

T. S. Eliot's Oscillating Subjectivity: Reconsidering Abjection in *The Waste Land*

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Introduction

In Canto 74, the opening poem of *The Pisan Cantos*, T. S. Eliot is referred to in a curious way. In the passage in question, Ezra Pound mentions Eliot as “the Possum,” celebrating a conservative machismo:

yet say this to the Possum: a bang, not a whimper,
with a bang not with a whimper,

To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars. (Pound 445)

This quote obviously alludes to the ending lines of “The Hollow Men”—“*This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper*” (*Poems* 1 84). However, we also recognize at a glance that the positions of “a bang” and “a whimper” have been reversed from the original lines. The passage, referring sarcastically to Eliot, apparently contends that “To build the city of Dioce,” who is famous as the first great king of the Medes, we need not the effeminate “whimper” but the manly “bang.” Pound’s commitment to masculinity expressed in the quote is corroborated by Carroll F. Terrell, the annotator of *The Cantos*. In Terrell’s view, “Pound likens Deïoces’ aspiration to create a paradisaical city with what he perceived to be Mussolini’s intentions” (Terrell 362); so “the city of Dioce,” into which Mussolini’s social-economic reform is projected, is all the more likely to be connected with virility because he is a leader whom Pound idealized as a *heroic* figure. Pound’s narrator-persona, as deployed in a colossal number of his works, including *The Cantos*, is of course not invariably a masculine one and his gender and sexuality are elusive and difficult to pin down. Nevertheless, the beginning of Canto 74 surely demonstrates the macho Pound who adheres to a traditional ideology of masculinity, as if asserting that “Poetry speaks phallic direction” (qtd. in Kenner 104).

Modernist poets such as Pound and Wyndham Lewis tended to view the aesthetic language of the Decadents at the end of the 19th century as a feminine one, which hampers objectivity and clarity by its opacity (Nicholls 195-96).¹ They attempted “the restoration of virility to poetry” (Lamos 55) so as to counteract and overcome this kind of debilitation. Eliot himself was no exception to this male chauvinistic movement in the beginning of the 20th century. As Leila Bellour writes, “his [Eliot’s] aesthetic theories are misogynist. Eliot fulminates against emotional intensity and morbidity, because he considers femininity and women as defiling and pernicious” (Bellour 28). However, the more we scrutinize Pound’s version of masculinity in the quote from Canto 74, the more apparent it becomes that the Possum’s, or Eliot’s effeminacy represented there is highlighted. This passage gives the reader the impression that Pound speaks of Eliot as a womanish poet, or as a poet *possessed* by the feminine.

What sort of femininity is Eliot haunted by and how is his struggle with it inscribed in his poetical practice? My argument begins with these questions. This article will examine representations of women in Eliot’s early poems centering on *The Waste Land* as a starting point to reconsider the poet’s contradictions and dilemmas over femaleness. What is to be especially focused on is Fresca, the female socialite described in the original drafts of *The Waste Land* which were later excised by Pound. Through investigating the Fresca section, which has received comparatively little critical attention so far, I will indicate that the speaker tries in vain to exorcise the maternal-female as the abject and oscillates between the semiotic and the symbolic. This (re)interpretation of the speaker’s rootless subjectivity, I would also like to argue, offers us an opportunity to shed light on the enigmatic syntax of the beginning of *The Waste Land*.

1. Representations of Women in Eliot’s Early Poems

“Portrait of a Lady” is especially worth paying attention to as the first step toward exploring the feminine in Eliot. This poem deals mainly with the inner struggle of its speaker, who tries to escape from the very subtle seduction of an older upper-class pedantic lady. As B. C. Southam annotates, this middle-aged patroness is said to have been based on a real woman. The model for the character lived in Beacon Hill, and Eliot and Conrad Aiken often visited her in

their Harvard years (Southam 58). It is, accordingly, quite possible to identify the nervous speaker with the young Eliot himself. In the following passage, a quotation from the beginning of the poem, the lady, in her room with “An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb” (*Poems I 10*), makes a comment on the concert she and the speaker went to together:

‘So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul
Should be resurrected only among friends
Some two or three, who will not touch the bloom
That is rubbed and questioned in the concert room.’ (*Poems I 10*)

Using exaggerated and roundabout phrases peculiar to upper-class society, she implies that the true value of Chopin can be understood only by an elite handful of people. Needless to say, her language clearly reflects her strong class-consciousness and her self-confidence in her own sensitivity to high art.

