmaus . . . The "shouting and the crying" re-echo not only from the mob that thronged Jerusalem at the time of the Crucifixion . . . In the "thunder of spring over distant mountains" there is likewise a hint of the vegetation myths, of the approaching rebirth of the parched dead land through the life-giving rain. Thus he who "is now dead" is not Christ alone, but the slain

Vegetation God; he is Adonis and Osiris and Orpheus.⁷

Absorbing dualities and contradictions, moving from the east to the west and from the past to the present, the impotent narrator goes on his journey searching for creativity, for a drop of water. But there is no water yet: "Here is no water but only rock" (l. 331). The desperate narrator yearns for signs of creativity; the impotent Fisher King is desperate for a release of his productive powers. But sterility persists; dryness and impotency persist:

The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we should stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
If there were only water amongst the rock
Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth that
cannot spit
Here one can neither stand nor lie nor sit
There is not even silence in the mountains
But dry sterile thunder without rain
There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl
From doors of mudcracked houses.
(ll. 333-45)

Tiresias keeps moving along the sands and the dry mountains. Sterility dominates over his consciousness and

⁷ F. O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry, 3rd. ed., (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), p. 38.

his powers of productivity. Only his journey of fear has some good effects on his growing consciousness. The narrator poet learns how to embrace reality, to come into touch with common men for whom and about whom he should write. The "crowds of people" who appeared on one of the protagonist's cards earlier in the poem appear again in the sandy mountains: "But red sullen faces sneer and snarl / From doors of mudcracked houses" (ll. 344-45). The poet has to get rid of his solitude and to embrace the world of men and their daily problems. The crowds of men are part of his present existence and of his future destiny. The journey of fear also makes the narrator poet very sensitive to sounds:

If there were the sound of water only
 Not the cicada
 And dry grass singing
 But sound of water over a rock
 Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
 Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
 But there is not water.

(ll. 353-59)

He continues to weave pagan myths into Christian beliefs because he seeks in Christianity a valid source of authority that can lead him out of his spiritual and artistic dilemma. Confused among fragments stored in his consciousness and still unsure of his ability to impose

unity on the chaos inside his consciousness, Tiresias must cling strongly to some image of authority:

Who is the third who walks always beside you?
 When I count, there are only you and I together
 But when I look ahead up the white road
 There is always another one walking beside you
 Gliding wrapt in a brown mantle, hooded
 I do not know whether a man or a woman
 --But who is that on the other side of you?
 (ll. 360-66)

The resurrection of Christ at this point in the journey seems to offer the narrator the sheltering "rock" he has been looking for since the beginning of his journey. Into this Christian resurrection he inserts the resurrection of the vegetation god: "What is that sound high in the air / Murmur of maternal lamentation" (ll. 367-68). The lamentations are those of women weeping over Christ as well as of those weeping over the death of the fertility god.

Accompanying those lamentations are various other sounds that the ear of the poet needs to discern:

Who are those hooded hordes swarming
 Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
 Ringed by the flat horizon only
 What is the city over the mountains
 Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
 Falling towers
 Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
 Vienna London
 Unreal.

(ll. 369-77)

Among the variety of sounds the narrator poet hears is the sound of music fiddled on a woman's black hair: "A woman drew her long black hair out tight / And fiddled whisper music on those strings" (ll. 378-79). The narrator's bella-donna appears again in this part of The Waste Land, once more to delude him by vanities; for after his long journey to the mountains, the narrator does not gain the love of the bella-donna and he finds the castle empty. Gerontion's bella-donna merges into the image of Tiresias' bella-donna, who appears many times on the narrator's long journey only to drive him on by her deceitful beauty. "Geoffrey's" bella-donnas in The House of Fame merge into one another and lead the narrator poet to no truth. Similarly, all the women in The Waste Land merge into one source of deceit and illusion. The helpless narrator is driven by the Lady's "long black hair" to the chapel where he finds nothing but sterility and emptiness:

And bats with baby faces in the violet light
 Whistled, and beat their wings
 And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
 And upside down in air were towers
 Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
 And voices singing out of empty cisterns and
 exhausted wells.

In this decayed hole among the mountains
 In the faint moonlight, the grass is singing
 Over the tumbled graves, about the chapel
 There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
 It has no windows, and the door swings,
 Dry bones can harm no one.

(ll. 380-91)

Among all images of emptiness and misery in the deserted chapel, the poet's ear becomes more and more sensitive to sounds in their multitude and variety. There is no creativity yet for Tiresias, for scenes of emptiness persist in his still-dry consciousness. Only that dry consciousness takes gradual steps towards maturity. The narrator poet learns towards the end of his journey that the experience of love, which he seeks exclusively at the beginning of his journey, is not enough to make him write poetry. He gradually comes to understand that the chief business of a poet is to handle and organize sounds.

