

#### CHAPTER 4: A LITURGICAL READING OF *THE WASTE LAND*

T. S. Eliot first published *The Waste Land* in 1922. In 1927, Eliot became a baptized member of the Anglican Church and a naturalized British citizen. As sources about his life and work indicate, the process leading to his conversion and change of citizenship took place over the course of some years. Likewise, the process of his creation of *The Waste Land* also took place over the course of some years prior to 1922, beginning in his student days in America. When *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* finally appeared in 1971, edited by Valerie Eliot, it provided new insights into the process of Eliot's production of the poem. Fragments like "The Death of Saint Narcissus" and "Exequy," as well as Valerie Eliot's notes to the *Facsimile*, not only present the elements left out of the poem after Ezra Pound's editorial work, but also show the long process of composition and reveal Eliot's long-term interest in religious matters. While critics have argued over the meaning of the poem, commenting on its difficulty and inaccessibility, its modern concerns, and its complex of imagery, they have offered a variety of approaches to the work and thereby have shed much light on the poem's meaning and significance. Along the way, some have argued Eliot's Americanism or English influence, looking for stronger insights into the poem based on Eliot's dominant literary heritage. Of course, Christian critics have not been absent from participating in the critical process, even though Eliot's conversion comes some years after the appearance of *The Waste Land*. Far from settling any of those old debates, the purpose of this study is to look at the deeper religious influences on Eliot and his poem — not only as those religious influences appear in the poem itself and in the earlier *Facsimile* elements, but also as those various religious influences filter down through American writers and society, as well as through English writers and society. Even though it appears moot to debate Eliot's American or English identity, it is important to note both the American and English religious backgrounds that informed both Eliot and his sources. Likewise, despite the five-year delay in his formal conver-

sion, one can begin to see a conversion process developing over the course of years from the earliest fragments of *The Waste Land* to the years just after its publication. Hence, the purpose of this study is by no means to exhaust the critical approaches to *The Waste Land*, but merely to add to the interpretive approaches by looking more closely at the poem's religious elements, themes, and overall structure as they grow out of Eliot's American, English, and Christian influences and sources. I shall look specifically for elements that relate to the Oxford Movement of the 1830s, and shall attempt to discuss those religious elements in terms of that liturgical church movement. My approach, then, is not simply a religious and pietistic assessment of Eliot's work, but more a look at the liturgical underpinnings of the poem's religious elements and influences. And given the process and structure of religious conversion, especially as laid out in liturgical seasons and preparations for baptism, I shall reveal that there is a liturgical structure underlying *The Waste Land* as it coincides with the traditional structure of religious conversion.

Initial reactions of critics to *The Waste Land* in 1922 were varied, and the poem was received differently in America and in England. According to one critic of the day, the English treated *The Waste Land* "chiefly with indignation and contempt," while "in America *The Dial* had awarded the author its annual prize of \$2,000."<sup>1</sup> Others in America thought the poem "a pompous parade of erudition."<sup>2</sup> William Carlos Williams complained that the poem appeared to be "the great catastrophe to our letters. ... Our work staggered to a halt under the blast of Eliot's genius which gave the poem back to the academics."<sup>3</sup> Paul Mariani disagreed with Williams: "The truth is that by 1922 the state of American letters was itself a wasteland, with only a few writes left to man the home fires and the others in Europe."<sup>4</sup> Edmund Wilson "wrote, in *The Dial* for December 1922, the most emphatically welcoming and apparently influential review of

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1. Donald Davie, "Eliot, Williams and Pound in the Twenties," *American Literature*, ed. Boris Ford, vol. 9 of *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature* (London: Penguin, 1988) 368.

2. Davie 368.

3. William Carlos Williams, *The Autobiography of William Carlos Williams* (New York: New Directions, 1948) 146.

4. Paul Mariani, *William Carlos Williams: A New World Naked* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1981) 191.

*The Waste Land.*"<sup>5</sup> Yet, in his positive review, Wilson acknowledges the weaknesses for which Eliot had been criticized by some of the other critics: "It is true [Eliot's] poems seem the products of a constricted emotional experience and that he appears to have drawn rather heavily on books for the heat he could not derive from life ... as if he were compensating himself for his limitations by a peevish assumption of superiority."<sup>6</sup> So already, in the initial reactions to the work, critics were commenting on some of the issues that would remain important considerations in later criticism — Eliot's bookishness, his repressed emotions, the poem's difficulty, and Eliot's erudition.

Of course, another of the early issues was Eliot's Americanism. For some critics, Eliot was, first of all, an American, born, raised, and schooled in America well into his adulthood. In his essay on Eliot's Americanism, Eric Sigg visually dramatizes Eliot's American roots by an extensive, albeit skeletal, family tree, which includes his distant relatedness to Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, John Adams and John Quincy Adams, John Greenleaf Whittier, James Russell Lowell, and Robert Lowell.<sup>7</sup> Edmund Wilson stated, "Eliot was indelibly American. ... [Eliot's] real significance is less that of a prophet of European disintegration than of a poet of the American Puritan temperament. Compare him with Hawthorne, Henry James, E. A. Robinson and Edith Wharton: all these writers have their *Waste Land*, which is the aesthetic and emotional waste land of the Puritan character."<sup>8</sup> Eliot, himself, agreed about his Americanism later in his life, as Lyndall Gordon notes: "Towards the end of his life Eliot came to see his poetry as more American than English: '... in its sources, in its emotional springs, it comes from America.'"<sup>9</sup> She adds: "The American aspect of Eliot is still neglected, but the dominant forms of American writing, soul history and sermon, give a curious backing to Eliot's impenetrability. ... In short,

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5. Davie 369.

6. Davie 369.

7. Eric Sigg, "Eliot as a Product of America," *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 16-17.

8. qtd. in Davie 369.

9. Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (New York: Noonday-Farrar, 1977) 2.

[*The Waste Land*] is a form of sermon: a call to the new life."<sup>10</sup> Gordon explains the influence of the traditional American sermon in terms of Eliot's own forebears:

He stands in the same New England tradition of moral earnestness as the Eliot forebears: Andrew Eliot in the eighteenth century, who preached to Boston society on "a generation of vipers," meaning his audience; and in the nineteenth century William Greenleaf Eliot, the admired grandfather, of whom a classmate at Harvard Divinity School said: "His eye is single. ... There is something awful about such conscientiousness. One feels rebuked in his presence."

The grandson's own "cry" was the imminent decline and fall of civilization. This is the classic American sermon, the Jeremiad, developed by settlers in the seventeenth century in order to repossess their dream of perfectibility.<sup>11</sup>

The traditional American sermon, the ideology that informs it and surrounds it, and its stressing of civilization's decline and fall, certainly fits with the negative assessment of modern society as Eliot presents in *The Waste Land*. Seen from the perspective of the larger American Puritan temperament and the American Jeremiad, Eliot's poem seems to be more rooted in America and American ideology than might originally have been estimated. For the purpose of my study, however, the stress is less on Eliot's Americanism and more on those religious aspects of Americanism — Puritanism and the Jeremiad — that inform the poem. The history of those Puritan roots, the Jeremiad sermon, and Eliot's American religious background have already been discussed in chapter two.

Harold Bloom also affirms Eliot's Americanness. Bloom calls the poem "an American self-elegy masking as a mythological romance, [and] a Romantic crisis poem pretending to be an exercise in Christian irony."<sup>12</sup> Bloom stresses these aspects in contradistinction to aspects of "mythological romance," "Christian irony," "brief epic or quest romance," and "civilization and its discontents." But these last four are precisely what other critics see in Eliot's poem. Further, Bloom's perspective obviously denies the mythological romantic element of the poem, which Eliot says, in his own "Notes on 'The Waste Land,'" grows out of his reading of Jessie Weston's

10. Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's New Life* (New York: Farrar, 1988) 234-235.

11. Gordon, *Eliot's New Life* 40-41.

12. Harold Bloom, introduction, *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Interpretations* (New York: Chelsea, 1986) 1.

book, *From Ritual to Romance*.<sup>13</sup> Also, Bloom's perspective sees any of the poem's Christian irony or content merely as pretense. Of course, my own perspective seeks to stress the Christian irony of the poem, which will necessitate seeing that Christianity as more than pretense and will be supported by the qualities of a mythological romance.

Ruth Nevo looks at the Eliot's "Notes" to *The Waste Land*. She appropriately deconstructs Eliot's "Notes" as being as obscure as the poem's own more problematic imagery — far from being the helpful notes they pretend to be, they are rather part of the problem of interpretation, contributing to our confusion and ambivalence. Nevo's thesis is that "*The Waste Land*, that seminal modernist poem of 1922, can now be read as a postmodernist poem of 1982: as a deconstructionist Ur-text, even as a Deconstructionist Manifesto."<sup>14</sup> She goes on to note the paradox of Eliot's being such a spokesman of radical modernism only to become a conservative convert to a hierarchical church, finally asserting that "the chief deconstructionist critics ignore T.S. Eliot with a pointed contempt which amounts to a concerted effort to discanonize him."<sup>15</sup> In discussing New Criticism, Nevo briefly quotes Cleanth Brooks, who asserts that "the thematic 'contrast between two kinds of life and two kinds of death,' the parallel symbolism of fertility cults and resurrection, ... all work toward the buttressing of a masked and indirect but unequivocal statement of Christian belief."<sup>16</sup> Nevo's position, of course, is a contrary one, seeing in the poem "no narrative, ... no time, ... no place, ... no unifying central character, ... no drama, no epic, no lyric, ... no one point of view, no single style, idiom, register, or recurrent linguistic device. ... It is totally, radically nonintegrative and antidiscursive. ... It is an apogee of fragmentation and discontinuity. ... Nor do its symbols function as foci. They refuse to symbolize."<sup>17</sup> Even if we try to see the poem from the perspective of Freudian language of the unconscious, similar to

13. T. S. Eliot, "Notes on 'The Waste Land,'" in *The Waste Land, The Waste Land and Other Poems* (New York: Harvest-Harcourt, 1962) 47.

14. Ruth Nevo, "The Waste Land: Ur-Text of Deconstruction," *T. S. Eliot*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Views* (New York: Chelsea, 1985) 96.

15. Nevo 96.

16. Nevo, 96-97.

17. Nevo 97-98.

dream language, as Bloom might have us consider, Nevo still challenges us to find an interpretive key. She is forced finally to question: "Have we a poem at all? An Antipoem? ... But is there an author at all?"<sup>18</sup> Finally, Nevo concludes her essay with what she calls "a deconstructive footnote to Eliot's famous footnotes," calling them "a parody of academic footnoting, ... so far from being exhaustive or comprehensive, ... more misleading than leading," and asks, "Are the Notes a part or not a part of *The Waste Land*?"<sup>19</sup>

Nevo deconstructs the "Notes," yet she affirms that "at the same time the Notes chart a number of tracings (significant? insignificant?), ... which are, however, no more and no less authoritative than the language of the poem itself."<sup>20</sup> But even if we were thoroughly to deconstruct both the "Notes" and the poem itself, we would still have images, allusions, and the entire poem and its structure to deal with, and we would be forced to analyze it from one perspective or another. If we simply disregard the "Notes," we are still left with what other critics have seen in the poem, namely qualities of Christian irony, allusions to Christian scriptures and themes, elements of quest-romance, mythological and epic characters, and discontent with civilization. Again, my approach looks more deeply at the Christian elements in the poem — not just the scriptural allusions or the Christian irony, but more the Anglo-Catholic elements and the overall liturgical structure of the poem.

In her deconstructive approach to both the poem and its "Notes," Nevo turns to talking about the poem's overall structure as that of a "five-act antidrama" with "no protagonist, no dramatic action, and no outcome." She continues, "But we can read a predicament of sorts into Part I: loss of faith and hope and vitality, and a follow-through in II with its unhappy and crisscrossed human relations. ... Part III offers a large number of crises and reversals in love, ... and 'What the Thunder Said' is catastrophe as apocalypse." This sets up the fifth act which "may be either a tragic recollapsing into temporal ruin and chaos or a divinely comic resolution of all previous perplexities through the magic formula: give, sympathize, control, and the peace that passeth

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18. Nevo 99.

19. Nevo 101-102.

20. Nevo 102.

understanding.”<sup>21</sup> Nevo goes on to discuss the “radical indeterminacy” of *The Waste Land*, adding that this is not helped by Eliot’s own noncommittal statement that it was a “rhythmical grumble.” But working from Jessie Weston’s book and its discussion of myth, she joins Cleanth Brooks in “[reading] *The Waste Land* as a sermon in disguise, ... preaching a Christian message in Brahman disguise.” Reminding her readers of Eliot’s actual conversion in 1927, Nevo adds, “Internalized versions of these readings make it a latent conversion poem in which the pre-conversion experience of sex disgust, self-disgust, alienation, sterility, and failure hovers, so to speak, on the brink of transformation or transcendence, ... and the poem can be seen retrospectively in that event’s long shadow.”<sup>22</sup> So in the midst of her deconstruction of the work, Nevo acknowledges approaching the poem from the perspective of Eliot’s conversion and even seeing the poem as a sermon in disguise. Her assessment of *The Waste Land* nicely anticipates my own interpretation of the poem, not just in its references to a sermon, nor just in the light of Eliot’s conversion, but in terms of both but from a more liturgical perspective. Where Nevo has considered the poem’s overall structure from the perspective of loss of faith and despair to resolution in the final formula of give, sympathize, control, I shall apply my liturgical perspective to the structure of the poem, as well.

Grover Smith discusses the overall structure of *The Waste Land* in his book, which is famous for tracking down the sources of Eliot’s allusions. Noting first that some commentators deny the integrity of *The Waste Land* based on the elements left out as seen in the *Facsimile*, Smith asserts that the poem “in its structure achieves two kinds of unity, the one psychological, the other cultural or ‘mythic.’”<sup>23</sup> Even Eliot himself, in a 1950s interview, denied the poem’s structure, saying that after Pound’s excisions, “it was just as structureless, only in a more futile way, in the

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21. Nevo 100.

22. Nevo 100-102.

23. Grover Smith, *The Waste Land* (London: Allen, 1983) 48. Part III, “The Structure and the Mythical Method,” pages 48-64, of Chapter 3, “*The Waste Land* in the Making,” appeared in Harold Bloom’s collection as: Grover Smith, “The Structure and Mythical Method of *The Waste Land*,” *T. S. Eliot’s The Waste Land*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Interpretations* (New York: Chelsea, 1986) 97.

longer version.”<sup>24</sup> As for the “Notes,” Smith feels, contrary to Ruth Nevo’s position, that the structure, though “unconventional” and “not obvious,” is “moreover explicit in the *prose* part of the poem, the ‘Notes.’”<sup>25</sup> Eliot, however, would agree with Nevo regarding the “Notes,” since he is the one who, in 1956, “derogated [his own ‘Notes’] in ‘The Frontiers of Criticism’ as ‘bogus scholarship’ (*On Poetry and Poets*).”<sup>26</sup> In affirming the structure he sees in the poem, Smith is forced to argue with Eliot, asserting that “Eliot could no longer *feel* the structural idea in satisfactory terms” and that the structure of the poem had become “a structure he could no longer see.”<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, and no matter what Eliot himself thought or said, a structure does endure, as Grover Smith has noted. Seeing in the poem two such basic kinds of structural unity — psychological and cultic or mythic — allows for my expansion on both as they dovetail and open to further religious structural analyses.

Smith reminds us that, according to Eliot’s note for line 218, Tiresias comprehends the entire substance of the poem. Smith adds, “The structural order envisaged through the spectator-unifier function, far from being vague, has a visible logic, and it is at least as cogent as most innovations of modern art. This order is reinforced somewhat more in cancelled passages than in the shorter version of *The Waste Land*, by an autobiographical parallel; the cancelled epigraph from Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* also hints at this.”<sup>28</sup> Here, Smith makes a statement that Eliot’s own personal, autobiographical events give structure to the poem and help unite the poem’s themes. This is also Lyndall Gordon’s approach in her biographical analysis of *The Waste Land* and its time of composition. Of course, since the publication of the *Facsimile* edition in 1971, this has been made more evident and easier to assess. Smith, in turn, summarizes Hugh Kenner’s suggestion, in his essay “The Urban Apocalypse,” that “Eliot, through a succession of references to Virgil’s *Aeneid* in the poem, may have thought at some point of creating a modern quest of

24. Smith, *The Waste Land* 49. Also, see Smith, “Structure” 98.

25. Smith, *The Waste Land* 48 [*sic*]. Also, see Smith, “Structure” 98.

26. Smith, *The Waste Land* 49. Also, see Smith, “Structure” 98.

27. Smith, *The Waste Land* 49. Also, see Smith, “Structure” 98-99.

28. Smith, *The Waste Land* 50. Also, see Smith, “Structure” 99; Smith here cites Eliot, “Notes” 50, n. 218.



Aeneas as Joyce had created that of Bloom — Odysseus. The clue to this quest, which can be made to work in reading the poem mythologically, is the descent into hell, as has been demonstrated by Bernard F. Dick in an essay entitled *'The Waste Land and the Descensus ad Inferos'* (1975).<sup>29</sup>

Bernard Dick discusses that epic influence and the sense of quest, specifically into the underworld. The descent into the underworld is an element common to many of the great epics, and Dick lists *Odyssey XI* and *Aeneid VI* as the two major examples. He then presents five aspects of this literary technique and asserts that all of these elements appear in *The Waste Land*, and that despite the fact that no one approach to the poem will prove completely satisfying, many of the poem's problems "can be resolved as conventions of the *descensus* where time and place are structural devices that make the spiritual intelligible in human terms."<sup>30</sup> He lists the process Teiresias goes through to begin his descent into the underworld — first seeing the anonymous dead, the crowd flowing over London Bridge (lines 62-63); then encountering the individual *umbra*, Stetson (lines 69-72); and then to "Belladonna, an old amour, whose rococo boudoir is a hell of history ignored and art misused" — in "the principle of *gradatio*: a continuous movement from the less specific toward the more specific to the climactically specific."<sup>31</sup> This finally culminates in a discussion of water and its significance in the poem, centering on Part IV, "Death by Water," the shortest and least-discussed section of the poem. Of course, for me, the water imagery leads to the theme of rebirth, which will be discussed later.

Eliot acknowledges his debt to Dante, another great author of epic or religious journey poetry, in his own "Notes" at the end of *The Waste Land*, citing five references to Dante's *Divine Comedy*.<sup>32</sup> These five references certainly lend weight, both literarily and religiously, to a spiritual journey interpretation of the poem. But the influence of Dante is not only in those five cita-

29. Smith, *The Waste Land* 50. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 100. Harold Bloom as editor, has wisely included both Smith's and Dick's essays in his collection, and we will look next at Professor Dick's article.

30. Bernard F. Dick, "The Waste Land and the *Descensus ad Inferos*," *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Interpretations* (New York: Chelsea, 1986) 67-71, esp. 71.

31. Dick 74-75.

32. T. S. Eliot, "Notes" 47-54; notes to lines 63, 64, 293, 412, and 428.

tions, but in the larger epic elements of the poem. In line with Professor Dick's thesis and the qualities of epic outlined above, it can be said that Dante's *Inferno* is a prolonged descent into the underworld, and so serves as another model of that style for Eliot. Harriet Davidson also writes, albeit briefly, about Dante's influence on Eliot. Discussing Eliot's "Notes" and their questionable serious intention and value to the poem, she states that it is still helpful to know the story of the quest for the Grail: "Stories of death and renewal or damnation and salvation, from the Grail legends and fertility myths outlined by Jessie Weston in *From Ritual to Romance*, and from Dante's *Divine Comedy*, greatly haunted Eliot's imagination and contributed to his conversion to Christianity in 1927."<sup>33</sup>

Cleo McNelly Kearns asserts Dante's influence on Eliot even more strongly. She notes Eliot's denial that *The Waste Land* was a "statement of complete disillusion, though it was widely so read."<sup>34</sup> This would seem to limit Eliot's sense of disillusionment with society, which is typically associated with a traditional pre-Christian conversion reading of the poem. But Kearns goes on to say, "The most important factor in Eliot's conversion as well as his art, however, was without a doubt the poetry of Dante, of which the influence on him was overwhelming. ... Eliot ... closely ... identified his quest with Dante's poetic and religious achievement."<sup>35</sup> This quotation comes in the context of her discussion of Eliot's religious background and Christian conversion. She briefly traces Eliot's development from a Boston Unitarian, through his Christian influences in school, to his full Christian conversion. Of course, his philosophical skepticism and training were important, as well as his sense of the need for ritual, and his questioning of his own Unitarian tradition — what Kearns calls "his temperamental aversion to liberal and revisionist religious views."<sup>36</sup> She sees the two aspects of the primacy of Dante's influence — on Eliot's personal religious development and on his artistic expression — coming

33. Harriet Davidson, "Improper Desire: Reading *The Waste Land*," *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 125.

34. Cleo McNelly Kearns, "Religion, Literature, and Society in the Work of T. S. Eliot," *The Cambridge Companion to T. S. Eliot*, ed. A. David Moody (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1994) 87.

35. Kearns, "Religion, Literature, and Society" 89.

36. Kearns, "Religion, Literature, and Society" 87-89, esp. 88.

together in *The Waste Land*. These influences of the epic, Virgil, Dante, and related religious themes, especially as discussed by Smith, Dick, and Kearns, are very strong. In addition, Hugh Kenner, among other critics, has noted Chaucer's related influence, especially in the opening lines of *The Waste Land*. In his essay "The Death of Europe," Kenner calls those opening lines of Eliot's "a denial of Chaucer," adding, "In the twentieth-century version we have a prayer book heading, 'The Burial of the Dead,' with its implied ceremonial of dust thrown and of souls reborn, ... and instead of pilgrimages we have European tours."<sup>37</sup> I would add that Chaucer's pilgrimage is a religious journey to Canterbury to visit the shrine of St. Thomas à Becket. Eliot's opening lines call to mind not only the similarity of Chaucer's opening lines, but they also suggest the same religious journey theme as found in *The Canterbury Tales*.