Taking into account the discussion of Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar, this misogynistic description of the lady is likely to be related to the frustration and irritation of “a number of modernist male writers” who “may have been as disturbed by their economic dependence on women as they were troubled by women’s usurpation of the marketplace” (Gilbert and Gubar 147). In any case, her voice directed toward the speaker as one of her own rare sympathizers—“my friend” (*Poems I 11*)—never changes his mind. While she speaks to him, inside his brain begins jazzy music, “a dull tom-tom” (*Poems I 11*), which is completely different from Chopin; and then, as if to elude her class classification pressed upon him, the young man’s consciousness sinks into his familiar and vulgar world.² Although some indications of pitiful feelings for her can be detected in the speaker, who fails to refuse her love explicitly, the lady is depicted to no small extent as a *précieuse ridicule* or a disgusting and repugnant woman in this poem. Stereotyped women flaunting their literary and artistic appreciation like this are true of the salon in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock.”

In addition, apart from these *précieuses*, a contrasting role of women typical of Eliot’s poems is the prostitute. For example, the woman standing “in the light of the door / Which opens on her like a grin” (*Poems I 18*) at night in “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” can be regarded as a whore who tempts the speaker to go to her brothel. The impression is eerie due to her “distortion,” in lines like “the corner of her eye / Twists like a crooked pin” (*Poems I 18*). In a set of Sweeney

poems in *Poems* (1920), too, the protagonist Sweeney visits a brothel, where he is surrounded by a number of prostitutes. Among them, “She [Rachel] and the lady in the cape,” who “Are suspect, thought to be in league” (*Poems* 1 52) in “Sweeney among the Nightingales,” take on a sinister aspect in that their existence intimates the poem’s terrible ending—Sweeney is brutally killed after the fashion of Agamemnon’s murder by Clytemnestra. Furthermore, Mrs. Porter, the woman in Part III of *The Waste Land* whom Sweeney goes to see and on whom at first sight is superimposed the picture of the goddess Diana bathing with her nymphs in the spring, is also actually a whore.

O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter

And on her daughter

They wash their feet in soda water (*Poems* 1 62)

As Southam notes, in the original popular ballad, on which this passage is based, Mrs. Porter “a Cairo brothel-keeper, together with her daughter, was notorious among Australian troops for passing on venereal disease” (Southam 168). Her and her daughter’s act of washing their feet in *The Waste Land*, what is more, could be replaced with that of washing their cunts after sexual service (Rainey 105).

In this way, the early Eliot displays his obsession with both pedantic ladies whose class-consciousness and inclination for high art are satirized, and prostitutes who appear in the city or in a bagnio at night. On the other hand, Colleen Lamos has pointed out another female archetype remarkably distinct from coarse women in Eliot’s poems, mentioning his ambivalent feelings for his mother. “The love for the mother produces a divergence in Eliot’s representations of women into virgins and whores, into exalted images of divine women whose apotheosis is Dante’s Beatrice, and into depraved, carnal women whose nadir is Fresca in the drafts of *The Waste Land*” (Lamos 81). According to Ackroyd’s biography, the influence of Thomas Eliot’s mother, Charlotte, upon him in education and other fields was so great that her presence utterly overwhelmed that of his father, with whom Eliot is said never to have had a feeling of familiarity. Frustrated in her own literary talent, Charlotte prepared her son’s way in literature with meticulous care and had high expectations of him; as a result between the two, Charlotte and Eliot, arose “a most complex relationship,” in which love and mental pressure are intermixed, though not necessarily a controlling one (Ackroyd 19-20). Lamos, focusing on biographical