Creativity does not come to Tiresias sure and definite at the end of his long and painful journey, but rays of hope appear vaguely in the sky. Lightning flashes in the sky of Tiresias' waste land, a cock crows, and rain appears imminent. This unproductive land, as in the Grail legend, which Eliot strives throughout to make parallel to Tiresias' waste land, is bound to produce with the trembling of thunder and the coming of rain. Eliot uses the symbols of unproductive lands and water to make concrete the intangible feelings and stages of consciousness of his narrator. Matthiessen states that "This necessity to concentrate on something definite is exactly what Eliot means by his repeated statement that the evocation of emotion by means

of complete, concrete objectification is the only right way of expressing emotion in art."⁸

By the end of Tiresias' journey, his long-sought voice of authority does finally come to his aid. The voice of the thunder dictating its commands to the poet offers him the necessary guidance he is looking for. Like "Geffrey" in The House of Fame, Tiresias finally surrenders himself to a power stronger than himself. But unlike "Geffrey" Tiresias goes to oriental philosophy to draw from it his desired source of authority. He goes to the Hindu fable of "The Three Great Disciplines," searching for rules that can help bring order and discipline to his chaotic and fragmented world. With awe and fear, "Tireasias listens to the words of the thunder:

Da
 Datta: What have we given?
 My friend, blood shaking my heart
 The awful daring of a moment's surrender
 Which an age of prudence can never retract
 By this, and this only, we have existed
 Which is not to be found in our obituaries
 Or in memories draped by the beneficent spider
 Or under seals broken by the lean solicitor
 In our empty rooms.

(11. 401-10)

The first "Da" of the thunder instructs the poet to "give," to surrender his powers to a being outside himself. The

⁸F. O. Matthiessen, "The 'Objective Correlative'" The Achievement of T. S. Eliot: An Essay on the Nature of Poetry, pp. 64-65.

poet says that he is unable to give himself to others because he is locked up in the prison he has made for himself, and he is severely suffering from isolation, from the lack of "roots that clutch." In this part of the poem, the narrator poet makes explicit his own feelings of isolation as well as the feelings of other poets, each locked up in the prison of his own personality. More than ever, the narrator poet yearns for a historical sense, for his literary roots, and for the will to surrender to a noble power. It is this moment of surrender that Eliot requires his narrator to give. He refers to this surrender in his Selected Essays 1917-1932 as a necessary step in the creative process:

There is accordingly something outside of 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 second-rate artist, of course, cannot afford to surrender himself to any common action; for his chief task is the assertion of all the trifling differences which are his distinction: only the man who has so much to give that he can forget himself in his work can afford to collaborate, to exchange, to contribute.⁹

⁹ T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," Selected Essays 1917-1932, p. 13.

Admittedly, this inability to collaborate, to exchange, and to contribute isolate the poet persona from his predecessors. It is this nostalgia for the past, for the nymphs that inspired Spenser, for the roots that relate the poet to Dante and to Shakespeare that contributes to the dilemma of the narrator poet. He has taken his long journey to the mountains, looking for love and creativity but searching more for his literary roots than for anything else. He has lifted ravishingly out of the fragments he has stored in his memory in order to relate himself to his literary past. To know this past and identify with it, to live the present and relate himself to his fellow men, the thunder asks the ~~X~~ poet to "sympathize":

Da
Dayadhvam: I have heard the key
 Turn in the door once and turn once only
 We think of the key, each in his prison
 Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison
 Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours
 Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus.
 (ll. 411-17)

The narrator poet says that he is unable to "sympathize" with his fellow men, for he has locked himself up in a prison. And he has lost the ability to love and sympathize, which are necessary in writing poetry; for the subject matter of a poem should be taken from diverse concerns of ordinary men, and the audience of a poem are common men.

For this reason, the thunder advises the poet to break the door to his prison. Leonard Unger notes this theme of isolation in The Waste Land and in many other works by Eliot: "In a sense, all of Eliot's works in verse are variations on the theme of isolation. The Waste Land presents a procession of characters locked within themselves."¹⁰ Eliot himself mentions this theme of isolation in his note to these lines; the passage from F. H. Bradley's Appearance and Reality attests to the narrator's inability to free himself from his self-imposed prison:

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

¹⁰ Leonard Unger, T. S. Eliot: Moments and Patterns (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1956), p. 14.

¹¹ T. S. Eliot, Notes on The Waste Land, The Complete Poems and Plays 1909-1950, p. 54.