In talking about a quest or journey, I would agree with Grover Smith that one must consider mythic elements, since epic and myth are very much bound together with quest or journey.<sup>38</sup> David Spurr comments on Eliot's early interest in "epistemology, mysticism, and the symbolic formations of non-Western cultures," noting his use of "works like *The Golden Bough*," Lévy-Bruhl's "theoretical framework," and Durkheim, among others.<sup>39</sup> Spurr lays a solid groundwork for understanding Eliot's early interest in anthropology and ethnology and his use of those materials in his writing. Acknowledging his debt to Lévy-Bruhl, Eliot summarizes, "The prelogical mentality persists in civilized man, but becomes available only to or through the poet."<sup>40</sup> Spurr goes on to comment, "The origin of poetry is thus located simultaneously in prehistory, primitive culture, and a primitive consciousness indistinguishable from contemporary notions of the unconscious."<sup>41</sup> Spurr sees *The Waste Land* as presenting "primitive ritual not as an escape but as a lost origin of order and meaning."<sup>42</sup>

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37. Hugh Kenner, "The Death of Europe," *T. S. Eliot's The Waste Land*, ed. Harold Bloom, *Modern Critical Interpretations* (New York: Chelsea, 1986) 13.

38. Smith, *The Waste Land* 54. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 104.

39. David Spurr, "Myths of Anthropology: Eliot, Joyce, Lévy-Bruhl," *PMLA* 109 (1994): 270.

40. Spurr 273.

41. Spurr 273.

42. Spurr 271.

Wanting to remain clear about his understanding of Eliot's "using myth," Smith cautions what he calls in some other critics "the 'nostalgic' implication" in Eliot's use of myth. Smith points out that these critics resort to the familiar concluding paragraph of Eliot's review, "Ulysses, Order, and Myth," from November, 1923, to reinforce their position. In that essay, Eliot affirms the use of myth for modern writing, calling it the "mythical method."<sup>43</sup> But Smith asserts that, unlike the efforts of some critics to link one basic myth to *The Waste Land* to give it order, "No one of the traditional myths, not even the Grail legend, satisfies the requirements laid upon the mythical method by Eliot; it is when all are taken together that they mould a shape."<sup>44</sup> Eliot's "unwillingness to be pinned down"<sup>45</sup> indeed disallows too facile a mythic interpretation, but certainly invites an interpretive approach that takes myth, ritual, and quest into consideration. Smith draws out the moral aspect of myth, seeing the "world of the poem [as] that of the primal Fall," and going on to cite R. W. B. Lewis' 1955 *The American Adam*, a "study of the myth of the Fall as it affected nineteenth century American culture."<sup>46</sup> Smith's sense of structural order in the poem comes more from the discarded portions, to be found in the *Facsimile*, especially in the "cancelled epigraph from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*," in which Smith sees an "autobiographical parallel."<sup>47</sup> In Conrad's work, "Mr Kurtz in the minds of Conrad's readers remains an explorer of forbidden hells of primitive knowledge. It is to such knowledge that his dying words are directed: 'The horror! the horror!'"<sup>48</sup> Smith also alludes to Eliot's use of St. Augustine. Of course, this comes in the context of discussing Part III of *The Waste Land*, entitled "The Fire Sermon." Here, Smith discusses the "social and religious [mythic] perspectives" and the "spiritual or rather moral vision of the poem."<sup>49</sup> This sets up for Smith a "moral framework" of which he says, "the framework or matrix is identified with the vision of Tiresias. It is Tiresias who

43. Smith, *The Waste Land* 55, 57. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 105, 107.

44. Smith, *The Waste Land* 57. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 108.

45. Smith, *The Waste Land* 58. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 108.

46. Smith, *The Waste Land* 55. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 105. Of course, this also refers us to Eliot's Americanism, again. Cf. pages 3-5 and notes 8-16 above.

47. Smith, *The Waste Land* 50. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 99.

48. Smith, *The Waste Land* 54. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 104-105.

49. Smith, *The Waste Land* 52. Also, see Smith, "Structure" 102.

gazes with Augustine upon the city of tyrant *demos*, the populace hungering for sense-gratification and power; who entertains with Plato a dream of wisdom; who, involved in illusion, fails at Buddhist Enlightenment.”<sup>50</sup>

Before moving on, a word of caution must be added here regarding Smith’s discussion of moral myth and moral interpretation. In the opening chapter of his book, Smith mentions Eliot’s “belief, till then undeclared in his work, that for his poetry to be first rate he had to project a moral point of view, one occupied with good and evil.”<sup>51</sup> From his reading in the *Facsimile*, Smith goes on to say, “Meanwhile Eliot perfected the aesthetic by which he would write *The Waste Land*. In this the dual achievement of that poem was, in effect, prophesied — the subduing of personal experience, at times with enormous difficulty, to the making of an individuated ‘world’ in a work of art, and the creation through that ‘world’ of a moral mirror for human kind.”<sup>52</sup> Noting some of the early responses to *The Waste Land* from a variety of groups, Smith summarizes them succinctly, ending with the reaction from Christians and a comment of his own about Eliot’s conversion:

Conservatives held back, Marxists rumbled; many other embraced its novelty, some its pessimism, iconoclasm or hints of prevenient grace. Believers in a vision of cultural sterility learned their text from it and admired it for anticipating their revelation. When Eliot became an Anglican, they raged that he had betrayed their cause; but Christians said *The Waste Land* represented his dark night of spiritual tribulation before conversion. And indeed this event followed by only six years the writing of the poem in 1921. The dark night was his, not the culture’s; but I see no prophecy of conversion in the poem.<sup>53</sup>

I can agree with Smith in his assessment, for the most part, seeing in *The Waste Land* a “moral point of view, one occupied with good and evil.” Indeed, Smith’s discussion of “The Fire Sermon” and its sources bears out that moral aspect of the poem. I also appreciate Smith’s succinct summary of group responses to the poem. And I would concur, especially considering Eliot’s extensive reading in mysticism, with the Christians who saw in the poem Eliot’s own pre-conversion dark night of the soul — this is part of my own way of reading the poem, as I shall

50. Smith, *The Waste Land* 53. Also, see Smith, “Structure” 102-103.

51. Smith, *The Waste Land* 16.

52. Smith, *The Waste Land* 17.

53. Smith, *The Waste Land* 2.

present below. However, a careful balance must be maintained, here, as Smith also tries to do. Smith's balance comes in the form of his denial of any signs of Eliot's conversion to come. This is certainly not how I see the poem, but I cannot go along with the generic Christian response of the day, either, seeing a "dark night of spiritual tribulation before conversion." The dark night of the soul refers more specifically to profound mystical experience, a deep spiritual struggle, such as experienced by St. John of the Cross — one of the mystics Eliot read. The application of this level of spiritual struggle to someone like Eliot writing prior to conversion might well be questioned, especially considering the parts of the poem written much earlier during Eliot's student days. The Christian interpreters of Eliot's day, in responding to the poem, wanted to use this image of a pre-conversion "dark night," especially looking back from Eliot's conversion six years later, only they did so from a more ordinary understanding of the phrase.

William Johnston, in his book *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism*, clarifies this distinction. He cites sixteenth-century English mystic Augustine Baker, who differentiates between "extraordinary mysticism" and "ordinary mysticism." Extraordinary mysticism belongs to mystics like Catherine of Siena and Teresa of Avila. The more ordinary form can be taught and "is the path trodden by a great number of quietly unknown Christian mystics" — and is "no more than an intensification of the ordinary Christian life."<sup>54</sup> For the true mystic, however, the dark night of the soul is much more than this kind of pre-conversion "criticism of the contemporary world," or what Eliot referred to as "only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling."<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, as Johnston further discusses the distinction between ordinary and extraordinary mysticism, he does explain John of the Cross's "dark night of the soul" as being a beginning point in the mystic's journey, after which, when "the 'house' is at rest," one enters the "higher or deeper realms."<sup>56</sup>

54. William Johnston, *The Still Point: Reflections on Zen and Christian Mysticism* (New York: Fordham UP, 1970) 27-28, esp. 28.

55. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1971) 1.

56. Johnston 37.

There are, therefore, dangers in labels like “dark night of the soul.” While I certainly agree with those who see the beginnings of a Christian conversion in *The Waste Land*, as per my thesis, I also must agree with Grover Smith in his cautions about in seeing a “*prophecy of conversion in the poem.*”<sup>57</sup> My contention is not to see the poem as the beginnings of conversion, *per se*, nor even as prophesying Eliot’s conversion. Rather, looking back from Eliot’s conversion six years later, the natural tendency is to read elements of the poem with that conversion in mind. But so as not to go quite so far as other hopeful Christians, I suggest that the time leading up to Eliot’s conversion follows a common and traditional pattern, into which *The Waste Land* fits. This holds true whether or not Eliot was conscious of his own spiritual development at the time. Rather, in much the same fashion as Eliot seems to have captured the mood of an age in the minds of many of his readers, so Eliot has captured the basic elements of spiritual quest and conversion, and we see the results of that in *The Waste Land*.

Further on this point, going back to consider the American Jeremiad, or sermonic quality of the poem, as discussed briefly above, it is also possible to see the poem from the perspective of a sermon growing out of the American Puritan temperament.<sup>58</sup> Similar to a sermon of that type, this work would chronicle the spiritual struggle of the speaker, but it would be more concerned with affecting a change in the audience — in fact, the reception of the audience would be of primary concern. In the Puritan or American form, the sermon which accomplishes this change in the audience, or at least hopes to, gives a full, albeit negative, assessment of the society and its shortcomings. Just the same, while the poem certainly shares similarities with that sermonic mode of communication, there is much more to it.

### The Influence of St. Augustine

In his discussion of “The Fire Sermon,” Grover Smith talks about the “spiritual or rather moral vision of the poem” and Eliot’s use of St. Augustine. Besides the poem’s allusions to

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57. Smith, *The Waste Land* 2, quoted above, emphasis added.

58. Cf. pages 3-4 and notes 9, 11, and 12, above.

Augustine as representative of western spirituality, as Eliot refers to him in his "Notes," Augustine's influence on Eliot and on this poem is much greater than just the moral influence to be found in "The Fire Sermon." John Holloway comments on the larger influence of Augustine in his essay on the origin of the title of *The Waste Land*. After quoting the final lines of "The Fire Sermon," Holloway says, "these closing lines ... provide the very title of the poem. 'To Carthage then I came' are the opening words of Book III of St. Augustine's *Confessions*: and he closed the preceding book with the words, 'I wandered, O my God, too much astray from Thee my stay, in these days of my youth, and I became to myself a *waste land*.'" Seeing also an "echo of Amos 4:11," Holloway feels that the poem here "[evokes] a genuinely prophetic vision of a breakdown in life itself: a waste land, general to humanity, in which nothing connects with nothing."<sup>59</sup> Holloway then expands Eliot's two notes on Augustine in a very important way. In his note to line 307, which reads "To Carthage then I came," Eliot comments, "V. St. Augustine's *Confessions*: 'to Carthage then I came, where a cauldron of unholy loves sang all about mine ears.'"<sup>60</sup> And of line 309, which reads "O Lord Thou pluckest me out," Eliot says, "From St. Augustine's *Confessions* again. The collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident."<sup>61</sup> Eliot, himself, it would appear, wants to highlight Augustine's presence in the poem, at least in this section, and especially as St. Augustine relates to the Buddha. But even though he cites Augustine as the source for the two lines, he does not at the same time give Augustine credit for the larger thematic influence here. Nor does Eliot acknowledge Augustine as the source of the very title of his work, as Holloway explains. We can thank Holloway for noting this omission on Eliot's part, and we might question Eliot's rationale for providing such an incomplete reference note.

Augustine's larger influence on the poem, as noted here, confirms the spiritual nature of

59. John Holloway, "The Literary Scene" *From Yeats to Eliot*, ed. Boris Ford, vol. 7 of *The New Pelican Guide to English Literature* (London: Penguin, 1983) 81.

60. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land, The Waste Land and Other Poems* (San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1962) line 307, page 41; T. S. Eliot, "Notes" n. 307, page 51.

61. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, line 309, page 41; T. S. Eliot, "Notes" n. 309, page 52.



Eliot's poem and in part helps to set up my more liturgical examination of it. The context of the quotation from Book 2 of Augustine's *Confessions*, noted by Holloway, is from Chapter 10, entitled "A Soul in Waste." It concludes, "I fell away from you, my God, and I went astray, too far astray from you, the support of my youth, and I became to myself a land of want."<sup>62</sup> In the footnote for that final line, the translator suggests a comparison to Luke 15:14, which reads, "When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need" — this is a part of the familiar Prodigal Son parable told by Jesus.<sup>63</sup> Then, as *The Confessions* continue at the beginning of Book 3, Chapter 1 opens, "I came to Carthage, where a caldron of shameful love seethed and sounded about me on every side. ... I sought for something to love, for I was in love with love. ... For there was a hunger within me from a lack of that inner food, which is yourself, my God."<sup>64</sup> In a footnote to the first sentence, the translator explains Augustine's pun on Carthage's name, given Augustine's personal concerns at this point of his confessions: "In the Latin, *sartago*, here translated as caldron, repeats the sound of Carthago, as if we would say, e.g., 'London, a dungeon.' Carthage was notorious for vice."<sup>65</sup> These are helpful quotations and notes, thanks more to Holloway than to Eliot, even if Eliot does give us the first clue to his use of Augustine's *Confessions*.

In context, Augustine laments the wasteful condition of his soul, which is similar to that of the Prodigal Son, whose only solution was to return to his father's house in humility and receive again the gifts of a gracious father. Instead of getting tangled all over again in the attempt to untie or extricate oneself, the solution is rather to cut through to a wholly other, radical, and unexpected solution — a "leap of faith," as Brooker and Bentley call it. Then, in the beginning of Book 3, with the pun on "Carthage" and *sartago*, or "caldron," there is a fleshing out (no further pun intended) of Augustine's inner spiritual hunger. With references to incomplete love, to

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62. Augustine, *The Confessions of St. Augustine*, trans. John K. Ryan (Garden City: Image-Doubleday, 1960) 75-76.

63. Augustine 76, n. 2; Luke 15:3-32, New Revised Standard Version (NRSV).

64. Augustine 77.

65. Augustine 77, n. 1.

being “in love with love,” one is reminded of the criticisms levelled against Eliot for his bookishness and sexual aversions. All of this sets the scene for a journey away from emptiness and bondage to a fuller life and spiritual rest. At the end of Book 2, Augustine asserts to God, “With you there is true rest and life untroubled.” This echoes the opening to the *Confessions* where Augustine says, “for you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you.”<sup>66</sup> This, of course, sets up the motif of a spiritual journey — moving from doubt, lostness, questioning, and dissatisfaction with the world and with oneself to faith, resolution, and spiritual development or rest.

As for John Holloway’s above reference to Amos 4:11, in context the prophet speaks for God encouraging the spiritual return of God’s people. Since they have not returned, God says: “And I also withheld the rain from you; ... I would send rain on one city, and send no rain on another city; ... so two or three towns wandered to one town to drink water, and were not satisfied; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD. ... I laid waste your gardens and your vineyards.” This first part of Amos 4 ties in with an important theme of *The Waste Land*, that of water and the delay of rain — this will be discussed below. The eleventh verse contains Holloway’s specific reference, “you were like a brand snatched from the fire; yet you did not return to me, says the LORD.”<sup>67</sup> Also in the passage is reference to Sodom and Gomorrah, which reinforces the image of a destructive fire of judgment, in addition to images of a fire of passion and a purifying fire. Similar to the Buddha’s Fire Sermon, this passage from Amos is reminiscent of the spiritual need to overcome passion and desire and return to moral living. This return motif fits with the context and theme of Eliot’s poem at this point, and it also fits with the material from Augustine’s *Confessions*. Together with the fire imagery, there are added and related references to thirst, hunger, lack of rain, wasted land, pestilence, and fire, together with complementary images of being “snatched from the fire” or “plucked out,” moral return, water, and refreshment.

Along with these references to St. Augustine, Eliot inserts a reference to the Buddha.

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66. Augustine 44.

67. Amos 4:1-13 (NRSV).

Between Eliot's two notes about St. Augustine, his note to line 308 mentions, "The complete text of the Buddha's Fire Sermon (which corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount)." Here the link between St. Augustine and the Buddha is strengthened, and they are played off against each other as representatives of Eastern and Western asceticism. And Eliot's complementary use of them serves to blend the two larger traditions together in similar spiritual thrusts, suggesting the universality of images and themes. More will be said about this later, when considering the overall religious structure of *The Waste Land*.

### The Facsimile Fragments

According to Valerie Eliot, in her "Introduction" to the *Facsimile*, the first mention of *The Waste Land* occurs in a letter dated November 5, 1919. And in 1920, during a rather turbulent time for both his first wife, Vivienne, and himself, Eliot again expressed a desire to find a tranquil time to write the poem he had in mind.<sup>68</sup> During 1921, Eliot met Joyce, liked him, read the latter part of *Ulysses* and found it "truly magnificent";<sup>69</sup> attended a performance of Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du Printemps* and stood and cheered;<sup>70</sup> and again expressed that he was "wishful to finish a long poem,'(as he still described *The Waste Land*) which was now 'partly on paper.'"<sup>71</sup> But before the end of 1921, and before his own great work of Modernism was to see publication, Eliot was to undergo deteriorating health, a breakdown, a leave from the bank where he worked, a period of rest in Margate, and finally therapy with Dr. Vittoz in Lausanne. When he returned to London in January of 1922, he had in his suitcase "a long poem of about 450 words [lines]," which he claimed to have written "mostly when I was at Lausanne for treatment last winter."<sup>72</sup> On the way back to London, Eliot stopped in Paris and gave his work to Pound for his editorial and critical assessment. After the poem's publication with Pound's editorial work, in January,

68. Valerie Eliot, Introduction, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound*, ed. Valerie Eliot (San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1971) xvii-xviii, xix-xx.

69. Valerie Eliot, Introduction xx.

70. Peter Ackroyd, *T. S. Eliot: A Life* (New York: Simon, 1984) 112.

71. Valerie Eliot, Introduction xxi.

72. Valerie Eliot, Introduction xxi-xxii, esp. xxii (brackets are Valerie Eliot's).

1923, Eliot sent the manuscript to John Quinn in New York, who commented, "Personally I should not have cut out some of the parts that Pound advised you to cut out."<sup>73</sup> Nonetheless, the work, as Pound edited it, appeared as the official, original text, and it was not until 1971 that the original manuscript-typescript surfaced, having found its way from Quinn, who died on July 28, 1924, through the New York Public Library. Years of comment and criticism appeared about the poem in its 1922 form, and of course, that is the official published version. With Valerie Eliot's publication in 1971 of the original typescript, with all its corrections and editorial comments, came some new insights about the poem's process of composition, its original content, Eliot's original intent and preoccupations, and Pound's editorial involvement. Naturally, a new surge of criticism also appeared after 1971, taking into account this new information. What is gained from the *Facsimile* edition for the purpose of my study is even deeper insight into Eliot's religious preoccupations at the time of writing and assembling the poem. In looking through the elements of the *Facsimile* that do not appear in the published version, an assessment of Eliot's concern for spirituality and religious formation is reinforced.

While most of the revelations of the manuscript-typescript do not affect my final assessment of the poem, a few important parts do. First, the epigraph from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* has overtones of morality in "Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender" and "The horror! the horror!"; and overtones of Bradleian epistemology appear in "that supreme moment of complete knowledge."<sup>74</sup> The first reference relates to the issue of memory and desire early in the final poem, as well as to the final give, control, and sympathize. This deleted epigraph is commented on elsewhere, and discussed in some detail in other sources, notably in both Grover Smith and Brooker and Bentley. Most of the other sections of the poem that were deleted or changed by Pound have less to do with my analysis. However, in the latter pages of the *Facsimile* there is a number fragments, many of which exist as separate poems, a couple of which were published separately. Some of these pieces indicate a strong religious interest on the

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73. Valerie Eliot, Introduction xxvi.

74. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 3.

part of the author, and they reinforce a more religious understanding, both of the final poem itself and of Eliot's own personal and religious development during the time of composition. From these fragments, it is clear that the roots of Eliot's conversion reach farther back than some might think. If Eliot's interest in religious concerns and his spiritual development are indeed older than *The Waste Land*, then the span of his spiritual journey definitely includes the time of the composition of *The Waste Land* and allows for a closer look at the more religious motifs in the final poem. In fact, Lyndall Gordon feels that "The turning point in Eliot's life came not at the time of his baptism in 1927, but in 1914 when he was circling, in moments of agitation, on the edge of conversion."<sup>75</sup>

The fragments are on pages 91 to 123 of the *Facsimile*. They consist of drafts and fair copies of full poems and fragmentary stanzas, mostly unpublished. According to Valerie Eliot's footnotes, "The Death of a [*sic*] Saint Narcissus" (pages 91-93 and 95-97) and "Song. For the Ophorian [*sic*]" (page 99) were published separately. The rest of the pages, including "Exequy" (pages 101-103), "The Death of the Dutchess" (pages 105-107), "Elegy" (page 117), and "Dirge" (pages 119 and 121), and a few fragmentary stanzas, including "After the turning of the inspired days ..." (page 109), "I am the Resurrection and the Life ..." (page 111), "So through the evening, through the violet air ..." (pages 113-115), and "Those are pearls that were his eyes. See! ..." (page 123), remained unpublished, except, of course, for the *Facsimile* publication. Nonetheless, these poems and fragments were cannibalized, and many of the lines found their way into the final poem. So while it might be interesting to consider these pages as they exist on their own, it is more helpful to consider the original context of the cannibalized lines for any additional insights related to their context in the final poem.

The first poem in the *Facsimile* after *The Waste Land* itself is "The Death of Saint Narcissus." The poem is about martyrdom and draws out the expected religious imagery. Line 17 reads, "He could not live mens' [*sic*] ways, but became a dancer to [before] God"<sup>76</sup> — an obvi-

75. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 58.

76. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 91, 95 (brackets are in the original).

ous image for a saint. The reason given in the fair copy is that he is “Struck down by such knowledge” of his eyes and limbs.<sup>77</sup> In the draft copy, the reason is more “because he was struck down/mad by the knowledge of his own beauty” — an obvious image for a character named Narcissus.<sup>78</sup> Either way, the reference suggests a level of knowledge reminiscent of F. H. Bradley’s three levels of knowledge. Also at this point, with mention of city streets, the fair copy also leaves out a reference to Carthage,<sup>79</sup> with all its associations of fleshy sinfulness, as St. Augustine portrays it in his *Confessions*. For shelter, the saint finds refuge under the grey rock, then under the red rock, and these lines find their way into the final poem as lines 26 to 29. Under the red rock provides a desert setting, which is contrasted with the city and its relationship to Carthage, the model of the sinful city — the desert is the true refuge of the saint, martyr, or mystic, and opens up possibilities for special communication with God. “The Death of Saint Narcissus” ends with a stanza about the saint’s martyrdom. As a “dancer to God” or “devoted to God,” “his flesh was in love with the penetrant [burning] arrows,” “he danced on the hot sand,” he “embraced” the arrows and “surrendered,” and the “redness [...] satisfied him.”<sup>80</sup> The references to hot sands and burning arrows coincide with the imagery of “The Fire Sermon,” the central section of the *The Waste Land*. Also, the surrendering anticipates the conclusion of the poem. Incidentally, the “shadow in his mouth” of the final line suggests the opposite of Havelock the Dane,<sup>81</sup> whose saintly mouth glowed from within — once Saint Narcissus is dead, there is no glow from his mouth, but only shadow.

“Exequy,”<sup>82</sup> with its apparent rough draft of a possible third alternate stanza on the next page, offers more religious imagery. Similar to Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress” and Robert

77. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 95, esp. l. 16.

78. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 91, esp. l. 16.

79. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 91, esp. l. 18.

80. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 93, esp. ll. 31–40; and 97, esp. ll. 33–40 (brackets are in the original).

81. “Havelock the Dane,” Roger Sherman Loomis and Laura Hibbard Loomis, eds., *Medieval Romances*, 284–310 (New York: Random/Modern Library, 1957) esp. 298, 303. “Havelock the Dane” is a medieval romance about the future king of Denmark whose true identity is deduced from the saintly glow emanating from his mouth when he sleeps.

82. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 101–103.

Herrick's "Corinna's Going A-Maying," among others, the religious imagery used here is in service of a love poem. However, the imagery includes pilgrimage, pious vows, votive prayers, cordial flame, bloodless shade, fountain, sacrificial or sacramental exercise, self-immolation, and quotations from Dante's *Purgatorio*. While these are not major in importance in the poem, especially in the context of a love poem, they do maintain the imagery of religion and worship: of mystics and monks and their pious vows and votive prayers, of sacrificial and sacramental religious activities or rituals, of martyrs and self-immolation, of flame that pertains to martyrs and to mystics, and of epic quest or spiritual pilgrimage. The rough draft on the reverse of the page, with its possible third stanza, continues with reference to mystics and waters. Again, these are not major, but they do suggest a consistent interest or preoccupation on the part of Eliot at this time in his life, and they reinforce my perspective on *The Waste Land* as a spiritual journey.

"After the turning ..." is the next fragment, and the the word "turning" in the title echoes "Ash Wednesday" and religious conversion, especially when followed by a line with reference to "praying."<sup>83</sup> This is reinforced by further references to a "frosty vigil," to "life and death" and to "the living and the dying." The final lines are more important, however, since they suggest a major theme of *The Waste Land* — "The world seemed futile — like a Sunday outing." This line fits with the overall sense of the disillusionment with society, with Eliot's "personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling," and with the consensus of critical assessments discussed above. Just as *The Waste Land* itself prepares the way for Eliot's later conversion to Christianity, so this fragment moves nicely, as if by way of prediction or setting the stage, into the next fragment, "I am the Resurrection and the Life. ..." This fragment has obvious religious themes associated with Easter resurrection, quoting Jesus's famous statement to Thomas the Doubter — an unwitting allusion of T. S. Eliot to himself? — in a traditional pericope for use at funeral services. The second last line refers to victim and sacrificial knife, which makes one think of Christ's sacrifice, and in that context also of the Eastern Orthodox tradition of cutting the eucharistic host with a special knife during the celebration of

83. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 109, esp. ll. 1-2.

the sacrament. The last line further expands this Western to Eastern reference with a reference more associated with the Bhagavad-Gita, "I am the fire, and the butter also" — with butter being used in sacrifice.<sup>84</sup> Also, this movement from East to West is reflected *The Waste Land*, in the combination of Augustine and Buddha in "The Fire Sermon."

The next unpublished poem, "So through the evening . . .,"<sup>85</sup> contains small but important references to religious life and liturgical matters. In the first, tenth, and fifteenth lines there is reference to "violet air" or "violet sky," and in the thirty-second line there is a reference to "seaweed purple and brown." While these references may be minor, they fit nicely with the references to Lent in my thesis. Colors have always had significance in the Church, and especially the color purple or violet. In ancient times, purple was made from a rarer clay or substance, making purple or violet cloth very expensive and therefore associated with wealth and royalty. The color and its rationale are picked up by the Church, and purple becomes the color of Lent, reminding us of the royalty of Jesus and preparing us for his passion. Of course, Jesus looks anything but royal in the lessons of the season of Lent, but that simply indicates the Church's opposite — or upside down — way of thinking about such things. This in turn relates to two other passages, lines 19-20 and lines 28-31. These two passages speak of the upside-down posture, either creeping down a wall or swimming down in deep water. This image, in turn, reminds us of Dante's technique of *contrapassum*, or one-to-one corresponding reversal of earthly and heavenly images and rites, in the *Inferno*. Along the same line with that reversal is the talk of death in lines 25-27. To be able to say "I have been a long time dead" and "since I died" suggests that death does not have the finality it is usually understood to have, suggesting perhaps some form of resuscitation or resurrection. Finally, lines 5 and 30 carry suggestions of the two chief sacraments of the Church — Eucharist and baptism. In the eucharistic prayers or Words of Institution, we are told to "Do this for the remembrance of me," which is echoed in line 5's "This-do-ye-for-my-sake." And the reference to the "calm deep water," especially in the context of *The Waste Land's* long

84. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 111; also page 130, in note 1 for page 111, which refers to the Bhagavad-Gita, ix. 16.

85. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 113-115, esp. ll. 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 15, 19-20, 21, 28-31, and 32.



wait for rain and water, carries a strong suggestion of baptism, especially in the context of these other religious and liturgical references.

In "Elegy," also unpublished, the speaker begins "Our prayers dismiss the parting shade / And breathe ~~the~~/a hypocrite's amen," and ends, "God, in a rolling ball of fire / Pursues by day my errant feet. / ~~The~~ His flames of ~~pity passion horror anger and of ire desire~~ / ~~a~~Approach me with consuming heat [*sic*]." <sup>86</sup> The references to grief and remorse, and striving to "expiate the fault," in lines 17-18, are easily in the realm of religious language, more specifically the language of confession and absolution. The fire and heat imagery reinforces the morality and confessional imagery. Further, an allusion to the dead arises here as it did in the previous poem, perhaps even referring back to those lines. Entitled "Elegy," which according to *The American Heritage Dictionary* means "A poem or song composed especially as a lament for a deceased person," <sup>87</sup> the poem suggests a moral and spiritual purification in this life or a purging in the next life. Following logically after "Elegy" is the unpublished "Dirge." <sup>88</sup> Again according to *The American Heritage Dictionary*, "dirge" means a "funeral hymn or lament." In the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church, the definition goes on to explain that the word refers to the prayer office for the dead: "In the Office for the Dead *dirige* is the first word in the antiphon for the first nocturn of matins. The complete opening words of this antiphon are '*Dirige, Domine, Deus meus, in conspectu tuo viam meam,*' 'Direct, O Lord, my God, my way in thy sight.'" <sup>89</sup> Finally, the short unpublished "Those are pearls ..." <sup>90</sup> completes the group of fragments included in the *Facsimile*. It continues the imagery of the closed dead eyes, the crabs, and the undersea burial of the previous poem. The first line from Shakespeare's *Tempest* finds its way into the final version of *The Waste Land* at line 48, with slight alteration, carrying over this imagery of dead eyes from these two fragments.

86. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 117, esp ll. 1-2, 21-24 [*sic*].

87. *The American Heritage Electronic Dictionary of the English Language*, 3rd ed., (New York: Houghton, 1992; InfoSoft, 1994).

88. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 119, 121.

89. *American Heritage Dictionary*.

90. T. S. Eliot, *Facsimile* 123.

Eliot had a specific fascination with Mantegna's painting *St. Sebastian*, which is pictured in Lyndall Gordon's book, back-to-back with a "wonderful" *Crucifixion* by Antonella da Messina in Antwerp."<sup>91</sup> As part of the caption for the reprint of *St. Sebastian*, Gordon refers the reader to Eliot's interest in mysticism and his writing of these early religious poems. It is in the context of that discussion that Gordon makes the strong statement that Eliot was on the verge of conversion at this early point of 1913-1914: "This supposition is based on a group of intense religious poems Eliot never published. He wrote four of these poems before he left Harvard ... (dated June 1914). 'The Love Song of Saint Sebastian' was written ... in July 1914 and 'The Death of Saint Narcissus' at the end of 1914 or beginning of 1915."<sup>92</sup> She calls these poems "the earliest visionary fragments of the *Waste Land* manuscript, [signaling] Eliot's liberation from the studied paths of philosophy."<sup>93</sup> Gordon also notes here the shift of subject in Eliot's poetry from the philosopher to the convert, martyr, or saint. She writes of Eliot's "monastic impulse to isolate himself from the crowd, to take off for mountain or desert in search of initiation and purification."<sup>94</sup> This image of Eliot coincides with what I see in these poems and fragments, in their imagery and preoccupations, and in *The Waste Land's* desert quest to spirituality. Gordon, herself, goes on to discuss the saint poems and fragments in this religious light.<sup>95</sup> She notes the moth circling the flame in "The Burnt Dancer." Her sense of that image is that the moth hovers on the edge of illumination — an image which extends itself into what Gordon calls the sequel poem, "The Death of Saint Narcissus."<sup>96</sup>

91. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years*, plates between pages 80 and 81.

92. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 58. See also Valerie Eliot, ed., Editorial Notes, *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (San Diego: Harvest-Harcourt, 1971), page 129, n. 1 for page 95, which reads "Eliot could not remember when he wrote this poem, but it may have been early in 1915."

93. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 59.

94. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 58.

95. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 58-64.

96. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 59.

### St. John of the Cross

I have commented on Eliot's long-term interest in mysticism and his readings in the Christian mystics during his school days in 1914.<sup>97</sup> As Lyndall Gordon explains, Eliot made extensive notes from Evelyn Underhill's 1911 publication *Mysticism*, which included a detailed quotation: "If we would cease, once for all, to regard visions and voices as objective, and be content to see in them forms of symbolic expression, ways in which the subconscious activity of the spiritual self reach the surface-mind, many of the disharmonies noticeable in visionary experience which have teased the devout, and delighted the agnostic, would fade away."<sup>98</sup> Underhill here allows for the unconscious or subconscious, or at least less conscious, activity or development of one's spirituality. While Eliot is certainly conscious of his spiritual development at the early period of his school days and his research into mysticism, as well as at the time of his full conversion and baptism in 1927, there are also less conscious undercurrents that reveal themselves in the process of writing and assembling *The Waste Land*. As for Eliot's more conscious spiritual development, Gordon goes on to say that Eliot "was more concerned ... with ... the traditional pattern of progress towards sainthood through phases of awakening, unworthiness, mortification of the senses, and illumination. As Underhill pointed out, the potential saint will naturally look to the historic life of Christ as 'an epitome ... of the essentials of all spiritual life' with its pattern of birth and rebirth."<sup>99</sup> In the light of the *Facsimile* fragments, this understanding of Eliot's more "normal" and less saintly process of coming to faith confirms Eliot's intentional spiritual development and sets up my liturgical assessment of Eliot's spirituality reflected in *The Waste Land*.

In addition to Underhill's book, Eliot was also reading St. John of the Cross's *Dark Night of the Soul* during his 1914 venture into mysticism. Evelyn Underhill dates the preface to her first edition of *Mysticism*, "Feast of St. John of the Cross 1910."<sup>100</sup> If Eliot was reading Underhill's

97. Cf. pages 16-17 above; see also Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years*, Appendix I, "Eliot's Reading in Mysticism (1908-14)" 141-142; also 60.

98. qtd. in Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 60.

99. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 61.

100. Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness*, 12th ed. (Cleveland: Meridian-World, 1955) xv.

book so intently and taking notes, naturally, he would also have read the famous sixteenth-century mystic St. John of the Cross and been confronted with the "dark night of the soul." Lyndall Gordon tells us, "At this time Eliot first came upon the disease of doubt, 'aboulie,' by which term he was to describe his depression while writing *The Waste Land* in 1921."<sup>101</sup> I would agree with Lyndall Gordon when she parenthetically points out here that this "dark night of the soul" needs some careful clarification to avoid a less precise and more common understanding of the phrase. To clarify the dark night, St. John of the Cross explains in chapters 8 and 9: "This night ... causes two kinds of darkness or purgation in spiritual persons according to the two parts of the soul, the sensory and the spiritual. ... [The] senses are purged and accommodated to the spirit; ... [the] spirit is purged and denuded as well as accommodated and prepared for union with God through love." St. John differentiates between more common believers and true mystics: "The sensory night is common and happens to many. ... The spiritual night is the lot of very few. ... The first purgation or night is better and terrible to the senses. But nothing can be compared to the second, for it is horrible and frightful to the spirit." Just when believers are enjoying their spiritual discipline and all looks bright, "God darkens all this light and closes the door and spring of the sweet spiritual water they were tasting. ... He leaves them in such dryness that they not only fail to receive satisfaction and pleasure from their spiritual exercises and works, ... but also find these spiritual exercises distasteful and bitter. ... This change is a surprise to them because everything seems to be functioning in reverse." St. John explains the sensation of this purgative dryness: "Since God puts a soul in this dark night in order to dry up and purge its sensory appetite, He does not allow it to find sweetness or delight in anything." The reason for the dryness "is that God transfers His goods and strength from sense to spirit. Since the sensory part of the soul is incapable of the goods of the spirit, it remains deprived, dry, and empty. ... Those whom God begins to lead into these desert solitudes are like the children of Israel." One of the signs of this purgation is "the powerlessness, in spite of one's efforts, to meditate and make use of the imagination. At this time God does not communicate Himself through

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101. Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* 60.

the senses as He did before, by means of the discursive analysis and synthesis of ideas, but begins to communicate Himself through pure spirit by an act of simple contemplation.”<sup>102</sup>

These two chapters of St. John serve to clarify the concept of the “Dark Night of the Soul,” discussed by so many in so many applications, often in the more common and less precise understanding. John of the Cross is explaining the concept of the spiritual journey of mysticism. However, he assumes an understanding of medieval anthropology on the part of his reader. This passage, and its related understanding of humanity, was further clarified for me in an interview with Father Gregory Houck of the Carmelite Order, the religious order of St. John of the Cross. As Father Houck put it, one has five exterior senses that allow one to experience the world. One also has five corresponding interior senses that allow one to experience God. The exterior senses cannot experience God, and so must be turned off in order to turn on the interior senses with which to begin experiencing God. This produces John of the Cross’s first “dark night of the soul” — the sensory dark night. The second and more rare dark night comes when these interior five senses are in turn turned off and one is left in a sort of spiritual void in which to experience God more directly and immediately, unmediated by the senses — John of the Cross’s deeper spiritual dark night.<sup>103</sup>

Put more simply, in order to begin one’s spiritual journey, one must have some experience of God, which is an interior experience. Logically, such an experience of God, according to John of the Cross, would necessitate an attenuation of one’s physical senses and experience of the world in order to begin to experience God internally. Naturally, this process is not in one’s own control but in God’s control, and so not always desired. The outcome, therefore, is going to be a process of struggle and discovery, with a slow opening of one’s spirituality, and it will bring with it a degree of detachment, disenchantment, and even disillusionment with the world of experience. In Eliot’s case, then, a shift in his experience of the world is to be expected. This spiritual shift

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102. John of the Cross, “The Dark Night,” *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, 2nd ed. (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979) 311-316.

103. Gregory Houck, Personal Interview, 7 September 1996. Father Houck, O. Carm., is Associate Pastor of St. John the Evangelist Roman Catholic Church in Leonia, New Jersey, which is a parish of the Carmelite Order.

corresponds to the epistemological shift of F. H. Bradley, in which one begins to see deeper, more inclusively, and with more personal detachment. So in *The Waste Land*, it is not surprising to see such a shift beginning in Eliot. The beginnings of this spiritual and epistemological shift are the basis of my liturgical way of reading *The Waste Land* as a spiritual journey.

### Two Analyses of *The Waste Land*

The strongest and most thorough critical approaches along these lines are Kristian Smidt's *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot* and Jewell Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley's *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*. Both works consider the influence of Bradley's epistemology, along with spiritual influences. Kristian Smidt concludes his book with three chapters, one on appearance and two on reality — an obvious reference to the influence of F. H. Bradley. Smidt notes the shift to metaphysical interests in Eliot's critical writing beginning in 1921. This is around the time of the final composition of *The Waste Land*. Smidt states that Eliot "soon came to treat religion in a less cavalier fashion than at first, to see that it mattered to art more than he had thought, and, now and again, almost to change his ground by subordinating art to dogma."<sup>104</sup> This overall shift of Eliot's interests to metaphysics and religion fits with my view of the beginnings of his conversion as seen in *The Waste Land*. However, it must be remembered that Smidt's religious or spiritual approach to Eliot is of a more pietistic nature, focusing more on Eliot's general religious belief and generic spiritual development. My approach will try to focus more on the liturgical aspect of that faith. After all, Eliot came to define himself as an Anglo-Catholic, which signifies high-church Anglicanism, and that suggests more liturgical themes embedded within Eliot's piety — liturgy having to do more with one's relation to the Church and its use of religious images, symbols, and texts in its worship life and understanding of spirituality. Hence, my remarks will build on Smidt's assessment of Eliot as he moves to embrace a more dogmatic religious orientation. Then, following my assessment of Smidt's analysis, I shall discuss Brooker and Bentley's approach to *The Waste Land*.

<sup>104</sup> Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot* (London: Routledge, 1961) 50.

Smidt begins his section on *The Waste Land* by reminding us that "Eliot himself has pounced on two interpretations of *The Waste Land* both of which he declares to be incomprehensible to him," one of which was "the common interpretation of the poem as the expression of the 'disillusionment of a generation.'"<sup>105</sup> Eliot thought the popular understanding of *The Waste Land* as expressing "the disenchantment felt by the so-called 'lost generation'" was "nonsensical."<sup>106</sup> First, he objected to the term "generation," feeling that he instead expressed his own ideas and emotions, perhaps "writing his time, but [saying that] he only does so in writing himself."<sup>107</sup> But further, Eliot "seems to have thought that disillusionment was precisely what the inhabitants of modern Europe did not suffer from," seeing them instead as "smugly satisfied with its sense of disillusionment."<sup>108</sup> Nonetheless, Smidt says Eliot "depicted through his personal dilemma ... a predicament of modern humanity more general than that of a generation, a predicament which he had begun to see quite clearly years before the Great War broke out."<sup>109</sup> Smidt acknowledges that "most of the essential moods and features of *The Waste Land* were present in the poems that Eliot wrote before the Great War"<sup>110</sup> — a point noted in the discussion of the Facsimile poems above, that much of *The Waste Land* was constructed of poems written well before the time of its actual composition in 1921-1922.

Smidt notes that Eliot's despair is "caused by the absence of the Absolute."<sup>111</sup> Seeing a close analogous relationship between the poet's own personal emotions and the "death gravitation of [the] society," Smidt says, "The objective images of a sterile civilisation have been seized upon to express the poet's sense of sterility in his own soul."<sup>112</sup> He adds, "The 'waste land,' in one of its aspects, is the wilderness of thought into which Eliot's studies and speculations had led him, a

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105. Smidt 147.

106. Smidt 147.

107. Smidt 147.

108. Smidt 147-148.

109. Smidt 148.

110. Smidt 148.

111. Smidt 149.

112. Smidt 150.

wilderness unenlivened by a vital faith. ... The poet is unable to surrender to belief."<sup>113</sup> Then, seeing Eliot's technique in the poem as reflecting more than just skill or even the themes of the poem, Smidt goes on to say: "The result was a broken sequence in which the order and unity were not merely of technique, as Dr Richards contends, but of mood, of negative belief, of doubt. The fragments of the poem are not just aspects of modern civilisation, but images of the desires, pains, thoughts and misgivings of the poet."<sup>114</sup> And citing H. R. Williamson's 1932 book, *The Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, Smidt further states that "*The Waste Land* may well be regarded as a 'cry from the wilderness, a call to repentance.'<sup>115</sup> Smidt acknowledges that there is room for readers to be content with the poem's subject being the disillusionment of a generation, and even for the children of that generation again to see that same topic present following World War II (Smidt writes prior to 1949, the publication date of the original edition). However, Smidt also recognizes the social satire of the poem, and he asserts: "But much of the poem cannot find its true perspective or become properly intelligible unless we regard it as the experiences of a mind looking into itself. ... [It] describes a human soul tormented by eternal problems which the historical situation only served to actualise."<sup>116</sup> This view of *The Waste Land* stresses the religious and introspective sense of the poem, which in turn sets up the movement toward spirituality, a movement which Smidt senses and a movement which I shall analyze from a liturgical perspective.

Later in his book, in another section discussing Eliot's Christianity, Smidt says: "The basis of Eliot's poetry changed as a Christian philosophy supervened on his former agnosticism. His vision changed at the same time. ... The poet found a pattern when the man found a faith. For one of the main effects of Christianity in Eliot's poetry is the provision of a unifying principle to his vision."<sup>117</sup> Nonetheless, Smidt also feels a discussion of doctrine in Eliot's poems is insignificant. Noting a unity in *Four Quartets*, Smidt warns, "But we must not mistake mood for

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113. Smidt 149.

114. Smidt 150.

115. Smidt 150.

116. Smidt 151.

117. Smidt 191.



philosophy, so as to miss the vision of disconnectedness in Eliot's early work, and fail to understand the change which occurred later."<sup>118</sup> Still later in the same section, Smidt makes an even stronger statement specifically about one of those early works, *The Waste Land*, about its purpose and impact: "*The Waste Land*, after leading us through all the rigour and nausea of a modern wilderness, shows us in the last section that it has all been part of a journey to a definite goal, the Chapel Perilous, where the Holy Grail is to be found. In other words ... a regeneration may perhaps be attained." This is my approach, to trace that journey through the wilderness to regeneration, but in liturgical terms. Acknowledging this journey in terms of asceticism and mysticism, Smidt adds, "Life must be an ascetic discipline, akin to the mystic disciplines of the East." However, he does not see the beginnings of Eliot's full conversion yet: "There is no question yet of grace."<sup>119</sup> On the contrary, I think it is grace that begins this process, overrides the efforts of ascetic discipline, and unifies his vision at the end of *The Waste Land*. This is the spiritual journey.