facts, especially his “complex relationship” with his mother, divides Eliot’s representations of women into two categories: Sacred women and Profane women. The latter include the pedantic ladies and the prostitutes as we have seen so far, whereas a typical example of the former, for instance, is the “hyacinth girl” in Part I of *The Waste Land* (*Poems* 156) because she almost exceptionally succeeds in avoiding Eliot’s misogynistic eye.³ As for this character, critics and researchers like James E. Miller would contend that she / he is actually the poet’s gay lover.⁴ And yet, “The protagonist’s eyes fail as he gazes into the heart of light, or heavenly city, just as Dante’s eyes fail when he encounters Beatrice in the earthly paradise, or when he gazes at the beatific vision” (Manganiello 54). In view of Manganiello’s argument, the hyacinth girl can be interpreted as an idealized female figure parallel to Beatrice, the character who conducts Dante toward Heaven. Eliot, together with Pound, holds an impassioned admiration and veneration for Dante throughout his career as poet. Taking this similitude into consideration, this episode may be situated in *The Waste Land* as “the poem’s principal epiphanic moment” (Cooper 71).

2. Fresca as the Abject Female Figure

Eliot’s representations of women dichotomized into Sacred and Profane are precisely analogous to Louis-Ferdinand Céline’s delineations of women, from which Julia Kristeva derives her idea of “abject” / “abjection.” She states as follows:

On sait quel dédoublement de la figure féminine il opère: d’un côté la face d’idéalisation courtoise—la danseuse—, et de l’autre côté, la paranoïaque, la prostituée plus ou moins dévalorisée, mais toujours susceptible de pouvoir et qui fait que le carnaval des femmes chez Céline n’est pas loin de l’apocalypse. (Kristeva, “Pouvoirs” 52)

It is known how he divides into two parts the feminine figure: the aspect of courtly idealization on the one hand—the dancer—, and on the other hand, the paranoiac, the prostitute, who are more or less devalued but always likely to have power; therefore the carnival of these women, in Céline, is not very different from the apocalypse. (my trans.)

This two-sidedness of idealized and despised women in Céline corresponds exactly with the female archetypes in Eliot’s works. This is also reflective of the

ambivalent quality of abject, which can turn into the object of captivation and also into that of repugnance.

In Kristeva's theory, abjection primarily means the act of excluding the horrible and appalling—the abject—like a religious ritual for exorcising impurities. Nevertheless, when defined in detail in a psychoanalytic context, this action signifies “nos tentatives les plus anciennes de nous démarquer de l'entité *maternelle*” (“our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity”; Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 20; Roudiez 13) in order to be extricated from the pre-Oedipal phase, where mother and child, or self and other, are unseparated, and then to enter into the patriarchal symbolic order. On this account, the object of exclusion prescribed as the abject is “le féminin en tant que lié à l'autorité d'une mère fantasmatique détentrice d'un pouvoir” (“the feminine as far as it is associated with the authority of a phantasmal mother who holds power”; my trans.; Kristeva, “Pouvoirs” 51) but these maternal-feminine characteristics possess ambivalent values that provoke not only a strong aversion to themselves but also a lust for the pleasure of fusion of mother and child. This two-sidedness of the abject, captivating as well as horrifying, accordingly, is closely and dangerously linked with “la rechute dans la dépendance d'un pouvoir aussi sécurisant qu'étouffant” (“the constant risk of falling back under the sway of a power as securing as it is stifling”; Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 20; Roudiez 13).

Maud Ellman perceives a violent bursting-out in Eliot's poems, above all, in *The Waste Land*, saying that “Indeed, *The Waste Land* is one of the most abject texts in English literature, in every sense” (Ellman 93). Ellman, for example, picks up representations of corpses—“le comble de l'abjection” (“the utmost of abjection”; Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 11-12; Roudiez 4)—scattered in the text. She then hints at their close affinity with repetitiousness and recursiveness of the abject once excluded and repressed, in conjunction with the episode of Part I, where the speaker wonders whether the corpse planted in Stetson's garden has sprouted or not (Ellman 94).