There is a moment, however, when Eliot's narrator escapes his prison: "Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours / Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus" (ll. 416-17). This moment of release and escape relieves the poet temporarily of the burden he carries on his back and of the great agony he suffers in order to create. This moment also brings back the image of the one-eyed merchant, which is one self of Tiresias, with the burden he carries on his back and from which he seeks a temporary relief. Eliot refers to this imprisonment and to this moment of relief when he describes the poet in "The Three Voices of Poetry":

He is oppressed by a burden which he must bring to birth in order to obtain relief . . . he may experience a moment of exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolution, and of something very near annihilation, which is in itself indescribable. And then he can say to the poem: "Go away. Find a place for yourself in a book--and don't expect me to take any further interest in you."¹²

This moment of release and the breaking of the chains in order to communicate and "sympathize" with others the

¹² T. S. Eliot, "The Three Voices of Poetry," On Poetry and Poets (New York: Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1957), p. 107.

voice of authority couples with another command. The narrator poet, says the voice of the thunder, should be able to "control" and to impose order on differences and varieties:

Da
Damyata: The boat responded
Gaily, to the hand expert with sail and oar
 The sea calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
 To controlling hands.

(11. 418-23)

The narrator poet must "control" and organize his diverse material. He must impose order and unity on the various broken fragments which he has stored in his consciousness. To those fragments from literary works the poet needs to add his own personal experiences and emotions and the experiences and emotions of other men. All this material the poet needs to organize in a balanced pattern of a poem. Eliot refers to this process of organizing and controlling in "The Function of Criticism," when he discusses the importance of criticism in the work of creation itself:

Probably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of shifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing;

this frightful toil is as much critical as creative.¹³

The narrator poet listens attentively to the commands of the voice of authority which asks him to "give," "sympathize," and "control." He understands the role he has to play as a poet as far as his material and his audience are concerned. He realizes that he has to establish his literary roots, cling to them, and follow their path in order to establish his own identity; for his poetic powers are only "withered stumps of time" when they lack the integrity of a historical sense. The narrator poet also realizes that he has to accept all dualities and absorb all differences in order to reach poetic maturity. Into his inclusive consciousness, Tiresias has to take the east side by side with the west, the past as well as the present. Tiresias wraps up the commands he receives from the oriental voice of authority with threads from old mythology and the Bible: "I sat upon the shore / Fishing, with the arid plain behind me / Shall I at least set my lands in order?" (ll. 424-26). Myth, reality, religion, and heresy run simultaneously through the veins of the narrator poet.

¹³ T. S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," Selected Essays 1917-1932, p. 18.

The narrator, however, is faced with his duty towards his community in blunt and direct words. However hard the role of guide is to play in a nation, the narrator poet cannot but accept that role. When he says the words "Shall I at least set my lands in order?" he realizes fully and unmistakably that he has to play a vital role in the direction of his nation. As a poet and a prophetic voice, he has the duty to civilize, refine, educate, and guide his people. This final perception on the part of the narrator poet is the destination Eliot sought for his narrator when he started his poet persona on the journey through the waste land. It is the reason why Eliot first called his long poem "He Do the Police in Different Voices." It is the role of police and guide that Eliot meant for his narrator to play throughout The Waste Land. This idea of police is expressed in The Waste Land in Different Voices:

The French "policer une nation" means to civilize and refine it. And in Montaigne the word "police" still retains its etymological purity: it indicates the web of relationships which connect people as social beings and as citizens, as members of a great civic body. . . . And one could argue that the poet is responsible to the "police" in more senses than one: that the

society to which he belongs is at stake in the quality of the language he uses.¹⁴

Tiresias as a poet has to educate and civilize his people. Eliot, if we can still identify him with Tiresias, has to put the literature of his time within an established European tradition. John Margolis endows Eliot with this responsibility of leadership: "England needed a prophetic voice to call it from its turpor, and Eliot . . . was already beginning to fill that role."¹⁵

The narrator poet ought to guide his people with his knowledge and his wisdom. And to achieve both knowledge and wisdom, the poet must open his consciousness to varied currents of culture from different countries. Instead of wrapping himself up in his own personality, any good poet must break the chains of his personality and expose himself to good literature from the east and the west. To express this concept of universality in literature and to stress its importance for the maturity of his narrator poet and of

¹⁴ Nicole Ward, "'Fourmillante Cite,': Baudelaire and 'The Waste Land,'" The Waste Land in Different Voices, ed. A. D. Moody (London: Edward Arnold Ltd., 1974), p. 87.

¹⁵ John D. Margolis, T. S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939 (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 21.

in the course of time a poet may become merely a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning--or without forgetting, merely changing."¹⁶

¹⁶ T. S. Eliot, "The Modern Mind," The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (Cambridge: Harvard Univ. Press, 1933), p. 122.

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