At this point in his book, Smidt continues with discussion of those more obviously Christian poems from later in Eliot's life, *Journey of the Magi*, *A Song for Simeon*, and *Ash-Wednesday*. Those works will be discussed in the next chapter, along with *Four Quartets*, and will present Eliot's fuller Christian expression. For now, *The Waste Land* represents Eliot's development toward that full Christian expression in those later works, and as such the poem stands as Eliot's personal Lenten preparation and journey to a full Easter faith.

Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley's book, *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation*, offers the most recent and most complete discussion of *The Waste Land*. Their approach is heavily informed not only by the long tradition of critical responses to the poem but also by Eliot's dissertation on F. H. Bradley and epistemology. Thus, they approach the poem from a critical perspective of Eliot's own epistemology, how the poem is constructed, what readers are expected to bring to the work, and how readers respond to the

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118. Smidt 191.

119. Smidt 199.

work. They note that “the process of reading is one of the poem’s major subjects,” since it is “unreadable by ordinary methods. Eliot calls attention to the nature of reading by virtually eliminating transitions. ... These transitions, in traditional texts, reveal how parts are related to each other. Their absence in *The Waste Land* insures that readers will be conscious of reading.”<sup>120</sup> Citing Harriet Davidson, they also assert with her that the poem is about “absence” or “loss” — both of community and of text. This makes any reading of the poem “a ceaseless and never-ending activity,” and “the value of interpretation is related more to something gained en route than to something waiting at the end.”<sup>121</sup> Thus, in summarizing Brooker and Bentley’s approach to *The Waste Land*, it is important to keep in mind that we are part of a community of readers and responders to the text, that our interpretations are more about the journey to interpretation than an end result, and that much of what we get out of the text depends on what we as readers bring to it. This last point coincides with one of Eliot’s own comments in his dissertation, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley*, which is used as an opening quotation for Brooker and Bentley’s book: “The finest tact after all can give us only an interpretation, and every interpretation, along perhaps with some utterly contradictory interpretation, has to be taken up and reinterpreted by every thinking mind and by every civilization.”<sup>122</sup>

In their first chapter, Brooker and Bentley first note Heidegger’s description of the twentieth century as a “time between the collapse of Newton’s God and the appearance of his not-yet-apparent successor (the rough beast Yeats imagined as slouching toward Bethlehem).” This “feeling of living between something and nothing, ... this abstract ‘betweenness,’ ... produces profound anxiety or uneasiness” — an “epistemological limbo” or “being caught between dispensations in history.” They go on to cite the publication in 1908 of Wilhelm Worringer’s dissertation, *Abstraction and Empathy*, in which they summarize Worringer’s argument that “in periods when people have a more or less settled epistemology, ... they tend to produce representational

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120. Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation* (Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1990) 8.

121. Brooker and Bentley 8.

122. Brooker and Bentley vii.

art ... controlled by ... 'empathy,' an impulse to identify with one's object and to trust its appearances as reality." Worringer sees the form of this art as "curvilinear" and softer. "On the other hand, ... in periods when people tend to lack an epistemology that makes their world manageable (in periods of 'betweenness'), they tend to produce abstract art ... controlled by 'abstraction,' an impulse to withdraw from the appearances of a world they neither trust nor understand and to take refuge in pure form." In this case, the form becomes "rectilinear," which tends to create "emotional distance and detachment." Worringer distinguishes between primitive and modern abstract art: "In primitive art, abstraction is due to a lack of knowledge about the world and the fear that comes from not knowing; in modern art, abstraction is due to an excess of knowledge and the radical skepticism that comes from knowing too much."<sup>123</sup> This serves to establish a link between epistemology and artistic expression, which in the case of *The Waste Land*, undergirds its very modernist style linked to its subject. The fact of the spiritual uncertainty of the modern age, an age of "betweenness" or "epistemological limbo," leads to my reading of the poem as an effort to move from that "betweenness" to spiritual resolution, and to do so in a ritualistic way. The ritualistic spiritual resolution is as ancient as it is modern.

Brooker and Bentley also allude to Frazer and Weston in the context of discussing the passage about Stetson. In the passage at the end of the first section of the poem, about the crowd flowing over London Bridge in which the speaker recognizes Stetson, the authors see the dog reference as a reworking of a quote from Webster. In making the "wolf" of the original quote into a "dog" and changing "foe" to "friend," Eliot suggests a modern god substitute, seeming to be a friend, but turning out to be "a destroyer." This is based on the coincidence of dog being god spelled backward, as noted by Eliot and Joyce, among others. Thus, the reference to the dog digging up the corpse suggests that it "demythologizes myth by digging up the buried god or hero." As Brooker and Bentley acknowledge, "A myth, one might say, can function only when it is approached with reverence." At the end of the section, Stetson is identified as a "Baudelairean 'hypocrite lecteur' whose pretense of uniqueness is rejected by the speaker who insists that he is

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123. Brooker and Bentley 20-21.

a double, precisely like all who now find themselves incapable of religious consciousness." This sets up the idea of transcendent knowledge, which the speaker knows he has lost.<sup>124</sup>

The discussion of dualistic thinking and transcendent knowledge leads into a brief outline of Bradley's three basic stages or levels of epistemology, based on Eliot's discussion in his dissertation:

Bradley divided cognition into three stages/levels. The first exists prior to (and beneath) consciousness of consciousness, the second consists of consciousness of consciousness, and the third involves a transcendence of consciousness of consciousness. The movement from the immediate experience of the first level to the intellectual experience of the second is accompanied by the intrusion of language, by the rise of objects, and by the fragmentation of reality. The movement from the second to the third level involves a transcendence of brokenness and a return on a higher level to the unity of the first level. ...

These levels of knowing are also levels of being. The first level dissolves almost as it arises, the second persists throughout most of waking life, and the third occasionally comes, either as a gift or as the reward of special effort and discipline. None of these levels is characterized by complete knowledge. In the first, there is actually no such thing as knowledge, as knower and known. In the second, there is specific but limited knowledge, with special distortion caused by the fact that the knower is imprisoned in his own perspective and receives only a few bits and pieces of experience, all of which are filtered through language. In the third, there is a special ideal knowledge which comes from passing beyond diffusion to a higher many-in-one unity.<sup>125</sup>

This is a helpful outline of Bradleian epistemology, which in a way echoes St. John of the Cross' spiritual sensory experience. It helps to clarify Eliot's original choice of the Kurtz quote from Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* for his epigraph. Mr. Kurtz has explored the primitive mind in his flight from the modern world. Pursuing lost unity, he crosses boundaries, including the spiritual boundary. As he is dying, "Kurtz experiences a transcendent moment, a complete vision. ... And in what we can perhaps think of as the underside of transcendent experience, he glimpses the horror, the heart of darkness."<sup>126</sup>

From the same perspective on epistemology, Brooker and Bentley move to a discussion of Eliot's substitute epigraph from Petronius, seeing the quote about the Sibyl of Cumae as an even better choice. Like Tiresias, whom they also discuss at this point, the Sibyl has mythic con-

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124. Brooker and Bentley 36-37.

125. Brooker and Bentley 39-40.

126. Brooker and Bentley 43-44.

sciousness, and “like Tiresias is an ancient seer and a gatekeeper of the underworld.” With Madame Sosostriis, a “modern seer, the ‘wisest woman in Europe,’” Eliot brings back the modern world with “another maimed sibyl.”<sup>127</sup> Of course, there is also Tiresias, about whom Eliot says in his “Notes” that he “sees ... the substance of the poem.”<sup>128</sup> Pressing the point about the difficulty of transcendent experience, the two authors cite another Tiresias passage from “The Fire Sermon” — the typist and “the young man carbuncular” — in which Tiresias is “throbbing between two lives.”<sup>129</sup> At the end of the chapter, the authors explore further the “‘continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity’ mentioned in Eliot’s review of *Ulysses*.” They discuss Frazer’s dying god and Perceval’s rôle as “an enabling adjunct to the savior whose death will regenerate the barren land.”<sup>130</sup> Jessie Weston takes up this point in more detail in her book, which Eliot also mentions in his “Notes on ‘The Waste Land.’” This discussion of epistemology and mythic figures gives the poem a greater expanse of vision from which to see spiritual development. The goal is not simply dualistic thinking, but truly transcendent thinking, with a view that can take in more of the world. Such a transcendent view can also cross the boundaries of spiritual limits to a sense of unity. And the way this is lived out or played out is in the form of ritual, as will be explained below. When we participate with mythic figures to attain to a more transcendent understanding of the world, we enter the realm of ritual.

At this point, Brooker and Bentley move to a section-by-section discussion of *The Waste Land*. They begin with “Burial of the Dead,” which they analyze as an introduction with five episodes. First, Marie sees “April as cruel because it breeds life from death, because it brings endless circularity and unavoidable paradox. ... She perceives the dualistic and paradoxical present as cruel because, in remembering the past and intuiting the future, she is left with a vacuum in the present moment, and absence in the middle of her life.”<sup>131</sup> But from Frazer’s mythic

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127. Brooker and Bentley 44–47, esp. 44, 47.

128. Brooker and Bentley 53. See also T. S. Eliot, “Notes on ‘The Waste Land’” n. 218, p. 50.

129. Brooker and Bentley 55.

130. Brooker and Bentley 57–58.

131. Brooker and Bentley 62.

perspective, "Mythic heroes ... transcend death because their suffering is part of a springtime (April, usually) ritual that lifts a curse from nature."<sup>132</sup> Jessie Weston's book goes into more detail on this point. But Marie is trapped in relational knowledge, which she needs to transcend. Discussing her plight further, Brooker and Bentley open the issue beyond dualism and relational knowledge to a more transcendent surrender to love, most especially a love of God: "Another gate to a world beyond dualism would be a surrender to love, to love of another person or to love of God. In Eliot's work, from beginning to end, waste lands are related to failures of love, to failures of individuals to transcend their separate spheres and become complements in a comprehensive and mutually nourishing unity."<sup>133</sup> This is precisely where Marie is trapped. And this is also the spiritual movement needed by Eliot.

Pursuing this matter of the land and its relation to the characters of the poem, Brooker and Bentley also associate the words "fear" and "dust" of the passage on the "Son of Man." First, they note the "familiar shift in perspective ... from light to shadow as a means of seeing what can only be felt: fear." Going further, "This association of fear and dust points to a powerful emotion and to the matter from whence we come and to which we go and thus arguably to the substance of the son of man in contrast to his silhouette."<sup>134</sup> Going still further with this matter of the land, or dust in the above reference, Brooker and Bentley combine both issues of transcendent knowledge and Weston's Fisher King motif:

In several versions of the myth, the questions and answers are these: "Who are you? I am the king. Who is the king? The king is the land. What is the land? The land is the king." The catechism reaffirms the king's competence, reaffirms the rule of metonymy as a fact, not a trope, and in the process reestablishes the unity of subject and object. After answering the questions, the king literally returns to his land by dying, a return which removes the curse from the land. It should be noted that before his wound the king and his land were one, but he was not conscious of it. After his wound, the king could no longer experience unity with his land but could not escape the conscious knowledge that he and his land were related. After his answers to the catechism, the king knows both the relation and a restoration of unity, and he knows both at the same time.<sup>135</sup>

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132. Brooker and Bentley 62.

133. Brooker and Bentley 63.

134. Brooker and Bentley 65.

135. Brooker and Bentley 66.

Elaborating on another phrase in relation to this motif, Brooker and Bentley further clarify the “son of man” reference. Christ uses “son of man” to refer to himself frequently in the Gospels, and the biblical writers use the phrase. Brooker and Bentley comment on Eliot’s use of “son of man” and relate it to Frazer’s and Weston’s studies in mythology:

In the context of Eliot’s reliance upon Frazer’s *Golden Bough* and other anthropological studies in the history of religion, it should also be noted that Christ, like the Fisher King, Osiris, Adonis, Attis, and countless others, is a manifestation of the same mythic impulse toward insuring the fertility of the earth by ritualistically killing heroes and kings. The Christ of this intermediate state of awareness (awareness of disjunction between himself and his people), the Christ of the waste land of stony rubbish, would be the smitten pre-Resurrection Christ.

When figures from different myths interact, such as Perceval questioning Christ, “the insistence that no direct answer can be conceived is an indication that mythic solutions are no longer possible. The prison of relational (intellectual, dualistic) experience has snapped shut.”<sup>136</sup>

Concluding these references to Christ, the authors turn to a brief consideration of his identity also as the son of God and the “hypostatic union” of the two aspects of this Christ figure: “A consideration of Christ must lead to this simultaneity of time and timelessness, and thus, if faith is achieved (more precisely, if the incarnation is accepted), it will be an achievement of the transcendence of paradox in which a both/and arrangement of contraries will be as obvious and clear as it is, in relational terms, absurd.”<sup>137</sup> Here, the Incarnation looms as an important doctrine for a slightly different, more mythic reason than its doctrinal reasons outlined in chapter two and elsewhere in the current study — here it relates to the transcendent unity of Bradley’s philosophy. Finally, the authors shift to the “red rock” image in the poem and relate it to the Judeo-Christian tradition and to the Christ figure:

The hope of drawing water from the rock, substance from matter, as Moses did, is explicitly denied. One hope, however, remains: the red rock. The rock is a biblical and Christian symbol of the church; the red rock is a Frazerian symbol of the place of bloody sacrifice. Eliot’s red rock, pulling in these associations, provides a shadow, a conventional sign of illusion, from which the one truth that is not illusion can be understood, fear in a handful of dust.<sup>138</sup>

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136. Brooker and Bentley 67.

137. Brooker and Bentley 68.

138. Brooker and Bentley 68.

This again links Christian images with Frazer's and Weston's mythic images, which reinforces the Christian journey of spiritual development linked it to the mythic quest.

Brooker and Bentley note Eliot's frequent use of frames of allusion — literary allusions that frame a scene in the poem — as “a way of directing focus. In the passage at hand, it peripheralizes myth and centralizes contemporaneity, or, in other words, it reveals myth as a frame for temporal life.”<sup>139</sup> This technique forces a relation between the two, with hints for understanding both in the context of the poem. It also sets the contemporary setting of the poem into a mythic framework, connecting the two, relating the two, and allowing the reader to see the mythic material in a new way. It also strengthens the poem's own mythic structure — both showing how myths have run their course and revealing the poem as a modern myth offering guidance, if there is any to be had, through the waste land of the modern world. At any rate, the journey motif is also strengthened, and we are even more prepared for Eliot's conversion to come a little later in his life.

Brooker and Bentley next discuss the passage on “the hyacinth girl,” which includes a reference to “the heart of light, the silence.” The authors refer to a poem “Silence,” written in 1910, recalling “Gerontion's statement that he has lost all five of his senses”<sup>140</sup> — not only a reference to Eliot's earlier writing and earlier life experiences and their influence on this poem, but also a reference to St. John of the Cross's “dark night of the soul.” They note Eliot's probable personal experience of this, further relating the phrase's appearance in “Burnt Norton.” They, of course, note the phrase's appearance “in the literature of mysticism to describe moments of ineffable transcendence.”<sup>141</sup> Besides an obvious reference to Bradley's transcendent knowledge, the authors also note the “obvious inversion of Conrad's heart of darkness [Eliot's first epigraph], in which light, suggesting knowledge as it did a few lines earlier among ‘stony rubbish’ and ‘broken images,’ is presented as perhaps more terrifying than darkness.”<sup>142</sup> Continuing in the

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139. Brooker and Bentley 69.

140. Brooker and Bentley 75.

141. Brooker and Bentley 75.

142. Brooker and Bentley 75.



overtly religious and mystical vein, Brooker and Bentley turn to the "Madame Sosostris" passage, noting that "In the early typescript, her speech was even more portentous, for it included a line from one of the greatest of all seers, Saint John the Divine: 'I John saw these things, and heard them (Rev. 22:8), which means that, however fantastic 'these things' may seem to be, they are actually true."<sup>143</sup> They note, in passing, that "Madame Sosostris [is] a preposterous personage symbolizing modern decadence and the decay of religion."<sup>144</sup> As for the cards, Brooker and Bentley comment that "One card (or the absence of one) seems designed for the reader. Eliot notes that he associates the Hanged Man (the missing card) with the sacrificial hero in Frazer and with the hooded, hallucinatory figure in 'What the Thunder Said.' His absence suggests the irrelevance of salvation through the death of a savior type."<sup>145</sup>

Concluding their chapter on "The Burial of the Dead," Brooker and Bentley offer a discussion of the "Unreal City" passage with reference to Dante's *Inferno*, using their understanding of Eliot's technique of framing:

The opening lines of this section establish an ontologically unstable setting which oscillates between the images of real and mythic city. ... The crowd is "flowing" and the speaker quotes Dante's reaction to the Vestibule of Hell with the line, "I had not thought death had undone so many." The scene is usually described as "death-in-life," an interpretative term which in our view distorts the passage. The relation of the scene to Ante-Hell is sometimes conveyed. ... These and virtually all unitive descriptions falsify the scene by not recognizing that the city is at once both real and unreal, both London in 1922 and Ante-Hell as Dante presented it. In a photograph, this scene would be a double exposure. ... As with the case of the concave convex alternation in optical illusions, the two scenes cannot be perceived simultaneously and their oscillation cannot be stopped.<sup>146</sup>

Here, we have a passage that demonstrates what the authors describe as Eliot's framing technique, and how the two scenes oscillate and interpret each other. The passage also demonstrates the sense of multifaceted vision bordering on Bradley's transcendent vision. These are both important facets of the passage and of the poem. For my purpose, however, I highlight the reference to Dante's *Inferno*, as discussed above in reference to Bernard Dick's essay. The Dante ref-

143. Brooker and Bentley 77. The reference to Rev. 22:8 includes the footnote: "The Waste Land Facsimile, 8-9."

144. Brooker and Bentley 78.

145. Brooker and Bentley 79-80.

146. Brooker and Bentley 83. The quotation from Shelley includes the footnote: "Percy Bysshe Shelley, 'Peter Bell the Third,' Poetical Works, ed. Thomas Hutchinson (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 350."

erence adds to the sense of a spiritual journey through the underworld. Dante's journey began in the woods, as he was being pursued by a panther (a reference to Christ?), at the midpoint of his life (a time of transition), over Easter weekend (the Triduum or most holy three days, Holy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter Sunday), in the year 1300. If there are oscillating ergon and parergon, or frames of myth and contemporaneity, then the reader might also be inclined to see the entire poems and their respective settings oscillating, as well. As such, my view of the *The Waste Land* as a spiritual quest poem is further strengthened in relation to Dante's journey through *Inferno*, *Purgatorio*, to *Paradiso*.

In discussing "A Game of Chess," the authors see connections to Eliot's personal life during the time of writing *The Waste Land*. They note, especially, his "Falling in love and reading Spinoza" as referring to his years with Vivien Haigh-Wood, his "disastrous marriage," and his vacillating "between the professions of philosophy and poetry," as heightened by his friendships with Bertrand Russell and Ezra Pound. Noting that this was also the time of his break with family and homeland, they see Eliot in these years as being "in every area of his life ... between broken worlds." The authors see Eliot's relationship with Vivien being played out also in the complementing of "male epistemology" with "female epistemology," necessitating that both be transcended. They say here that "The wasting of human beings of both sexes can be seen as one of the consequences of separating female and male modes of knowing/being, that is, of separating perception from reason, experience from faith."<sup>147</sup> Relating this male/female motif to myth, especially Frazer's and Weston's insights, "the land is the feminine counterpart of a king or lord. The importance of women in the poem becomes strikingly clear when it is realized that a waste land is in mythic terms equivalent to a barren or unhealthy woman."<sup>148</sup> From Bradley's epistemology, they resolve the male/female epistemology/mythology:

This mythic pattern assigns all blame to the male figures, divides suffering between male and female, and makes the rejuvenation of the female contingent on the death of the male. In philosophical terms, the male is a subject and the female is an object. Health and fruitfulness require the unity of male and female, of sub-

<sup>147</sup>. Brooker and Bentley 96.

<sup>148</sup>. Brooker and Bentley 97.

ject and object, either before time in immediate experience or after time in transcendent experience. The irresolvable dualism of subject and object (and of man and woman) in the center is inseparable from the triumph of the relational consciousness that locks both into closed systems and prevents communion.<sup>149</sup>

In relating male and female aspects of epistemology and mythological motifs, they see the necessary complementarity of reason and perception, and experience and faith:

The main epistemological analogues of mythic male and mythic female are, respectively, reason and perception. Reason (also, under some conditions, faith or revelation) provides knowledge of what cannot be directly perceived. Mythic fathers, it will be remembered, are remote. They live in the sky and send down their messages from a distance. ... Their children know these sky fathers, if at all, by inference, faith, or revelation. ... On the contrary, earth mothers and the moral mothers of half-gods are known empirically; they are present in the flesh to be directly experienced. ... Mothers are known empirically, in the womb and at the breast, but fathers are known, if at all, by believing the reports of others.<sup>150</sup>

Finishing the thought, they state, "In simpler terms, deserts can bloom and metaphorical waste lands can be transformed only through the harmony of the sexes. The connections between myth and epistemology could not have been missed by Eliot," since he was familiar with Professor Cornford and the Cambridge anthropologists — the authors cite especially Cornford's book, *From Religion to Philosophy: A Study in the Origins of Western Speculation*, published in 1912.

Naturally, the complementarity of the sexes and their respective strengths are presented in the poem through the character of Tiresias — "In *Oedipus Rex*, his androgyny is not relevant; in *The Waste Land*, it is emphasized for, having been both male and female, he can fuse reason and perception into perfect knowledge." And as a final note to this "review of mythic associations," the authors state that "men of myth move on a rectilinear time line between birth and death. Like Oedipus, they may make temporary curving paths backward toward origins. Such a return is an outrage, and its ultimate failure and punishment confirm the necessity of going beyond each moment of existence in a sequence of irreversible movements." For the Christian reader, this has strong suggestions of the Nicodemus passage in the third chapter of the Gospel of John, in which Nicodemus asks Jesus how he can receive the Kingdom of God. Jesus responds that he must be "born again," which Nicodemus questions further from a logical and rectilinear male point of

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149. Brooker and Bentley 97.