As Ellman argues, manifold aspects involved with the abject can be found in the text of *The Waste Land*. This essay, however, directs our attention to Fresca. She appears in the beginning of Part III in the original drafts and is often explained as “a collection point for a plethora of negatives about females” (DuPlessis 50). This female character, clearly an allusion to Alexander Pope's Belinda, seems to belong to the leisured class and indulges in the culture of

Decadence, of which Arthur Symons and Walter Pater are representative—the “feminine” art which modernist male poets recognized as a hypothetical enemy. Her words in a letter ““And when to Paris? I must make an end, / My dear, believe me, your devoted / friend”” (*Poems I* 333) remind us of the patroness in “Portrait of a Lady,” who mourns the young man’s going abroad, perhaps to Paris, and addresses him as “my friend.” Moreover, her physical trait of being “white-armed” (*Poems I* 332) recalls the women’s “Arms that are braceleted and white and bare” (*Poems I* 7) in “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” and, on top of that, the image of horrible drowned bodies, “White bodies naked on the low damp ground” (*Poems I* 62) in *The Waste Land*.

What is notable in the depiction of Fresca’s everyday life in this episode is the misogynistic emphasis on her physicality. This is evident in her series of actions such as eating, drinking and defecating—these easily cause us to recall excrement as an exemplar of the abject (Kristeva, “Pouvoirs” 50)—and in the “good old hearty female stench” (*Poems I* 260). This sort of description brings to mind the similar lines “her strange synthetic perfumes, / Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused / And drowned the sense in odours” (*Poems I* 58) of Part II. By the same token, the lines quoted below are most likely to show Eliot’s attitude toward pedantic ladies with high-art taste.

Women grown intellectual grow dull

And lose the mother wit of natural trull. (*Poems I* 333)

In the previous section, we have confirmed that women in Eliot’s works roughly reduce to the two figures, *précieuses* and prostitutes. Here the speaker’s or Eliot’s voice which betrays his thought that, by comparison, the “natural trull” is more preferable than the *précieuse* could be heard from these cryptic lines.

Does Fresca, however, incarnate just “a collection point for a plethora of negatives about females” in the poem? Seemingly, negative images are lingering over her owing to Eliot’s portrayal of her. Robert S. Lehman discerns in Fresca a figure of the idealized poet that Eliot praises and eulogizes in his essays.

Fresca moves all too easily from the consumption of Gibbon, Richardson, and Pater to the generation of her own gloomy verse. Indeed, passing from the consumption of the tradition to the production of verse is for Fresca nearly as thoughtless, as automatic, as passing from the consumption of tea and chocolates to the production of bodily waste. . . . Her behavior is dangerously close to the behavior of the mature poet: she reads fairly widely

from the Western European tradition and out of these excursions into literary history she creates her art. . . . Like Eliot's mature poet, Fresca sacrifices herself to an impersonal (because automatic) activity. (Lehman 72)

Just as she drinks tea and eats chocolates for breakfast and after that goes to defecate "the needful stool" (*Poems I* 332), she absorbs traditional literary works and then composes nearly automatically—these dispositions associate Fresca's writing of poems with Eliot's impersonal theory of poetry, Lehman observes. In other words, Fresca, from this point of view, comes to be the embodiment of the "mature poet," which Eliot frequently mentions in his essays. If we refer again to her discourse on Céline, Kristeva suggests that the image of mother, located at the center of crowds of abject women portrayed in his works, has one aspect of being "Idéale, artiste, vouée à la beauté" ("Ideal, artistically inclined, dedicated to beauty"; Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 185; Roudiez 157). In the same manner as Céline's case, Fresca, although she is apparently described in a severely misogynistic way, can be construed as an ideal artist or an apostle of beauty. This two-facedness does reflect the ambiguity of Eliot's attitude toward women, even the abject itself. As already discussed in the previous section, Eliot repetitiously delineated abject women from his early poetry to *The Waste Land*. The reason why is that in modern times, when religious institutions in a position to exorcise impurities have collapsed, art and literature assume the function of purifying and sublimating the abject as a substitute for them (Kristeva, "Pouvoirs" 52). Still, Eliot's continual attempt to exorcise the abject through his early works leads to *The Waste Land's* stage of development in which the speaker-subject fails to exclude the abject entirely, and, because of this, is unable to be extricated from the chaotic realm where the maternal principle is predominant.