150. Brooker and Bentley 97-98.

view, to take Brooker and Bentley's language and motif. Jesus then defines "born again" as being "born of water and the spirit," which is a reference to Christian baptism. Thus, the "outrageousness" to a male figure of such a "return" to being "born again" is played out in mythic and religious terms. And this may well set up the resolution of Eliot's journey through the waterless waste land.

Later in their chapter, Brooker and Bentley analyze the passage based on an evening conversation between Eliot and Vivien about bad nerves and speaking and thinking. The passage contains a reference to dead men and bones, and then four lines about the noise of the wind. A Christian reader might see in this reference to the wind a "familiar etymological pun" relating the words "spirit, ghost, mind, ... soul, ... wind or breath, ... inspiration and respiration, *Geist*, gust, ghost, and aghast." The authors note how in "Gerontion" Eliot "strips wind of its religious and mythic values by forcing the reader to understand it as mere wind." They continue:

Similarly, in "What the Thunder Said," the chapel is empty, "only the wind's home" (line 388). A chapel is supposed to be the home of the spirit of God, and the Chapel Perilous in the grail story is haunted by evil spirits, but here the chapel is neither occupied by spirit nor haunted by ghosts. On the contrary, it contains only literal wind and is haunted by the absence of spirit. Eliot here reverses the history of words, taking meanings back to their origins. In other parts of the poem, he does the same with water; he demythologizes it, turning its power to cleanse and purify into the physical effect that it has upon a victim of drowning.<sup>151</sup>

Nonetheless, whether in line with the traditional etymology of "wind" or not, the reference is still there, whether to an actual religious reference or to its absence — and perhaps the reference is even stronger for the absence. The absence of "spirit" would certainly be in accord with the failure of myth and of religion noted elsewhere by Brooker and Bentley. In the pub scene, this absence in terms of religious reference is carried out further in the character of Lil, "the main character, who is absent." Her name is "a truncated form of Lily, the flower of Easter, the flower of the 'cruellest month' in the waste land."<sup>152</sup> Finally, the authors conclude this chapter with a reference to Eliot's article "The Metaphysical Poets," in which Eliot notes the dissociation in the

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151. Brooker and Bentley 109.

152. Brooker and Bentley 112.

English poetic tradition of the categories of erotic life and intellectual life. He considers this

divorce of erotic from intellectual, pleasure from knowledge, feeling from thought, ... a recurring catastrophe. ... It was, in fact, the basis for both religion and art. The challenge is to remarry the two modes. In *The Waste Land*, the unlikelihood of that reconciliation is presented, but presented in a way that obliges those who wish to read it to search for modes of transcendent perception. A poem of despair can be known only through a reading method that implies absurd hope.<sup>153</sup>

These are strong statements that serve to undergird my liturgical approach to *The Waste Land*. The references to water and wind, whether in presence or lack, to Lil and Easter lilies and the "cruellest month," to faith and reason, and to the failure of myth and religion, all noted by Brooker and Bentley, show the number of Christian images and allusions in the poem, and help to open up the poem by way of these images. Relating Frazer's and Weston's mythological approaches and Bradley's epistemological approach to the Christian images leads to the deeper, unified, transcendent understanding of the poem.

On "The Fire Sermon," Brooker and Bentley note Eliot's note to line 308 that the Fire Sermon of the Buddha "corresponds in importance to the Sermon on the Mount." As such, the sermon, or the two sermons, link Eastern and Western spiritualities. The authors explain Buddha's sermon for those of us unfamiliar with it:

The Buddha's sermon, delivered to a thousand priests, consists of three questions and three answers. The first question asks what is on fire. Naming the senses one by one, the Buddha explains that the senses and any knowledge received by the senses are on fire. ... He adds that the mind is also on fire and that all impressions dependent on the mind are on fire. The second question is: "And with what are these on fire?" The answer is: "With the fire of passion, say I, with the fire of hatred, with the fire of infatuation; with birth, old age, death, sorrow, lamentation, misery, grief, and despair are they on fire." The third question is implied: How can these fires be extinguished? The Buddha answers that the process of perceiving that the senses and the mind are on fire will of itself generate an aversion for pleasure and knowledge and that the aversion will put out the fire. ... The overwhelming image in the Buddha's sermon is fire; it is used in almost every sentence. It refers not only to the raging and uncontrolled fire of passion but also to the willed and controlled fire of purification. Fire is also used to indicate the instability and unreliability of any knowledge received through the senses or through the mind.<sup>154</sup>

153. Brooker and Bentley 116-117.

154. Brooker and Bentley 121-122. The quotations from the Buddha's Fire Sermon are footnoted: "Henry Clarke Warren, *Buddhism in translation: Passages Selected from the Buddhist Sacred Books and Translated from the Original Puli into English*, Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 3 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1896),

Such an image from such a sermon connects both Buddhist tradition and the western Christian mystic tradition. Eliot acknowledges this fact in his own "Notes," as is discussed elsewhere in this chapter. Naturally, fire is also a strong image in western spirituality, standing on the one hand for the fire of passion or the fire of judgment, and on the other for the fire of inspiration or the tongues of fire for the Holy Spirit. About Augustine, Eliot's Western representative, and Eliot's note to line 309, "the collocation of these two representatives of eastern and western asceticism, as the culmination of this part of the poem, is not an accident," Brooker and Bentley add, "Augustine confesses his lustfulness, admitting that he had immersed himself in the filthy cauldron of the city of Carthage, that he had wallowed in the pleasures of the flesh. ... The Buddha and Saint Augustine and the powerful background texts they bring to this part of the poem are central in most interpretations of *The Waste Land*."<sup>155</sup>

Briefly discussing those interpretations, Brooker and Bentley caution that "this section of the poem does not even remotely resemble a sermon," that "its dominant image is not fire but water" and that "its sexual episodes are not characterized by passion or hatred or remorse or by any emotion that could be compared to fire." Thus, they conclude, "This section is a dramatization not of lust but of the absence of lust."<sup>156</sup> At this point, they offer Augustine's definition of lust as "the orientation of intense desire toward forbidden objects instead of toward God."<sup>157</sup> Relating passion to religion as two sides of the same coin, Brooker and Bentley continue: "Most preachers against physical passion, including the Buddha and Augustine, are mindful of the fact that sex and religion constitute rival modes of achieving unity." Nonetheless, the two "share one result: an abolition of quotidian or relational consciousness. Eliot's secular city is a place where people cannot imagine transcendence of any kind. They are incapable of spiritual transcendence, but also they are incapable of physical transcendence."<sup>158</sup>

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351-53." Another footnote reads: "For an authoritative and detailed discussion of Eliot's Indic sources, see Kearns, *Eliot and Indic Traditions*."

155. Brooker and Bentley 122.

156. Brooker and Bentley 122-123.

157. Brooker and Bentley 123.

158. Brooker and Bentley 124.

These two disparate directions of passion and religion comprise a paradox relating to the Heraclitus quote that begins their chapter, and which is also part of *Four Quartets*: “The way up and the way down are one and the same.”<sup>159</sup> At this point in their chapter, the authors talk of what they call the “paradox of downward and upward transcendence.” They relate it, roughly, to Bradley and to myth. “In Bradley,” they say, “the road to the Absolute begins in the ideal unity of immediate experience, which Eliot calls ‘annihilation and utter night.’”<sup>160</sup> This is, of course, also a reference to St. John of the Cross’s “Dark Night of the Soul.” They continue, “Up and down, back and forth — all transcendences lead in the same direction. Without a religious leap of some kind, one cannot ascribe evil to one pole and good to the other. Each is annihilation and utter night.”<sup>161</sup> In terms of the waste land myths, they note further that “death is a necessary step toward immortality ... for both the general health and the king’s transcendence require his death.”<sup>162</sup> “Here at the center of *The Waste Land*, we encounter the ultimate deprivation: the inability to feel and the absence of suffering. There remains only the final extinction offered in ‘Death by Water’ to complete the thematic continuity [of the poem].”<sup>163</sup>

But this section of the poem continues the motif of death. Concerning the allusion to Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress,” the authors note: “Eliot follows Marvell by multiplying images of death — bones, rats, naked bodies on the wet ground. And he reduces Marvell’s marble vault to ‘a little low dry garret.’ ... In contrast, Eliot’s musings upon death are gratuitous.”<sup>164</sup> At this point, we are in the center of the poem, both by line count and thematically. This is the passage containing the reference to St. Magnus the Martyr Church in London. In the structure of “The Fire Sermon,” Brooker and Bentley see fragments of love stories surrounding “a brief evocation of the communal life of fishermen in a public bar near the church of Magnus Martyr. The pub scene, with its mandolin music, is brief and easy to overlook, but its apparent

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159. Brooker and Bentley 121.

160. Brooker and Bentley 126.

161. Brooker and Bentley 126.

162. Brooker and Bentley 126.

163. Brooker and Bentley 127-128.

164. Brooker and Bentley 132-133.

irrelevance to the erotic episodes surrounding it suggests that Eliot had a reason for placing it at just this point in the very middle of the poem." This makes for a "concentric" structure with the church framed at the center, with "[the] opening variations and the sermons against lust [framing] a set of variations on sex with minimum lust which in turn frame a short episode on the communion of workers in a bar and the splendor of a contiguous place of communion, the church of Magnus Martyr."<sup>165</sup> Naturally, this placing of the church and a pub form of communion in the center of the poem raises its mention from a passing reference to a central element of the theme, as I will discuss below in more detail.

Regarding the appearance of Tiresias, the androgynous blind seer, and the cry of the Rhine daughters from *Götterdämmerung*, Brooker and Bentley feel the final "la la" is "the nadir of *The Waste Land*, and just at this point, when all value has disappeared, the voices of Saint Augustine and the Buddha provide fragments of intense concern."<sup>166</sup> In discussing the nadir of the poem, the authors reintroduce the notion that what is missing is lust itself — "*The Waste Land* has reached its lowest and most desperate moment — the extinction of desperation itself."<sup>167</sup> Again, they return to the center of the poem, which they call the "heart of *The Waste Land*" and "the moment of clear value." They add about Magnus Martyr at the center of the poem, "In an unpredictable and brilliant shift, Eliot places the splendor of Magnus Martyr's white and gold within the bar and within the music itself. The effect is a manifold affirmation. It is not simply that a community exists here or that the church is beautiful or even that an analogy is drawn between the communion of workers and the communion within the church."<sup>168</sup> Further, Eliot's lines about the bar, the church, and the fishermen "metonymically reduce" the city and its population, and "the music contains the spectacular architecture of Wren's church. City, bar, music, the walls of Magnus Martyr, the series moves inward, through containers and things contained until

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165. Brooker and Bentley 138. The bracketed material is from Brooker and Bentley 136.

166. Brooker and Bentley 145.

167. Brooker and Bentley 146.

168. Brooker and Bentley 146-147.



the final term of the series is larger than all but the first term."<sup>169</sup> In yet another way the church is placed in a central position in the poem, further framed by the poetic material around it. As it is set in the "inward" position, the spiritual journey inward is also suggested, with the church, or home of the spirit, at the center and communion, both religious and spiritual, as the goal.

Here, the authors return to the creativity of reading *The Waste Land*. At this point in the poem, the reader must exert his or her faculties to understand these passages — "The reader may wish to understand only that an island of communal feeling still exists in the midst of epidemic isolation. Or he may wish to understand only that the church is an unused relic of a past community which can be evoked in special moments."<sup>170</sup> But the authors caution that readers must keep in mind the structure of the passage, and are thus called to an even greater interpretive creativity:

To apprehend that structure as it stands is to include those partial readings within a much larger experience. ... The key to the experience is the deceptively simple line: "Where fishermen lounge at noon: where the walls." The use of a colon and the repetition of "where" presents us with a set of relations that cannot exist in the world. The walls of Magnus Martyr cannot be in the bar and cannot be in the music — except in the alternative universe, ... which the poetry invents. To see this brief passage as it is written is to recognize that the reader must invent a universe from which to read and perceive if he is to experience the coherence in what he has read. The affirmation of community is an affirmation of both the artist's creativity and the reader's need to complete the creation of a heterocosmic point of view. ... The reader, existing outside the poem, has the burden of making sense and value.<sup>171</sup>

This, then, involves the reader in the larger communion taking place in the poem. The authors conclude, "'The Fire Sermon,' then, is *The Waste Land*'s moral and spiritual nadir; at the same time, it contains the poem's most dazzling affirmation, the scene of the fishermen lounging at noon outside the pub and the church."<sup>172</sup>

Eliot differentiated between perception and interpretation, both in his dissertation and in his Royce seminar paper. Brooker and Bentley state that "perception involves two terms, the perceiver and the thing perceived. Interpretation adds a third term, the meaning assigned to the thing perceived." Interpreting, or assigning meaning, to a fact "turns the fact into a means to an

169. Brooker and Bentley 147.

170. Brooker and Bentley 147.

171. Brooker and Bentley 147-148.

172. Brooker and Bentley 152.

end (the interpretation), thus decentering it." Our interpretive efforts are "external interpretations." The probability is that readers are less likely to agree on external interpretations. Their final point is that interpretation is limited, never leading to absolute truth or complete conclusions and interpretations. Instead, the reader tends to encounter the material in the poem, move outside the poem to consider meanings, return to the poem, and find himself or herself back in the poem just at the point before interpretation. This Brooker and Bentley call the "hermeneutical loop," with a difference having been made in the mind of the reader for having gone through the "process of trying to interpret." The stages of the hermeneutical loop relate to Bradley's stages of cognition — "The move from immediate to relational to transcendent experience is similar in some ways to the movement away from the text through the hermeneutical process followed by the posthermeneutical loop back to the text." Thus, they feel that "Death by Water" "insists on being interpreted and, at the same time, mocks any interpretation we can discover."<sup>173</sup>

Brooker and Bentley note an interesting aspect of "Death by Water," as it follows "The Fire Sermon," — that "it offers a release from tension, complexity, and anxiety. Its rhythm is seductively soothing, its syntax gentle, its tone elegiac, its diction simple and universal. Its reference to immersion, forgetting, drowning, and dying produce in the reader a sense of a peaceful ending." Further, in this penultimate section of the poem, they see elements of closure, albeit premature within the poem, thus "[parodying] the experience of closure in art and thought" — "The first three parts of the poem end with a denial of closure, and the fifth part ends with a merely formal benediction. The fourth part consists of a conventional closure in an interior position and thus subverts the concept of an ending."<sup>174</sup> Brooker and Bentley note the "appearance of water in a poem called *The Waste Land*," which suggests the "possibility of revival and rebirth."<sup>175</sup> "The myths behind the poem associate water with the lifting of the curse from the land. ... Death, in his sources, particularly in Frazer, Weston, and the Bible, is the prerequisite for life, and in all three, death by water is a central ritual in physical and spiritual rebirth. In all

173. Brooker and Bentley 155-159.

174. Brooker and Bentley 159.

175. Brooker and Bentley 159.

three, death is an end which is a beginning." Thus, they see "Death by Water" as "a major moment in *The Waste Land*. The drowned man motif brings together many figures, episodes, and themes from Eliot's sources, from his early work, and from within the poem."<sup>176</sup> In "What the Thunder Said," the authors see the emphasis shifting "from death by water to desire for water."<sup>177</sup>

The authors warn, at this point, that we readers are engaging in an "external interpretation." Nonetheless, "because Eliot instructs the reader to consider *The Golden Bough*, water must refer in some way to ritual. The reader may think of Christian baptism, Frazerian archetypes of death and rebirth, Freudian return to the womb, or even of fish as a traditional fertility symbol, to name only a few potential meanings." But from the context in the poem, and Eliot's ambiguous use of images like water, the authors feel Eliot could be suggesting the old archetypes have failed, after all, and "water is only water for drinking or for drowning." For Brooker and Bentley, "the absence of any indication of a sacramental and redemptive presence" "seems to ... [mock]" the rebirth archetypes. The authors note the line in the poem "A current under sea/Picked his bones in whispers" as "[undermining] any suggestion of resurrection." Yet, they also note the reference here, in the word "whispers," to "Ezekiel 37 (a basic subtext of part I), 'Son of man, can these bones live?' but does not whisper any answer."<sup>178</sup> This passage indeed carries a sense of resurrection, albeit in a passage of the Hebrew scriptures which may not yet possess the full sense of resurrection as Christians understand it. This passage from Ezekiel includes the reference to "Son of Man," another name for Christ, which Eliot uses elsewhere in the poem.

The authors note "the function of water as metaphor coexisting with dry and barren land as metaphor." While the waste land enjoys a primary position in the title, water is everywhere, making land a frame for water, in a sense. Again, as with frame and content, they feel an oscillation is generated: "If the poem had permitted a conventional understanding of these two metaphors, the reader would have been unable to have evaded the sense that water is a signifier point-

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176. Brooker and Bentley 159-160.

177. Brooker and Bentley 161.

178. Brooker and Bentley 161-162.

ing in the direction of salvation for, after all, irrigation is an obvious way of making waste lands bloom again." Further, they suggest that if Eliot had eliminated this fourth section, as he considered at one point, a different sense of the poem would have resulted, and "The longing for water in 'What the Thunder Said' would have signaled the possible presence of a healing, sacramental element in a spiritually dry realm. As the poem stands, however, it is difficult to attach any sacramental value to water," due to the more literal treatment of water in the fourth section. "The world within the poem is one in which symbols fail, one in which mythologies collapse in a heap of broken images. This literalization of ancient symbols (from water as symbol to water as H<sub>2</sub>O), this demythologizing and desacramentalizing, is a central aspect of Eliot's representation of the waste land."<sup>179</sup> Discussing further what the authors have called the "hermeneutical loop," this literalization of water — a "defeat of symbolism" — is "a refusal of the text to become a means to an end. ... It is hard to imagine water in a context of dryness, lovelessness, anomie, and discord failing to be a symbol of hope. Its defeat as a symbol, its status as antisymbol, is thus a special achievement."<sup>180</sup>

Brooker and Bentley feel that Eliot's title for the final section "calls attention to interpretation, to what the thunder meant, ... for in such a context, thunder announces the possibility or likelihood of rain and, consequently, of revival."<sup>181</sup>

Eliot's note and the text itself point to the Passion of Christ. ... [The] lines suggest that the narrator is speaking after the Crucifixion but before the Resurrection. Easter and redemption are not in view. ... Eliot's notes seem to suggest that the death of the one "who was living" be taken as an aggregate of all traditions grounded in fertility magic and vicarious atonement through blood sacrifice. Perhaps this passage should be read as an indication that salvation through sacrifice of the hero is itself dead, no longer operative in the modern world.

... To put it another way, the paradox at the core of mythic or metonymic consciousness has been lost. That paradox is the idea that death for the most god-like person brings new vitality to the survivors who feel a unity with him.<sup>182</sup>

Brooker and Bentley admit, "This interpretation, however, does not answer all of the questions raised by the passage." Again, water has become demythologized to "plain unsacramental H<sub>2</sub>O,"

179. Brooker and Bentley 163-164.

180. Brooker and Bentley 165.

181. Brooker and Bentley 172.

182. Brooker and Bentley 174.

and the thunder with no rain is “mere noise.” And in the “water-dripping song,” the “speaker’s movement in search of hope is desperate in the extreme.” He is “willing to delude himself into a momentary belief that water is near.”<sup>183</sup> However, water is near, as I see it. And water’s sacramental or unsacramental quality is not based not on the water alone, but on how the water is put to special use. Again, there are images of a quest for water. Such a quest is one way of looking at the Christian season of Lent, as will be discussed below. And indeed, the way Brooker and Bentley approach this section of the poem, following after their assessment of the fourth section, certainly set up a Lenten journey approach as one way of looking at the poem.

Further strengthening an approach to *The Waste Land* as Lenten journey, are two references — “a reference to Moses in the wilderness providing water by striking the rock,” and “the traveler to Emmaus.” The main point made by the authors about this passage in the poem is “qualified by Eliot’s note associating this part of the poem with Christ’s progress to Emmaus after the Resurrection. If this hallucination occurs on the journey to Emmaus, the hooded shadow, ‘the third who walks always beside you,’ must be identified as Christ.”<sup>184</sup> Of course, the authors also note Eliot’s suggestion to include “the Frazerian perspective, ... [associating] the shadows with the dying gods of fertility rituals and with the Hanged Man that Madame Sosostriis was unable to find among her cards.”<sup>185</sup> And they add that such associating causes the figures to meld together. They also note the sexual ambiguity of these mythic figures, not only in themselves, but also in Eliot’s presentation of them. Such sexual ambiguity, or sexual uncertainty, serves to defeat fertility, causing sterility, a barren body, and a waste land, which requires the death of the mythic figure to rejuvenate. Thus, the “mythic figures seem to be involved in an objective correlative of the very curse they sought to dispel.”<sup>186</sup> This is a fascinating treatment of Eliot’s mythic figures and the waste land motif, and a clever turning of Eliot on himself.

Brooker and Bentley relate Eliot’s faceless woman brushing her hair in the mirror to “the

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183. Brooker and Bentley 176-177.

184. Brooker and Bentley 179.

185. Brooker and Bentley 179-180.

186. Brooker and Bentley 180.

medieval image of the Hypostatic Christ. In *Ulysses*, which Eliot was reading while writing *The Waste Land*, Stephen seems to see Mr. Bloom as the figure of the Hypostatic Christ as depicted by medieval churchmen."<sup>187</sup> Hypostasis is a term used theologically for the presence of both divine and human in the same person at the same time. The figure in Joyce is described as 'leucodermic, sesquipedalian with winedark hair.'" The way Eliot presents Christ in the poem is as a hooded faceless shadow whose identity, especially sexual identity, is not clear. This relates to Joyce's "leucodermic" figure for his invisible skin. As good as these insights are, as strong as their arguments are, and as anticipatory of my Lenten interpretation to follow below, Brooker and Bentley are aware that their interpretation is "suspiciously inventive and, like most interpretations, is unlikely to survive for long in reading such a complex passage."<sup>188</sup>

Finally, we get rain, and then the thunder speaks. At this point, Eliot turns to a fable of thunder god Prajapati, and thus the poem moves outside of Western culture. In the fable, "the god who speaks through thunder, says 'Da! Da! Da!' and the three orders of beings — gods, men, and devils — interpret this 'message' as three cardinal commands, 'control, give, sympathize.'"<sup>189</sup> In his famous book, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, Jacques Lacan also summarizes this story about the thunder god Prajapâti:

When the Devas, the men, and the Asuras were ending their novitiate with Prajapâti, so we read in the second Brâhmana of the fifth lesson of the Bhradâranyaka Upanishad, they addressed to him this prayer: "Speak to us."