3. Between the Mother and the Father

In terms of this psychoanalytic context, it is worthy of attention that in his essay "Hamlet" Eliot demonstrates deep interest in the relationship between Hamlet and his mother, though he admits its perspective is not necessarily a comprehensive one—"Mr. Robinson is undoubtedly correct in concluding that the essential emotion of the play is the feeling of a son towards a guilty mother" ("Hamlet" 47). As his own explanation for his motive behind writing this, Eliot mentions his dissatisfaction with previous criticism of the play. In the view of

Eliot, such romantic critics as Goethe and Coleridge forget that “[their] first business was to study a work of art” (“Hamlet” 45), and Eliot criticizes them for “find[ing] in Hamlet a vicarious existence for their own artistic realization” (“Hamlet” 45) at the beginning of the argument.

It is probable, however, that just as Eliot actually fails in “an escape from emotion” and “an escape from personality” (“Tradition” 43) in *The Waste Land*, so in this essay he is not able to construe Hamlet from the standpoint of a critic detached entirely from his own personality. It is well known that Freud has perceived the epitome of the Oedipus complex in Hamlet’s anguish. According to Freud’s analysis, Hamlet’s inner struggle which hampers his vengeance on his uncle Claudius probably originates in his fear that killing Claudius would lead to reproaching himself, for Hamlet also has a latent desire to love his mother in place of his father (Freud 282-83). Taking into account Eliot’s ambivalent feelings toward abject motherhood, we couldn’t easily say that the essay “Hamlet” succeeds in providing an impartial and objective analysis of the play; rather, in spite of his critical attitude toward Goethe and Coleridge in the argument, Eliot’s attention to Hamlet’s disgust for his mother Gertrude seems to be derived from Eliot’s personal sympathy for Hamlet. In brief, Eliot’s subject, which wavers between his desire for the Mother and disgust at her, resonates with Hamlet’s nauseated repudiation.

Toward the end of the essay, Eliot refers to Hamlet’s inexplicable feelings which have no objective equivalent, writing that “The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known” (“Hamlet” 49). “The intense feeling” as Eliot puts it is quite interesting firstly because its quality is explained as either “ecstatic or terrible”—this two-sidedness reminds us of the abject—and secondly because this kind of feeling, he thinks, could be felt by “every person of sensibility.” Considering this passage, it seems that despite his emphasis on not identifying with the character at the beginning, Eliot speaks as if he would also be a victim of this intense feeling.

Eliot’s dilemmas over this abject motherliness and his strong sense of order are two sides of the same coin. Eliot as literary critic often vehemently attacked the Romantic individual and principle of “the Inner Light” (*ASG* 59) that in his view characterizes D. H. Lawrence; he instead gave enormous credence to tradition, that is, the symbolic order of language. This attitude sharply

distinguishes Eliot from Céline. In Kristeva's view, Céline is averse to order and displays "la rage contre le Symbolique" ("rage against the Symbolic"; Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 209; Roudiez 178). Unlike Céline on this point, Eliot firmly committed himself to the symbolic order. Indeed, his order-oriented nature is salient in the text of *The Waste Land*. Of course, this tradition-consciousness is primarily exemplified in omnivorous quotations from and allusions to an immense range of literary works through all ages and countries, most of which belong to the canon of classic European literature. Nonetheless, his longing of this kind is more conspicuous in the following passage.