"Da," said Prajapâti, god of thunder. "Have you understood me?" And the Devas answered and said: "Thou hast said to us: *Damyata*, master yourselves" — the sacred text meaning that the powers above submit to the law of the Word.

"Da," said Prajapâti, god of thunder. "Have you understood me?" And the men answered and said: "Thou hast said to us: *Datta*, give"—the sacred text meaning that men recognize each other by the gift of the Word.

"Da," said Prajapâti, god of thunder. "Have you understood me?" And the Asuras answered and said: "Thou hast said to us: *Dayadhvam*, be merciful"—the sacred text meaning that the powers below resound to the invocation of the Word.

That, continues the text, is what the divine voice caused to be heard in the thunder: Submission, gift, grace. *Da, da, da.*

For Prajapâti replies to all: "You have understood me."<sup>190</sup>

187. Brooker and Bentley 182-183.

188. Brooker and Bentley 183.

189. Brooker and Bentley 187-188.

190. Jacques Lacan, *Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis*, trans. Anthony Wilden (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins

With this quotation, Lacan ends his book, just as Eliot ends his poem, and a note by the translator, Wilden, follows, relating this passage to Eliot's poem.<sup>191</sup> In another note to an earlier passage in Lacan's writings, Wilden explains that early Hindu schools of poetic theory were schools of sentiment, style, beautiful expression, picture, and *Dhvani*, which means "sound, murmur, roar," even "thunder." He cites Apte's dictionary definition of *Dhvani* as "that power of a word or sentence, by virtue of which it conveys a sense different from its primary or secondary meaning, suggestive power." This becomes called "the doctrine of 'suggestion' ... [which] would be better described in this context as a theory of metaphor or metonymy."<sup>192</sup> Brooker and Bentley assert that the thunder says nothing and the sound it makes means nothing. They also note that several interpreters are involved in deciphering the sound of the thunder. The first interprets the sound itself, "DA!" as leading to the word "*Datta*," to which the second interpreter comments on the word or concept. Thus, each word is manufactured based on the onomatopoeia of the sound of thunder, and then each word is further interpreted — so we have interpretations of interpretations. Further, the noise of the thunder is first translated into Sanskrit and is an Eastern and universal process, followed by the European and personal glosses on the Sanskrit translations. However, as the authors say, "in a psychoanalytic session ... such interpretative leaps are conventional." Also, this process of interpretation is a "process of understanding transcendental signifiers ... granted an authenticity [in India] denied to it in the West, where only ancient prophets could be taken seriously as translators of such messages."<sup>193</sup>

From the interpretive chain of this passage of the thunder, the authors conclude that it exposes "the inadequacy of the interpretative process in conceiving a coherent plan for contending with the complexity of human relations." Thus, they also conclude: "A crucial implication emerges from these observations. *The Waste Land* is in part a commentary on the contingency

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UP, 1968) 86-87 [*sic*].

191. Lacan 156, n. 192.

192. Lacan 142-143, n. 137.

193. Brooker and Bentley 189-191.

of language."<sup>194</sup> Brooker and Bentley add Bradley's philosophical view here:

Language is a part of the world of appearance, the dualistic realm of relational knowing. It does not exist in immediate experience and does not exist in transcendent experience. Language must fail. ... [Eliot] regarded language as the most important mediator of unstable relations. ... Transcendent experience is not mediated by and not reachable through language. Between signifier and signified falls the shadow, the reminder of their duality.<sup>195</sup>

Here, I might well turn to a brief consideration of Jacques Lacan's understanding of symbol and signifier. In his book, Lacan discusses language as it relates to psychoanalysis. In his first chapter entitled "The Empty Word and the Full Word," he sees the Word as the only mediary for psychoanalysis's healing and formation. And through this "talking cure," the "putting into words of the event ... determined the lifting of the symptom." In the process, it is important also to hear what is not being said — "it is proper to the Word to cause to be understood what it does not say." Also, Lacan says, "the Word always subjectively includes its own reply." In this context, he quotes Pascal, "You would not be looking for me if you had not already found me," which are the words of Christ in *Le mystère de Jesus, Pensées*. A final quotation from Lacan refers to the larger service of language, such as we might find in poetic usage, that "the function of Language is not to inform but to evoke."<sup>196</sup> Lacan includes several references to T. S. Eliot and his work, including a brief discussion of the Sibyl of Cumae, which Lacan also uses as an epigraph. Lacan also includes references to myth and anthropology in his discussion of "the Symbolic, the Imaginary, and the Real" in his book.<sup>197</sup> Thus, in his discussion of Language and the Word, Lacan reminds us of the evocative and allusive power of the word, primarily in psychoanalysis, and of the importance of the symbolic in communication. And beyond the word, as Lacan presents it, is the Word as it used in the Christian context, standing for God's self-expression. God's Word finds its fullest expression in Christ, the Word made flesh, since words fall short. Both are in the realm of communication, with the latter being a fuller, richer, more com-

194. Brooker and Bentley 196, 197.

195. Brooker and Bentley 199.

196. Lacan 9, 16, 58, 62, 144 (n. 148), 63. The translation and identification of the Pascal quote are given by the translator, Wilden, in his note on p. 144.

197. Lacan 73.



plete, more personal, and transcendent language.

Thus, since language, in its complexity, falls short of the kind of certainty we might like to ascribe to language, Brooker and Bentley can finally say “Transcendence to the Absolute is the only answer, and that answer cannot be accepted without a leap beyond philosophy into faith. Something after meaning is needed before meaning can be found in a coherent form.”<sup>198</sup> So here, at the end of the poem, following all the discussion of Eliot’s themes and of Bradley’s epistemology in Eliot’s background, Brooker and Bentley suggest a leap of faith. After the quest of the poem, they see the speaker in the closing lines “[sitting] upon the shore / Fishing, with the arid plain behind me.”<sup>199</sup> They feel this is “the speaker [enacting] a rejection of the quest by turning his back to the wasted land. ... Further, we can hardly fail to think of the speaker as some version of the Fisher King.”<sup>200</sup> However, I would suggest that these lines at the end of the poem are not a rejection of the quest but a completion of it. At the end of the quest through the arid plain, the speaker sits on the shore and fishes, with the waste land behind him. If we follow the quest motif as a Lenten journey through the waste land, there is a point of arrival, or at least partial arrival. And if we are in the Christian Lenten context, then fishing at the shore is well within appropriate endings for such a spiritual journey.

As for the fragments at the end of the poem that are “shored” against the speaker’s ruin, Brooker and Bentley summarize the sources of them as having to do with song and poetry, “with singing that persists through and transforms disaster. ... These fragments have in common the motif of singing which persists through loss and transforms disaster into art. They are followed by the statement that they are being used to shore up the ruins of the narrator, another disinherited and desolate figure trying to use remnants as building blocks for art.”<sup>201</sup> As a shoring up process, the first fragments “affirm order and art as potent answers to collapse, pain, depression, and even the dissolution of a tradition of order and art.” The authors remind us of the possible

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198. Brooker and Bentley 196, 197.

199. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, lines 424–425; qtd. in Brooker and Bentley 200.

200. Brooker and Bentley 201.

201. Brooker and Bentley 203–204.

soteriological effect of poetry: "If *The Waste Land* had ended with 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins,' we could have read a final message to the effect that poetry can act as a saving consolation in times of hopelessness. Matthew Arnold's statement that poetry is capable of saving us would prevail."<sup>202</sup>

Terry Eagleton also comments on this potential power of poetry and literature, in that literature has taken over where the Church has failed. First, he notes the similarity between religion and literature in that both deal with "emotion and experience, and so [literature] was admirably well-fitted to carry through the ideological task which religion left off." Then, citing Matthew Arnold and Northrup Frye, Eagleton offers the "failure of religion" as one "explanation for the growth of English studies in the later nineteenth century." Reminding us that "Frye is a clergyman," he adds that "Frye offers literature as a displaced version of religion." Eagleton quotes George Gordon, early Professor of English Literature at Oxford, in his inaugural lecture: "England is sick, and ... English literature must save it. The Churches (as I understand) having failed, and social remedies being slow, English literature has now a triple function: still, I suppose, to delight and instruct us, but also, and above all, to save our souls and heal the State." Turning to T. S. Eliot and *The Waste Land*, Eagleton summarizes Arnold, Frye, and Gordon in language surprisingly close to the imagery of these closing fragments of Eliot's poem:

The crisis of European society — global war, severe class-conflict, failing capitalist economies — might be resolved by turning one's back on history altogether and putting mythology in its place. Deep below finance capitalism lay the Fisher King, potent images of birth, death and resurrection in which human beings might discover a common identity. Eliot accordingly published *The Waste Land* in 1922, a poem which intimates that fertility cults hold the clue to the salvation of the West.<sup>203</sup>

But, given the next fragment, what Brooker and Bentley call the "mocking words" of *The Spanish Tragedy*, such salvation through art is not possible. They see in that third last line of *The Waste Land* "the use of poetry in the service of madness and silence."

So much for redemption through art. ... The poem ends on the margin between secular hope and secular damnation, between order and madness. On that margin,

202. Brooker and Bentley 205.

203. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983) 26, 22, 93, 23, 41.

that shored-up shore, "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata" return as mere shells of signifiers. ... The appropriate end is the repeated benediction, "Shantih shantih shantih." It is only because peace is out of the question on this precarious margin that peace must be stated. Understanding has brought us to a margin between minimal affirmation and maximal calamity, so the only peace thinkable is that which passes (transcends, in the Bradleian sense) understanding.<sup>204</sup>

After such a fitting conclusion to the poem, to their book, and to this discussion of these various critical references — and thus a fitting introduction to my own ideas about *The Waste Land* — Brooker and Bentley add a brief postscript with the epigraph from *Four Quartets* ("Little Gidding," V): "We shall not cease from exploration / And the end of all our exploring / Will be to arrive where we started / And know the place for the first time." They refer to Eliot's conversion a few years later as a kind of return in which Eliot "drew on the imagery of a 'first world' of unity." In this short chapter, the authors discuss infantile epistemology, Jean Piaget, and the unconscious. This comes in the midst of their discussion of Bradley's Absolute: "Bradley's philosophy and Eliot's method stimulate a search for a final perspective, a metaphysical 'outside' from which history and the poem can be viewed as a simple organic unity. That perspective can be called heaven or nowhere or the Absolute, but it is by any name a place that cannot be reached." Since the transcendent is so unattainable and so fleeting and momentary — "too unconscious and too fleeting" — "Immediate experience remains ... as something known and lost and yet not lost." This culminates in a speculation about the poem that begins with a summary answer of "two basic questions. What is the principal theme of *The Waste Land*, and how does that theme relate to its techniques of presentation?" They answer:

*The Waste Land* is, in a basic way, a lament for lost community. ... But when the reader arrives at those biblical, Greek, Indic, Germanic, and English mythic sites, he will find in each of them a failure of communion and will discover no place better suited for communion than a public bar near Magnus Martyr.

The poem's central subject, then, is loss, displacement, deprivation. In a profound way, the loss it evokes is not just a twentieth-century urban condition. The poem's references reveal that this sense of loss has been pervasive throughout history. ... If it had been otherwise, there would not be such a full record of religious strategies for dealing with that sense of lost community, for regaining a vanished unity. The very word "religion" comes from roots meaning rebinding, retying, transcending brokenness and regaining a primal condition of harmony. Although the twentieth-century waste land is a place of intense awareness of disunity, it is only a recent version of a constantly recurring condition. Eliot's nos-

204. Brooker and Bentley 205-206, esp. 206.

talgia is for a community that he knows has not existed in history.<sup>205</sup>

Brooker and Bentley then turn to their second question, suggesting that Eliot plays this theme out further in his poetic technique of “parataxis or the absence of connectors.” They cite Julia Kristeva’s work, especially her book *Desire in Language*, in which Kristeva relates locomotion and speech. She asserts that in later infancy, children learn to crawl and walk simultaneous to their learning language. As they move away from mother literally, they can communicate by language to maintain some form of contact, thus compensating for the physical distance. Thus, they conclude, “Speech always begins in the context of separation and loss. Language is a skill permanently associated with both isolation and reunification; it is a signal system that at once confirms and overcomes loss.”<sup>206</sup>

### The Lenten Journey

Making this leap of faith as Brooker and Bentley call it, I return to my earlier discussion of some of the spiritual references related to *The Waste Land*. In the passage quoted earlier from John of the Cross, in which he explicates the “dark night of the soul,” he makes frequent use of the images of darkness and dryness. These are very strong and traditional images for sensory or spiritual privation. The “dark night,” in which vision is diminished or gone, is likened to a desert experience, in which one feels thirst. The desert image is an especially rich one, since one experiences anxiety, heat, cold, hunger, emptiness, solitariness, and loneliness, along with the thirst — almost total privation, in other words. Another author, a more recent monastic and spiritual writer, has also written about the experience of the desert. Thomas Merton writes, in his little book, *Thoughts in Solitude*:

The Desert Fathers believed that the wilderness had been created as supremely valuable in the eyes of God precisely because it had no value to men. The wasteland was the land that could never be wasted by men because it offered them nothing. ... The desert was the region in which the Chosen People had wandered for thirty years, cared for by God alone. ... God’s plan was that they should learn to love Him in the wilderness. ...

This, then, is our desert: to live facing despair, but not to consent. To trample

205. Brooker and Bentley 208-222, esp. 208, 219, 208-209, 220-221, 210-211.

206. Brooker and Bentley 212-213.

it down under hope in the Cross. To wage war against despair unceasingly. That war is our wilderness. If we wage it courageously, we will find Christ at our side. If we cannot face it, we will never find Him.<sup>207</sup>

Here in Merton, as in St. John of the Cross, is reference to the spiritual value of the wasteland. While the desert or wasteland is the place of thirst and privation, it is the place for confronting God *par excellence*. From St. John of the Cross' sensory dark night, it is the logical place for turning off exterior senses, since there is less to experience in the desert. Then the interior senses become turned on, and we can begin to experience God. Thus, we thirst after God in the spiritual desert, just as we would after water in the physical desert. This, in turn, makes water an even richer symbol, for the intensity of the desert privation and for the shift to the interior senses. Hence, the Psalmist can say, "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God."<sup>208</sup> This water imagery, especially as linked to spiritual thirst, is an extremely important part of *The Waste Land*. As a metaphor for spiritual thirst in *The Waste Land*, water is indeed a central image, especially for its absence through most of the poem. Before seeing water as the fulfilment of the spiritual quest of the poem, the journey through the dry wilderness of St. John of the Cross' sensory dark night, Merton's desert, and much of *The Waste Land* must be considered.

There are numerous references to the desert, or the wilderness, in the Hebrew and Christian scriptures. There are sixty-six references to "desert" in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) of the Bible (including the Apocrypha), eight of which are in the Psalms; there are 283 references to "wilderness," sixteen of which are in the Psalms; and there are five references to "wasteland." In the Psalms, references to the desert and wilderness usually carry reminders of God's having led God's people through the desert. Such references often include water, as well — "He turns rivers into a desert, springs of water into thirsty ground. ... He turns a desert into pools of water, a parched land into springs of water."<sup>209</sup> Similarly, in Deuteronomy, the people are reminded of the God "who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, an arid waste-

207. Thomas Merton, *Thoughts in Solitude*, 1956 (Boston: Shambhala, 1993) 5-9.

208. Psalm 42:1 (NRSV).

209. Psalm 107:33, 35 (NRSV).

land with poisonous snakes and scorpions. He made water flow for you from flint rock."<sup>210</sup> In the Exodus, the people of Israel were led through the wilderness for forty years in order to arrive at the Promised Land. It is this final image that predominates, even in the earlier references — God's leading through the wasteland — the image of spiritual journey through the wasteland. So it is this journey image that is used most specifically in the Gospel text about Jesus' forty days in the wilderness — using the typology of the forty-year journey of the chosen people, through the wilderness, to the promised land.

The Church has traditionally made this journey through the wasteland imagery the center of its Lenten season as preparation for Easter. If believers are to arrive at the promised land of the resurrection to eternal life, celebrated in Easter, they are to walk through the forty days of the Lenten wilderness. It is no coincidence that Lent is forty days in length. It is also no accident that the lessons chosen for the entire Lenten season reflect the traditional themes of wilderness, spiritual journey, and purification. This is the way I read *The Waste Land*, as the same kind of journey through wilderness to arrive at spiritual rest. To clarify the connection between the poem's journey and the Lenten journey, it is important to explain the Church's season of Lent, elucidate the symbols and themes, and trace the ritual leading through the season to spiritual fulfillment. At this point, it will be helpful to consider the historical and liturgical development of the season of Lent and the themes and lessons used for its observance.

According to several sources, "the name Lent is probably derived from the Anglo-Saxon word meaning spring, the time when the days lengthen."<sup>211</sup> It began as a forty-hour preparation for the celebration of Easter, commemorating Christ's forty hours spent in the tomb after the crucifixion before Christ's resurrection that first Easter. As a time of preparation, it developed into a full season prior to Easter, although it developed variously in different areas of the world. Generally, it first lengthened to a two-week observance, called *passiontide*, and later lengthened to the present forty days, in commemoration of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness being tempted

210. Deuteronomy 8:15 (NRSV).

211. Luther D. Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy: A Study of the Common Liturgy of the Lutheran Church in America* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1947) 490.

by the devil. Fasting became a practice during this period, in line with the wilderness theme of the season, so Sundays, little weekly celebrations or feasts of Easter, were not included in the count of the 40 days of fasting. Removing the Sundays meant adding four additional days to the six weeks, probably around the time of Gregory the Great, finally fixing the season as we have it today.<sup>212</sup>

Quite early on, baptism became associated with Easter, as the believer's participation in Christ's death and resurrection. Therefore, also early on, preparation for baptism became an important part of Lent. In his book *The Origins of the Christian Year*, Thomas J. Talley explains this link between Lent and baptism:

The advent of the messianic kingdom is ... a call to transformation, conversion, repentance, *metanoia*. ... Studies in the phenomenology of religious repeatedly demonstrate a rhythm of death and rebirth in rites of passage, ... the process of coming to a new identity. Such a process of conversion can be seen also in the ritual of proselyte baptism in the Talmud, and it is the motive of the entire catechetical tradition in Christianity. Baptism, the radical conferral of new life in the risen Lord, includes, as integral to that new life, the renunciation of the old. Of that transition, the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is the fundamental paradigm, and the realization of that paradigm has played a large role in the liturgical organization of time.<sup>213</sup>

Naturally, the preparation for baptism during Lent involved extensive instruction or catechesis. Talley continues, "there is no reason to doubt that the final catechetical period described in the *Apostolic Tradition* fell prior to Pascha [or Easter]. ... We are probably safe, therefore, in seeing in this final immediate preparation of candidates for baptism the seeds of that season we know as Lent."<sup>214</sup> Adrian Nocent confirms this understanding of Lent, baptism, and conversion, when he talks of "Lent's 'three organizational principles' — 1) 'the liturgy is organized in terms of the catechumenate'; 2) 'organized as a preparation for the reconciliation of penitents'; 3) 'organized with a view to deepening the spiritual life of those faithful.'" Nonetheless, he concludes, "The Church's most important mission is to move [people] to *metanoia*, or conversion — that is, to

212. Reed 490-491; Thomas J. Talley, *The Origins of the Liturgical Year*, 2nd ed. (Collegeville, Minn.: Pueblo-Liturgical, 1991) 163-167.

213. Talley 163.

214. Talley 165.

bring them to travel a different road and to turn to God."<sup>215</sup> As for those who have already been converted and baptized, Lent continues to have significance. Nocent adds, "To those not yet converted, Lent offers entry into the new creation through baptism. To those already baptized, it proposes a reformation of life."<sup>216</sup>

This is reinforced in the modern Church in the practice of sealing the font for the season of Lent — meaning no baptisms during the season, all potential baptisms being reserved until the Easter vigil as a celebration of the resurrection. This "intimate connection" between baptism and the Easter vigil is also suggested by the juxtaposition of the liturgies for the Great Vigil of Easter and Holy Baptism in the current *Book of Common Prayer* of the American Episcopal Church.<sup>217</sup> Thus, Lent became the time, *par excellence*, for preparation for conversion — for catechetical instruction, or instruction of the catechumenate. Once baptized, one is expected to relive that instructive season in fasting and penance. Thus, when believers again arrive at Easter, they renew their own baptismal vows along with those being newly baptized.

That places baptism not only at the center of the life of the Church and of Easter, for its theme of resurrection, but places it also at the heart of Lent, in terms of preparation for rejuvenation and reformation. So themes of penance, fasting (some form of deprivation for spiritual reasons), confession, and conversion predominate in Lent. Add to this the delaying of baptism until Easter — until the Easter vigil, especially — and you have also a building of "thirst," literal and spiritual, due to the lack of water coupled with the focus on water — the delayed promise of baptism throughout the season of preparation. This is similar to what happens in *The Waste Land*, with references to water and its lack throughout the poem, with the water finally coming in the form of rain at the end the last section of the poem.

Further, in the Church's worship, the entire year is structured in terms of the life of Christ.

215. Adrian Nocent, *Lent*, vol. 2 of *The Liturgical Year*, trans. Matthew J. O'Connell (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical, 1977) 33.

216. Nocent 17.

217. Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Commentary on the Lutheran Book of Worship: Lutheran Liturgy in Its Ecumenical Context* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1990) 30. This relationship between baptism and Pascha, or Easter, is discussed at some length in Talley 33-37.



The lessons revolve around certain themes as we progress through the life of Christ. The year begins with Advent, four weeks of preparation leading to Christmas and Epiphany (the visit of the wise men). The next major season is Lent leading to Easter, which we have outlined above. And Easter lasts seven weeks — a week of weeks — culminating in Pentecost, or the fiftieth day of Easter. The subject matter of those seasons is obvious, following major events in the life of Christ. The Sundays after Epiphany and those that follow Pentecost are “lower” Sundays, which give an opportunity to reflect on texts in general about Jesus’ ministry and teachings. Thereby, the texts we use during Lent reflect that season of preparation. While following the life of Jesus, the texts tend to focus on that period of Jesus’ life leading up to his crucifixion, and the themes then presented are themes of preparation, self-denial, commitment, and conversion. Also, in that the texts are designed to coincide with the catechumenate, they set up the conversion theme, in which conversion entails a complete turning around and heading in the other direction. This, too, fits with the renunciation theme of *The Waste Land* and serves as Eliot’s own worldly renunciation in preparation of his own later conversion.

Naturally, as the season and the Sundays developed in the practice of the Church, lessons needed to be appointed for the Sundays, especially to present the themes of the season. Turning, then, to the lessons for the season of Lent, there is a certain progression of themes. After Ash Wednesday, which has its own particular focus on mortality, thereby justifying the journey of Lent, come the Sundays of Lent. There are five such Sundays, before Holy Week and its own events, starting with Palm Sunday. Of course, while the basic structure of the season has remained much the same over the centuries after its initial development, the lessons appointed for the Sundays have undergone some slight alterations, varying also a little between church traditions. However, I shall attempt to summarize the five Sundays of Lent, noting specific texts and acknowledging a few variations.

According to the 1871 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* of the United Church of England and Ireland, the worship book Eliot himself would have been using whenever he attended liturgies in the Anglican Church, the lessons listed are identical to the American Episco-

pal version of *The Book of Common Prayer* of 1928.<sup>218</sup> In both editions, the collect (or prayer of the day — the prayer that comes immediately before the reading of the lessons and presents the theme of the day), the epistle, and the Gospel lessons are given for each of the Sundays, and the texts of them are written out in the books. During the current century, all the major denominations have been undergoing major liturgical revisions and changes. These changes followed the 1947 formation of the Church of South India (uniting Anglicans, Presbyterians, Congregationalists, and Methodists), the 1950 Prayer Book Studies of the Episcopal Church, Vatican II (1962-65), and others.<sup>219</sup> Thus, during the third quarter of this century, most churches have introduced new worship books with fuller liturgies and a three-year lectionary cycle. This has, of course, led to a more complex lectionary for the season of Lent. Nonetheless, there are traditional themes, lessons, Psalms, and prayers which remain among the newer lectionary texts.

The first Sunday in Lent always uses as the Gospel text the temptation of Christ for 40 days in the wilderness following his own baptism. In the 1871 and 1928 editions of *The Book of Common Prayer* (*BCP*, 1871; and *BCP*, 1928), as in Year A of the 1977 edition of *The Book of Common Prayer* (*BCP*, 1977), that text was Matthew 4:1-11. Year B (*BCP*, 1977) gives Mark 1:9-13, which is a typically (for Mark) shortened version of the text, and Year C (*BCP*, 1977) gives Luke 4:1-13, which is very much like Matthew's version. As the Lutheran scholar Luther D. Reed says about it, "As this Sunday anciently marked the beginning of the Quadragesima, the choice of our Lord's temptation as the Gospel was most appropriate."<sup>220</sup> Another Lutheran theologian Philip Pfatteicher adds, "The association of this Sunday with the temptation of Christ is universal in the Western church. The Gospel is one of the oldest assigned lessons, dating back to

218. *The Book of Common Prayer of the United Churches of England and Ireland* (London: Oxford UP for SPCK, 1871) 86-118; *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church: According to the Use of The Protestant Episcopal Church in the United States of America* (New York: Oxford UP, 1928) 124-162. Cf. *The Book of Common Prayer and Administration of the Sacraments and Other Rites and Ceremonies of the Church Together with The Psalter or Psalms of David* (New York: Seabury, 1977) 891-895.

219. Philip H. Pfatteicher, *Manual on the Liturgy, Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1979) 6-7, 30-31.

220. Reed 492.

the time of Leo the Great in the fifth century, and antedates the extension of the days of Lent to the previous Wednesday."<sup>221</sup> The other two lessons, one or both, usually relate to the theme of the Gospel text.

The Gospel for the second Sunday in Lent is the account of the woman of Canaan and her daughter — Matthew 15:21-28 (the healing of the daughter of the woman of Canaan). The Roman Catholic Missal recommends the Transfiguration. Again, Reed says, "The lessons as we have them for this Sunday and for the next Sunday probably had special reference to the catechumens in the early church, adults, it should be remembered, who were being instructed."<sup>222</sup> The newer three-year lectionary offers John 3:1-17 (Nicodemus' questions about being born again) for Year A, Mark 8:31-38 (Jesus predicts his passion and Peter's rebuke) for Year B, and Luke 13:(22-30) 31-35 (Jesus laments over Jerusalem) for Year C. These texts are somewhat of a departure from the earlier Gospel text, but they deal with related themes, as might be expected.

The third Sunday in Lent has for its Gospel a warning "of the never-ending conflict with evil which calls for vigilance and the divine protection which is sought in the collect and trustfully awaited in the Introit."<sup>223</sup> The text is Luke 11:14-28 (casting out a demon — a house divided), while in Years A, B, and C of the newer lectionary, the texts are John 4:5-26 (27-38) 39-42 (the Samaritan woman at the well), John 2:13-22 (the cleansing of the temple), and Luke 13:1-9 (the fig tree bearing fruit), respectively. The newer texts are again a departure from the traditional text, with the text for Year B most closely matching. Reed also says of this Sunday, "The propers [lessons, Psalm, and collect] were chosen before the season of Lent, as we know and observe it, had developed. They are clearly related to the observance of this day and week in the early church, when the preliminary 'scrutiny' or examination of catechumens was held followed by a public renunciation of the devil and all his works and ways and the pronouncement of the formula of exorcism."<sup>224</sup> The lesson from Jeremiah that goes with this text is the admonition that

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221. Pfatteicher, *Commentary* 229.

222. Reed 493.

223. Reed 494.

224. Reed 494.

reads, "Amend your ways and your doings and obey the voice of the Lord your God."<sup>225</sup>

With the fourth Sunday in Lent, there is a decided change of pace at "Mid-Lent." From the Psalm and the Epistle for the day, the theme of rejoicing presents itself — labeling this Sunday "Rejoicing Sunday" or "Refreshment Sunday." At one point in the development of Lent, this Sunday marked the half-way point of the season, when Lent used to begin on the Monday following the first Sunday in Lent.<sup>226</sup> As such, it was observed with feasting as a break from the more somber fasting mood of the season. The Gospel reinforces the use of the word rejoice in Psalm and Epistle by presenting a miracle story — the feeding of the five thousand, John 6:1-14. The Sunday also had a tradition of being known as "mothering Sunday." Reed goes on to say about this day, which provides a distinct break in the Lenten mood:

Anciently the "station" for this day was the "Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem" (actually the church is in Rome), and it will be noted that the Introit, Epistle, and Gospel all have reference to Jerusalem. ... The propers seem definitely to have been chosen with the thought of relieving the austerities of the Lenten season. The observance of Lent in the early centuries began the following day [when it was a 2-week observance], and the lessons for this Sunday may reflect something of a pre-Lenten carnival spirit. Anciently the pope distributed bread to the poor on this day [in line with the Gospel reading]. Later rose-colored vestments were worn and (sixteenth century) a golden rose, symbolic of our Lord, the Rose of Sharon, was solemnly blessed by the pope and sent as a gift to some king, queen, or other high dignitary in recognition of service rendered the church.<sup>227</sup>

In the three-year cycle, the texts are John 9:1-13 (14-27) 28-38 (the healing of the man born blind), John 6:4-15 (virtually the same traditional text), and Luke 15:11-32 (the parable of the prodigal son), for Years A, B, and C, respectively. Despite the variety of texts, this day has always had a strongly refreshing character, which dominates even the lessons.

The "one stern note" for the day, coming in the collect, "is softened by the reference to 'the comfort of thy grace.'"<sup>228</sup> Also, on this day, the catechumens were advanced and allowed to remain a little longer in the liturgy to hear the Gospel. They were also taught the Creed and the Lord's Prayer. And the Introit and Gradual, from Psalm 122, echo the joy of the catechumens, "I

<sup>225</sup>.Jeremiah 26: 1-15, qtd. in Reed 494.

<sup>226</sup>.Marion J. Hatchett, *Commentary on the American Prayer Book* (New York: Seabury, 1981) 175.

<sup>227</sup>.Reed 495.

<sup>228</sup>.Reed 496.

was glad when they said unto me: let us go into the house of the Lord.”<sup>229</sup> Finally, the first lesson from Isaiah 55 invites “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters . . . buy wine and milk without money and without price.”<sup>230</sup>

Finally, the fifth Sunday in Lent begins “passiontide,” or the final two weeks of Lent. The season of Lent has been intensifying up to this point, and, as Reed says, “This period of fourteen days was the earliest extended commemoration of our Lord’s Passion. It vividly recalls his persecutions and sufferings, and this Sunday is popularly known as Passion Sunday. The term Passion Week is no older than the nineteenth century and originated in Anglican circles.”<sup>231</sup> The Gospel gives a “final declaration of hostilities, . . . while the Epistle gives a terse but complete presentation of the Passion,” and the first lesson “presents the figure of a standard in the wilderness, with a brazen serpent upon it.”<sup>232</sup> The Gospel appointed is John 8:46-59, which is about accusations of Jesus and disputes about Abraham, with Jesus almost being stoned. Year A recommends John 11:(1-16) 17-44 (the raising of Lazarus), Year B recommends John 12:20-33 (the grain of wheat that falls into the earth, losing one’s life, the voice from heaven, and Jesus’ being lifted up), and Year C recommends Luke 20:9-19 (the parable of the vineyard owner sending his son, and the stone that the builders rejected). Whatever the differences between the newer three-year lectionary texts and the older, more traditional texts, they try to present the same themes, and they present some of the same texts.

An important part of the lessons appointed for the day are the Psalms and the prayers of the day, or collects. As Reed says, in his presentation of the major texts and themes of the season, “The Sundays in Lent are known by the first words of their Latin Introits.”<sup>233</sup> Introits are the old entrance Psalms, and they continue in use as the Psalm between the first and second lessons, today. Thus, the Psalms appointed for the days are more than just liturgical filler. Therefore,

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229. qtd. in Reed 496.

230. qtd. in Reed 496.

231. Reed 496.

232. Reed 497.

233. Reed 490.

following the Psalms for the season, from which the individual Sundays derive their names, they, too, carry themes that help define the season and the individual Sundays. The first Sunday in Lent is known as *Invocabit* Sunday, from Psalm 91:15 (maintained only in Year C of *BCP*, 1977), which reads in the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer*, "He shall call upon me, and I will hear him." The second Sunday in Lent is called *Reminiscere* Sunday, from Psalm 25:6 (assigned to the First Sunday in Lent, Year B, of *BCP*, 1977), "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth." The third Sunday in Lent is *Oculi* Sunday, from Psalm 25:15 (again, from the first Sunday in Lent, Year B, of *BCP*, 1977), "My eyes are ever toward the LORD." The fourth Sunday in Lent, one of the more important days of the season, is called *Laetare* Sunday, this time from Isaiah 66:10 (together with Psalm 122:1 — kept in Year B of *BCP*, 1977), which reads, "Rejoice with Jerusalem, all you who mourn over her." And the fifth Sunday in Lent is *Judica* Sunday, from Psalm 43:1 (not used during these weeks in either of the three years in *BCP*, 1977, but the *Lutheran Book of Worship* uses it on the fourth Sunday in Lent, Year A), "Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people."<sup>234</sup> Often, the Psalms relate to one or more lessons for the day, reinforce a theme for the day, and fit in with the flow of the season. These Psalms have significance, then, not only in relation to the events of the life of Christ as related in the lessons of the day, but they also have significance in the life of the Church. So their significance is not just for the season and the lessons of the day, but for the very structure of Lent, which is indicated by their providing the very names for the Sundays.

Naturally, over the years, there has been some adjusting of lessons and themes for the Sundays of Lent. And since Luther Reed's book, the Church has introduced a much more complex lectionary. Of course, there has been an attempt to maintain the traditional themes and flow as much as possible. But movement to the current three-year lectionary has meant some changes in texts and details. Nonetheless, the Lutheran, Episcopal/Anglican, and Roman Catholic churches, as the three liturgical churches of the West, have kept a fairly similar approach and set of lessons for the season. Also, many of the texts, whether appearing on the same Sundays among the dif-

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<sup>234</sup> Reed 492-497.

ferent churches or being shifted around slightly, deal again and again with baptism.<sup>235</sup> Or, as Nocent puts it, "From the very beginning of Lent, therefore, the Church already has in mind the night of the Easter Vigil, when she will read the opening pages of Genesis to those who are about to be buried with Christ in death in order that they may rise with him to new life. Then the newly baptized will understand those pages with minds reborn."<sup>236</sup>

Among the changes, however, I must note a few important ones that affect the structure and themes of Lent, as discussed above. The fifth Sunday used to be called Passion Sunday, also, and set the stage for Holy Week, which begins with Palm Sunday a week later. Today, however, Passion and Palm Sundays have been merged, and the day falls at the beginning of Holy Week. Holy Week exists as a somewhat separate entity, beginning with Jesus entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and culminating in the Triduum, or the holy three days of Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. This leaves Lent to consist of the five Sundays listed above, which allows Lent to exist on its own as a nicely structured five-part drama leading up to the events of Holy Week. This is further reinforced by the instruction in the Prayer Book, from 1662 to 1928, that the Ash Wednesday collect was to be used every day during Lent, until Palm Sunday,<sup>237</sup> further marking off the five weeks of Lent from Holy Week. Keeping Lent as a five-part drama, leading into the drama of Holy Week and Easter, forms a unit that lends itself to comparison with Eliot's five-part poem, *The Waste Land*.

Despite the complexities both of Lent and *The Waste Land*, with their respective multiplicity of themes, internal references forward and backward, and the nature of such spiritual journey chronicles, we can see some similarities between the two in terms of an overall conversion, regeneration, rejuvenation, repentance, or reformation theme. Naturally, conversion is a complex matter, and the religious texts and themes that undergird it must be equally complex and open-ended. The texts, structure, and themes of the season of Lent are designed to guide the Church through the season and through the process of conversion and/or reformation. As such,

<sup>235</sup>. Cf. Pfatteicher, *Commentary* 230-231.

<sup>236</sup>. Nocent 8.

<sup>237</sup>. Hatchett 173.

they attempt to cover all bases, thereby meeting the needs of a variety of people and approaches to spirituality and conversion or amendment of life. Laying out the structure of the texts and themes of the season can by no means be simple, exact, or complete. Rather, only a sketch or general guide — an overarching general outline — can be offered for the season, with an acknowledgment of its general structure coinciding to other such religious conversion themes and texts. In other words, my discussion of Lent in relation to *The Waste Land* cannot be allegorized into a simplistic one-to-one correspondence of Sundays in Lent to sections of *The Waste Land*. Rather, my approach will present the two as they represent the basic structure of a group of texts chronicling the general, expected structure of any conversion or growth toward reformation.

#### *The Waste Land* as a Lenten Journey

At this point, it is helpful to recall Ruth Nevo's deconstructive approach to *The Waste Land*, discussed above. Focusing primarily on Eliot's "Notes," she sees the poem as "a five-act antidrama ... [with] no protagonist, no dramatic action, and no outcome." This is very similar to my view of the poem, and likewise to my view of the season of Lent, especially in relation to the poem. Nevo's five-act drama outline begins with "loss of faith and hope and vitality" in the first part of *The Waste Land*, and ends with the "resolution of ... give, sympathize, control, and the peace that passeth understanding."<sup>238</sup> And Nevo goes on to state that "*The Waste Land* offers us no way to determine whether the thrust of its nonoutcome is tragic or comic." Similarly, Lent has its tragic aspect, as it prepares pilgrims for the joyful season of Easter; thus, there is a tragic-comic way to understand the season — religious author Frederick Buechner has even published a book on preaching that is subtitled, *Telling the Truth: The Gospel as Tragedy, Comedy, and Fairy Tale*, thus making use of the same categories. Indeed, Nevo develops her argument thus: "it has been possible to read *The Waste Land* as a sermon in disguise (as did Cleanth Brooks), preaching a Christian message in Brahman disguise." Acknowledging the polarized readings the

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<sup>238</sup>Nevo 100.



poem has received over the years, Nevo offers two possible conclusions. The poem could be “death-obsessed” nightmare on the one hand; on the other hand, “Internalized versions of these readings make it a latent conversion poem in which the preconversion experience ... hovers ... on the brink of transformation or transcendence (Eliot’s actual conversion took place, it will be remembered, in 1927), and the poem can be seen retrospectively in that event’s long shadow.” Naturally, this second option fits my own interpretation of the poem. Given that the poem is what Nevo calls “an irreducible plurality of meaning,” I don’t mean to suggest that my religious view of the poem is the only, correct, or even preferred approach to the poem, but only one more approach to add the multiple and varied ways *The Waste Land* may be viewed.<sup>239</sup> Nonetheless, I feel my approach encompasses the journey motif, the religious conversion motif, the mythic motif, and the Bradleian transcendent knowledge motif.

Thus, turning to my own five-part assessment of the poem in relation to the five weeks of Lent, it is helpful also to recall the structure and themes presented during that season. First, there is the acknowledgment by the Church, especially during Lent, of sinfulness and the need for reformation of life. From this perspective, then, Lent becomes a time to reflect on this fact and begin to move through the season to rejuvenation and reformation. Such is also the perspective of *The Waste Land*, according to some critics as noted above. David N. Power has summed it up: “T. S. Eliot’s use of image of *The Waste Land* to describe our self-satisfied and progressive twentieth century is also a shock, but one that rings true.”<sup>240</sup> If, indeed, Eliot’s poem describes the modern age and the poem presents a “criticism of the contemporary world,” a disillusionment with society, which so many saw in it upon its publication, then it draws a picture of humanity in need of reformation. If it is, as Eliot himself commented, that the poem is “only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling,” then too, a need for reformation is in order, albeit of a more personal, developmental nature. As Lent begins with Ash Wednesday and the acknowledged need for repentance and reformation, so

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239. Nevo 100-101.

240. David N. Power, O.M.I., *Unsearchable Riches: The Symbolic Nature of Liturgy* (New York: Pueblo, 1984) 133.

the sense of *The Waste Land* is much the same at its beginning. The springtime setting or beginning of both Lent and the poem signal, not simply spring joy and renewed life, but the painful transition of the season. This can be a cruel season, like the less than festive observance of Lent with its reflection on human sinfulness, its acts of repentance, and its consciousness of mortality.

Nonetheless, as Adrian Nocent puts it, "there is nothing pessimistic about the liturgy's very realistic vision of a world destroyed by sin. The aim is rather that the Christian should become aware of his sinful state and have a concrete grasp of the deficiencies, failures, and humiliating limitations of his wounded nature."<sup>241</sup> Despite the rigors of Lent, the Church's eye is constantly on the Easter resolution — hence the Sundays actually being a break in the season and not counted among the forty days. Nonetheless, in order to regain the Easter state, the season of Lent is a fitting preparation. Adrian Nocent again puts it well, and includes allusions to other images of the poem:

If the Church likes to tell us of the paradisaical state (it is a frequent theme of the Fathers), she does not do so for the pleasure of reminding us of what we have lost, but to remind us that we must return to that paradise. ... Paradise, in her way of thinking, is not so much a paradise that has been lost as it is a paradise we are to regain and, in fact, have already regained. ...

... The Church ... is herself both an image of paradise and the beginning of paradisaical fulfillment. In an ancient text entitled *The Odes of Solomon*, which may have been used in liturgical celebrations, the splendor of that regained paradise, of which the Church is an image, is described in poetic terms. The text tells us that our paradise is now to be found in Christ:

Eloquent water from the fountain of the Lord was given me to drink; I drank and was intoxicated by the living water that does not die. I abandoned the madness widespread on the earth, stripped it from me and cast it away. The Lord gave me his own new garment and clad me in his light. I drew glad breath in the pleasant breeze of the Lord. I adored the Lord because he is glorious, and I said: Happy they who have their roots in the earth and for whom there is a place in his paradise. [Odes of Solomon, ch. 12; French translation in J. Labourt, "Les Odes de Solomon," *Revue biblique* 7 (1910), p. 493]<sup>242</sup>

Proceeding through the five Sundays of Lent, on the first Sunday, *Invocabit* Sunday (from Psalm 91:15, "He shall call upon me, and I will hear him"), Jesus is being sent into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil after his baptism. Naturally, this wilderness journey coincides

<sup>241</sup>. Nocent 9.

<sup>242</sup>. Nocent 10-11.

with the waste land journey of the poem, and is similar to the epic descent to the underworld, already alluded to above, and discussed by Professor Dick in his essay, also discussed above. In her organization of the parts of the poem, Ruth Nevo calls the first part “loss of faith and hope and vitality.” Of course, both waste lands are not literal waste lands but symbolic waste lands of spiritual emptiness in society. Hence, as the Church enters Lent, its members must walk through the same spiritual waste land with Jesus, being tempted, being made aware of their mortality, and being reformed by the hope of the Easter season that comes at the end of this penitential season. Certainly, in the first section of the poem, as throughout, are the images of death in this spring-time season — “lilacs out of the dead land,” “A heap of broken images,” “fear in a handful of dust,” “I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,” “the heart of light, the silence,” “the drowned Phoenician Sailor,” “The Hanged Man. Fear death by water,” “I had not thought death had undone so many,” and “That corpse you planted last year in your garden.”<sup>243</sup> Of course, there is also the “Son of man” reference, also commonly used in the Christian Gospels to refer to Christ in his pre-exalted man-of-sorrows aspect, as well as the journey through the underworld suggested at the end of the first section of the poem.<sup>244</sup>

The second part of *The Waste Land*, what Nevo has seen as “a follow-through ... [to Part III] with its unhappy and crisscrossed human relations,” has a complex section that can be related to the second Sunday of Lent. In this section of the poem, “A Game of Chess,” Brooker and Bentley, as noted above, have seen connections to Eliot’s personal life — his marriage to Vivien, his friendships, his break with America, and his professional vacillating. They see Eliot’s relationship with Vivien being played out also in the complementing of “male epistemology” with “female epistemology,” necessitating that both be transcended, suggesting the complementarity of reason and perception, and experience and faith. Naturally, as noted above, this complementarity of the sexes reaches its peak in the character of Tiresias, in the next section of the poem. Reference was also made to Brooker and Bentley’s observation that men of myth cannot make a

243. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 2, 22, 30, 39-40, 41, 47, 55, 63, 71.

244. T. S. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, ll. 20, 60-76.

return to beginnings. And as said above, following this discussion of Brooker and Bentley, this has strong suggestions of the Nicodemus passage in the Gospel of John, chapter three. Nicodemus' concern is the impossibility of being "born again," seen from a rectilinear, logical, male point of view. As noted above, this may set up Eliot's journey through a waterless waste land. But of course, the reference to Nicodemus is a reference to being born again "of water and the spirit," referring of course to Christian baptism. Interestingly enough, Brooker and Bentley's discussion lead easily into this discussion of the Nicodemus story, which happens to be one of the options for the Gospel text in the three-year lectionary cycle for the second Sunday of Lent, *Reminiscere* Sunday, (from Psalm 25:6, "O remember not the sins and offences of my youth"). Later, in the pub scene, we meet the character of Lil, her name being "a truncated form of Lily, the flower of Easter, the flower of the 'cruellest month' in the waste land."<sup>245</sup> As a final comment about this section, Brooker and Bentley note above the failure of myth and of religion. In the other two years in the three-year lectionary for Lent, Mark 8:31-38 (Jesus predicts his passion and Peter's rebuke) and Luke 13:(22-30) 31-35 (Jesus laments over Jerusalem) are recommended for Years B and C, respectively. These texts indicate grave misunderstandings about the Christian myth and its fulfillment by no less than Peter on the one hand, and Jesus' own failed expectations for Jerusalem on the other.

The third section of *The Waste Land*, "The Fire Sermon," is the longest. Brooker and Bentley commented above on the title referring to the Buddha's Fire Sermon, which is seen on a par with Christ's Sermon on the Mount. The focus is on the senses being on fire with passion, necessitating an aversion to pleasure and knowledge which will put out the fire. This also suggests fires of purification, thereby connecting Eastern and Western spiritualities. Here we encounter the references to Augustine, to his passion, to Carthage, and to his need for spiritual purification. As already noted above, the third Sunday in Lent, *Oculi* Sunday (from Psalm 25:15, "My eyes are ever toward the LORD"), has for its traditional Gospel a warning "of the never-ending conflict with evil which calls for vigilance and the divine protection which is sought in

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245. Brooker and Bentley 112, quoted above.

the collect and trustfully awaited in the Introit.<sup>246</sup> The text, Luke 11:14-28, is about casting out a demon and a house divided against itself. Current years A, B, and C lectionary texts, also noted above, are John 4:5-26 (27-38) 39-42 (the Samaritan woman at the well), John 2:13-22 (the cleansing of the temple), and Luke 13:1-9 (the fig tree bearing fruit), respectively. Part of the theme of the day is examination of catechumens, a public renunciation of the devil, and encouragement to amend one's ways. This all fits very well with the overall thrust of this section of the poem, especially as Brooker and Bentley note the predominance of the image of water over the image of fire in this section, despite its subtitle.

Given the length and complexity of this section, there are many other references, as well. First, Brooker and Bentley begin their chapter on this section with the Heraclitus quote, "The way up and the y down are the same" — for them suggesting that all transcendences lead in the same direction. Then they encourage a religious leap. And returning to the paradox of the waste land myths, they see death as necessary to arrive at immortality. Further, in the Mrs. Porter foot-washing scene, there is an allusion to the Maundy Thursday foot-washing, among other allusions. Then comes what Brooker and Bentley see as the center of the poem, the reference to Magnus Martyr, in which they see Eliot intentionally placing the church and communion in the center of the poem. This points up the necessity of a religious point of view,<sup>247</sup> as noted above in my more detailed summary of Brooker and Bentley's analysis of this section of the poem. The authors conclude: "'The Fire Sermon,' then, is *The Waste Land*'s moral and spiritual nadir; at the same time, it contains the poem's most dazzling affirmation, the scene of the fishermen lounging at noon outside the pub and the church."<sup>248</sup>

Related to this emphasis on vigilance in the never-ending conflict with evil, casting out demons, and a house divided against itself that we find in the traditional Gospel for the third Sunday in Lent, as well as the examination of catechumens or candidates for baptism, is the Eas-

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246. Reed 494.

247. Brooker and Bentley 152. The quotation is footnoted: "F. H. Bradley, *Ethical Studies*, 2nd. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press [Clarendon Press], 1927), 314."

248. Brooker and Bentley 152.

ter vigil service (usually celebrated on Holy Saturday evening). Having sealed the font for Lent, and having held off baptism until Easter, the Great Vigil of Easter becomes the time *par excellence* for baptism. This keeps it linked with the theme of resurrection and Easter, strengthens the use of the Paschal Candle — the symbol of Christ, the Light of the World, used at Easter, at baptisms, and at funerals — and with the ancient practice of seeing the Lenten season as one of preparation for catechumens. Part of the long liturgy that evening are the readings at the beginning, which contain up to twelve readings from scripture, all of which culminate in the baptisms and the first Eucharist of Easter. Most of the readings assigned for the vigil are from the Old Testament and are designed to reflect the long history of salvation — from creation, flood, and Abraham and Isaac in Genesis; through the Passover in Exodus; through two passages of Isaiah, including the thirsty coming to the waters passage of Isaiah 55; through Ezekiel 36 in which clean water will be sprinkled on the people and a new heart and spirit will be given to them; through Ezekiel 37; to the gathering of God's people in Zechariah as the ninth lesson. This all anticipates the Resurrection of Jesus in the Easter texts. One of those texts has always been Ezekiel 37:1-14 — the valley of dry bones — the eighth reading according to this nine-readings cycle of the Episcopal Church.<sup>249</sup> Thus, growing out of the theme, lessons, and practice of this third Sunday in Lent, comes a presage of the Easter vigil with its texts. And the Ezekiel text is emphasized simply because that text lies behind the passage in line 186 of the poem — “The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear.” The Ezekiel text also partially lies behind the reference to “Son of Man” throughout the poem, since this is one place in scripture where that phrase is used. Hence, even here in this section of the poem, there is a connection to the Lenten themes and anticipation of Easter and resurrection. Also in this section is the reference to the “violet hour” of lines 215 and 220. As discussed elsewhere in this chapter, violet is also the color of the paraments and vestments used for the season of Lent. The color has its significance, as do all the liturgical colors, and it is interesting Eliot would choose such a strong, royal, and liturgically specific color for use in his poem.

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249. Hatchett 246-248.

The fourth, and shortest, section of the poem, "Death by Water," Brooker and Bentley see as "a release from tension, complexity, and anxiety." This is definitely the mood of the fourth Sunday in Lent, *Laetare* Sunday or Refreshment Sunday (from Isaiah 66:10 together with Psalm 122:1, "Rejoice with Jerusalem, all you who mourn over her"). After three sections of the poem, as after three weeks of the season of Lent, a need for a break is sensed, and in each case the penultimate section or Sunday provides it. Brooker and Bentley also note the appearance of water with its possibility of revival and rebirth. In addition, there is an echo of the Ezekiel passage noted above in the discussion of part three of the poem (immediately preceding). Phlebas' bones being picked in whispers (line 316), to recall what is said even earlier in Brooker and Bentley's discussion, echoes the Ezekiel 37 valley of dry bones and the breath that enlivens them again. Besides those references, other texts assigned for the day include John 6:1-14 (the feeding of the five thousand) as the traditional Gospel. The three-year cycle texts are John 9:1-13 (14-27) 28-38 (the healing of the man born blind), John 6:4-15 (virtually the same traditional text), and Luke 15:11-32 (the parable of the prodigal son), for Years A, B, and C, respectively, as noted above. Most of these are miracle texts, enhancing the less somber, or more festive, mood of the day. Again, there are reference to those who thirst coming to the waters, from Isaiah 55.

The fifth and final section of the poem would correspond to the old Passion Sunday, which is the fifth Sunday in Lent, *Judica* Sunday (from Psalm 43:1, "Vindicate me, O God, and defend my cause against an ungodly people"). The focus is on the Passion of Christ, anticipating the current practice in the Church of combining Passion Sunday and Palm Sunday. As discussed above, the Gospel traditionally appointed was from John 8:46-59, in which Jesus is almost stoned after a dispute about Abraham. Modern texts for the three years are the raising of Lazarus, the losing of one's life to save it, and the parable of the vineyard owner. The season of Lent culminates in the focus of this Sunday, since the Church moves on to Holy Week the following Sunday. Hence, in this fifth part of *The Waste Land*, the poem's themes culminate in this last section. And as Brooker and Bentley discuss this final part of the poem, they too make the link to the passion of Christ and the Lenten themes. First, they note the possibility of rain and

therefore of revival. Then, they state that "Eliot's note and the text itself point to the Passion of Christ. ... [The] narrator seems to have lost hope, the lines suggest that the narrator is speaking after the Crucifixion but before the Resurrection. Easter and redemption are not in view."<sup>250</sup>

This is a stronger link between the poem and Lent than we might have dared make on first reflection. But within their larger explanation of the poem, especially considering Eliot's references to Bradley and epistemology, and to myth and Weston and Frazer, Brooker and Bentley help buttress my point. Their road leading to suffering, the water-dripping song, and the speaker's movement in search of hope have a strong Lenten thrust to this part of the poem, and so to the entire poem. Further allusions noted by Brooker and Bentley are the Moses in the wilderness getting water from a rock and the unknown traveller to Emmaus. The reference to Moses getting water from a rock is found in two places — Exodus 17:1-7 and Numbers 20:10-11; and the reference to the figure on the road to Emmaus is found in Luke 24:13-35. According to Marion Hatchett, the Exodus passage shows up on the Third Sunday in Lent.<sup>251</sup> The Luke text appears on the Monday after Easter, according to Luther Reed.<sup>252</sup> Whenever these texts might appear, they certainly relate closely to the themes of *The Waste Land*, and of course likewise to the themes of the season of Lent.

An added element in the final section of *The Waste Land* is its ending, which is also the ending of the entire poem. In commenting on this final segment, I have noted Brooker and Bentley's "leap beyond philosophy into faith" — which can be seen not only in Eliot's own professional life at this point, but also in the thrust of the poem. Following the final fragments, the poem ends with the three words from "What the Thunder Said," — "control, give, sympathize." After the repeat of those three words comes "Shantih shantih shantih" — which Brooker and Bentley see as a "benediction." For them, the "only peace thinkable is that which passes (transcends, in the Bradleian sense) understanding." This transcendent understanding is certainly in line with the epistemological thread running throughout the poem, as Brooker and Bentley have

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250. Brooker and Bentley 174.

251. Hatchett 591.

252. Reed 508.



explained. Given the poem's composition at a time in Eliot's life when he would have been steeped in Bradley's epistemology, this is a very apt way of understanding of the poem's ending. For Brooker and Bentley, this not only ends the poem, but is also the transition for Eliot from philosophy to poetry. From the perspective of this current study, this is also a turning point in Eliot's faith journey — that is, it is the Lenten journey through the waste land that precedes and leads to the full conversion to follow in Eliot's life in a few years.

Considering the concluding "benediction" of the poem a bit more, it might be remembered that a benediction would end a liturgy, sending the worshipers off into the world for the week, their having been refreshed in the context of worship. In addition, the benediction comes at the end of the god of Thunder's instruction to monks. Thus, the benediction ends the poem and likewise Eliot's professional quest, just as it ends Christian and Eastern liturgies. As a further note, there are many benedictions in use in the Church, most of which are from scripture. This particular one is from the Upanishads, and, as Eliot translates it in his "Notes" to the poem, it corresponds to Philippians 4:7, "And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." In "The Order for Holy Communion of the Protestant Episcopal Church," this serves as the first part of the final benediction of the whole worship service. In the Lutheran tradition, this line survived, until the most recent worship book, as the *votum* or blessing after the sermon, which used to end the service of the Word portion of the liturgy, before turning to the Eucharist or Holy Communion.<sup>253</sup> Hence, while Brooker and Bentley may be right in saying that "The Fire Sermon" is not really a sermon at all, as has been indicated above, this benediction closing the poem suggests the possible sermonic nature of the whole poem. And together with the poem's central material involving Magnus Martyr and communion, my Lenten liturgical perspective on the poem is greatly enhanced. After all, in their postscript chapter on *The Waste Land*, Brooker and Bentley ask the question of the principal theme of the work, to which they answer, as quoted above, "*The Waste Land* is, in a basic way, a lament for lost community, ... a failure of communion and [the reader] will discover no place better suited

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253. Reed 693, 735, 703, 307, 308; Pfatteicher 221, 223.

for communion than a public bar near Magnus Martyr." So finally, returning to the middle of the middle section of the poem, "The Fire Sermon," and, as Brooker and Bentley have noted, the very center of the entire poem, both in terms of lines and in terms of theme, contains the passage on Magnus Martyr. For this study, also, this passage of the poem is central. Therefore, as regards Magnus Martyr at this point, let me close with a few more comments about the time of year, the geography, and the connection of *The Waste Land* to *The Canterbury Tales*.

On a recent trip to England, we visited St. Magnus the Martyr Church. The church is located between St. Paul's and the Tower of London, each of those sights walking distance away from the church. The church is near the Monument Underground stop, named for the nearby monument to the Great Fire of London of 1666. The church is also down the street and down the hill from Lloyd's Bank. Intersecting at the monument is Eastcheap, King William Street, and Cannon Street. Cannon Street is an extension of the Strand (going through Fleet and Ludgate passing by St. Paul's), and both are mentioned in the *Facsimile* (pp. 35, 47, 136, 141-142; ll. 66, 258-260). Queen Victoria Street crosses both Cannon and King William Streets. Up the hill on King William Street is St. Mary Woolnoth Church, and down the hill leads to London Bridge past the Monument and past St. Magnus the Martyr Church. Parallel to Eastcheap and nearer the River Thames (which is flowing east-west at this point) is Lower Thames Street, which runs along the north side of St. Magnus the Martyr Church. The south side of the church is near the river, and the west entrance (the east wall being where the altar is located) is almost on the approach to London Bridge.

We happened to be visiting on Michaelmas or St. Michael and All Angels day, 29 September 1995. Since Michaelmas traditionally marked the beginning of the fall school term, we assumed it would be a good day to visit the church, and indeed as we expected, a 1:00 p.m. celebration of the Eucharist was scheduled to mark the day. Before the liturgy, we were privileged to talk with the Verger, or caretaker of the church, Mr. Leonard Pierce. Mr. Pierce showed us around the church, which was undergoing extensive renovations. First, we were made aware that the original entrance to the building had been right on the approach to London Bridge, and had been

adjusted and moved over the years to make more room for the bridge's approach. Second, the original London Bridge had been of wood, as had houses along it. Then, because of the bridge's proximity to the Tower of London, beheaded victims had their heads paraded on pikes to the bridge and posted on the bridge during those days. In fact, a model of the wooden bridge from this time, complete with houses and shops on the bridge, and with small model heads on pikes, was being kept in the undercroft of the church until the model was to be returned to its proper place following the church renovations.<sup>254</sup> All this strongly links the church with the general area, with the Tower of London, and with London Bridge. Hence, the two passages alluded to above — the procession of the crowd of the dead over London Bridge up King William Street in lines 60-68, and the setting of music and the bar near Magnus Martyr in lines 257-265 — are the basis for Eliot's reference to the parade of the dead in the first case and the link between the two passages separated by 200 lines. Also, there is a further link with Eliot's own personal life, since he worked in the area and visited the church on work days at lunch times. That centers some of the action of the poem, and it establishes Magnus Martyr as a more than a peripheral element in the poem. Add to that the fact that the church was on the approach to the bridge, and there is a strong link to *The Canterbury Tales*, which of course coincides with the opening lines of the poem restating Chaucer's opening lines.

According to a small color brochure providing information on the church, the stained glass windows, and the organ, the church was originally founded as

*"Ecclesia St. Magni Civitatis London juxta pedem, vel as pedem Ponti London"*  
 — viz "The Church of St. Magnus at the foot of London Bridge." ... Its position, near the bridge, played an important part in the life of the church of the City. London Bridge with its twenty arches stretching across the river from the north to the south bank and forming a barrier through which the larger ships could not pass. Ships wishing to unload their goods into the City of London did so along the bankside from the Tower of London to the bridge.

... In the late 15th century the priests and clerks of the City were called to order for dallying in taverns and fishing at the "tyme of dyvnye services" instead of paying attention to their services. ... The medieval church was repaired in the early 17th century and completely rebuilt after the Great Fire of London in 1666 by Christopher Wren. ...

... In 1924-25 Martin Travers restored the interior when the "unsightly

254. Leonard Pierce, personal interview, 29 September 1995.

changes" made in the early 19th century were removed. ... Besant in his *City Churches and their Memories* writes "As to the interior of St. Magnus, up to a year ago it was worth visiting. Spacious and severe — rather bare, as a matter of fact — with high pews and a three-decker pulpit, it was thoroughly representative of the architect and the period. But now all has changed. The three-decker pulpit and high pews are gone by the board. In the place of the one simple altar there are now three, with candles to burn, and a heavy smell of incense, all in the Roman manner — hopelessly and absolutely out of keeping. That is how it strikes me."<sup>255</sup>

Interestingly enough, the church also has several beautiful stained glass windows commemorating former churches in the area that were burned in the Great Fire of 1666. One window is for St. Margaret's, Fish Street, from under the walls of which were sold fish. Another window commemorates the Chapel of St. Thomas Becket which had stood on London Bridge.<sup>256</sup> Such a history of the church and its related parishes, kept alive in the architecture and the stained glass windows of the current building, serve to strengthen the importance of the parish, both geographically and thematically, both to *The Waste Land* and to *The Canterbury Tales*. It is quite fascinating to note the prominent window to St. Thomas London Bridge on the south wall just above eye level, right about the point where one would enter and sit for a weekday Mass. Indeed, the Verger of the parish, along with the Interim Priest (the parish was vacant at the time) and the liturgical assistant in the Mass for St. Michael and All Angels, confirmed T. S. Eliot's frequent visits to the parish church during the week, since it was near Lloyd's, where Eliot worked during the years 1917-1918, well before the final composition of *The Waste Land* — at 17 Cornhill Street,<sup>257</sup> Cornhill being an extension of Cannon Street, which intersects with Queen Victoria Street and King William Street. In fact, the parish now has a stronger ministry to the local workers during the week than to a regular Sunday and weekend congregation.<sup>258</sup> To commemorate even further Eliot's relationship with the parish, on the front of their small color booklet, under the photograph of the interior "East end of the church" is the quotation, "Ionian White and

255. John Wittich, "St. Magnus the Martyr, Lower Thames Street, London, EC3R 6DN" (Great Britain: Beric Tempest, 1994) np; from the short two-page "History" section of the booklet.

256. Wittich, from the short four-page stained glass window section of the booklet.

257. Ackroyd 77.

258. Pierce.

Gold' T. S. Eliot."<sup>259</sup>

It seems reasonable to assume that if T. S. Eliot used to visit St. Magnus the Martyr Church, he must have done so before or during the final composition of *The Waste Land* to have included the description of the interior. This would, of course, also confirm his own personal spiritual quest during that time. Further, given the church's location at London Bridge, its connection to St. Thomas Chapel of London Bridge, and the stained glass window for St. Thomas Becket, it is rather easy to link the bridge with travel, and most especially with pilgrimage, especially to Canterbury, the site of the shrine to St. Thomas à Becket. From there, it is a short step to allusions to *The Canterbury Tales* as found in the opening lines of *The Waste Land*. Further, with that in mind, it is quite reasonable and appropriate to see a pilgrimage theme in Eliot's poem. Certainly, Jessie Weston's book, to which Eliot makes reference in his notes to the poem, nicely lays out the Arthurian material and the theme of the Fisher King. Given the setting of the church, plus the preceding religious references above, there is yet another reason for seeing *The Waste Land* as a poem of spiritual quest. As a final note, one of Eliot's later works was a drama of St. Thomas à Becket, *Murder in the Cathedral*, which nicely completes the pilgrimage motif.

To close this chapter, St. John of the Cross' *Ascent of Mount Carmel* speaks of the resolution of spiritual searching in terms of water, peace, and wisdom:

Accordingly the moment prayer begins, the soul, as one with a store of water, drinks peaceably, without the labor and the need of fetching the water through the channels of past considerations, forms, and figures. At the moment it recollects itself in the presence of God, it enters upon an act of general, loving, peaceful, and tranquil knowledge, drinking wisdom and love and delight.<sup>260</sup>

These are strong lines that gather up a couple of the thematic threads of Eliot's poem. The concluding line suggests the *votum* or "Shantih shantih shantih" line, discussed above. Finally, I conclude with a quotation of a common hymn for Lent that makes use of many of the same images I have been discussing. The hymn text was written by Elizabeth C. Clephane (1830-1869), just around and after the time of the Oxford Movement; the hymn tune, "St. Chris-

259. Wittich, on the front cover of the booklet.

260. John of the Cross, "The Ascent of Mount Carmel," *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh and Otilio Rodriguez, 2nd ed. (Washington: Institute of Carmelite Studies, 1979) 143.

topher (76 86 86 86),” was written by Frederick C. Maker (1844-1927), whose years bridge those of the text writer and the Oxford Movement and Eliot. The hymn first appeared in *Family Treasury* in 1872,<sup>261</sup> so may have been known by Eliot — at least the hymn makes use of similar images. It appears in the *Lutheran Book of Worship* as hymn 107, “Beneath the Cross of Jesus”:

1. Beneath the cross of Jesus  
I long to take my stand  
The shadow of a mighty rock  
Within a weary land,  
A home within a wilderness,  
A rest upon the way.  
From the burning of the noontide heat  
And burdens of the day.
2. Upon the cross of Jesus,  
My eye at times can see  
The very dying form of one  
Who suffered there for me.  
And from my contrite heart, with tears,  
Two wonders I confess:  
The wonder of his glorious love  
And my unworthiness.
3. I take, O cross, your shadow  
For my abiding place;  
I ask no other sunshine than  
The sunshine of his face;  
Content to let the world go by,  
To know no gain nor loss,  
My sinful self my only shame,  
My glory all, the cross.<sup>262</sup>

261. Marilyn Kay Stulken, *Hymnal Companion to the Lutheran Book of Worship* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1981) 206.

262. “Beneath the Cross of Jesus,” *Lutheran Book of Worship* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1978) hymn 107.