The sea was calm, your heart would have responded
Gaily, when invited, beating obedient
To controlling hands (*Poems I* 71)

These lines are subsequent to "Damyata," the last of three doctrines revealed by the thunder, which decrees "Control yourself." As evinced in "beating obedient / To controlling hands," the speaker's propensity to leave his / herself to the outside authority and his / her desire to be controlled by patriarchal hands are clearly expressed. Likewise, the lines below, which have their origin in Ferdinand's words lamenting his father's shipwreck in *The Tempest*, are also suggestive in support of Eliot's aspiration for order.

While I was fishing in the dull canal
On a winter evening round behind the gashouse
Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
And on the king my father's death before him. (*Poems I* 62)

The subject "I" certainly reflects the image of Ferdinand, but this scene also pertains closely to the Holy Grail legend and its story of the fisher king. If our attention is paid (to be more accurate, as far as we comply with Eliot's own directions) to the use of its "mythical method" ("*Ulysses*" 178) in the construction of the text, its main purpose is to recuperate and regenerate the incapacitated fisher king and the devastation of his land accompanying his mutilation. Given the fact that the speaker-subject is merged with Ferdinand's lamentation of his "father's death," which ends up being just a groundless fear in *The Tempest*, *The Waste Land* can be regarded as a text centering round the restoration and reestablishment of the father-king, of the patriarchal order.

The Waste Land, as insinuated in the phrase "A heap of broken images" (*Poems I* 55), is often considered as a fragmentary and chaotic text, which has

no unity or coherence. Indeed, already at the famous beginning of the 1922 edition of *The Waste Land*, we are able to see the semiotic language spurting out to disrupt a normative syntactic construction—the symbolic. If Fresca embodies abjection in terms of explicit content, the following lines essentialize the poet’s anguish in terms of implicit form.

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. (*Poems I 55*)

From the perspective of syntax, we notice that each present participle, which under normal sentence structure would govern its own object next to it on the right, is left behind at the end of the line. To put it another way, a total of 5 present participles introduce a construction immediately flicked away to head the next line. This style deviates substantially from the normative syntax. What is quite crucial at this point is that almost all the verbs that conjugate into present participles express becoming and rearing. In Kristevan terms, symbolizing the Mother occurs through present participles in contrast to symbolizing the Child through objective nouns. This severance signifies the inscription into the text of a keen desire to detach oneself from a state of fusion of mother and child in the pre-Oedipal phase and to establish a distinct borderline and outline of self and subjectivity, through excluding the maternal—the abject.

The “hyacinth girl” episode, on the other hand, stands for the speaker being drawn to the semiotic. Although the abject is essentially two-sided and ambiguous, hatred and aversion are often banished from one’s mind (Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 16). The episode in which the speaker becomes unable to speak testifies to the fact that in front of the Sacred woman figure comparable with Beatrice, the Profaneness of the abject is dispelled. The subject, conducted by the pleasure of fusion of mother and child, is pulled back from the paternal realm, the core of whose formation is language, into the maternal realm where the subject’s drives flow in whirls without language acquisition. Similarly to this, Tiresias, originally a character in Greek mythology and “the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest” (*Poems I 74*), oscillates between male and female sexual

identity.

I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives,
Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see

.....

I Tiresias, old man with wrinkled dugs (*Poems I 63*)

In this excerpt, where Tiresias is introduced for the first time to the reader, he is described as “Old man with wrinkled female breasts,” which exemplify female and motherly physicality. Their “wrinkled” image is abject and its repetition in the text implies that the maternal-feminine traits are undetachable from Tiresias. In this sense, Tiresias is not merely homologous with but also the embodiment of the subject, who grapples with and tries to exorcise the maternal and the feminine as the abject but cannot exclude it completely.

Concerning whoever endeavors to be freed from the pre-Oedipal phase by virtue of abjection, Kristeva states as below:

Constructeur de territoires, de langues, d’œuvres, le *jeté* n’arrête pas de délimiter son univers dont les confins fluides—parce que constitués par un non-objet, l’abject—remettent constamment en cause sa solidité et le poussent à recommencer. Bâisseur infatigable, le *jeté* est en somme un *égaré*. Un voyageur dans une nuit à bout fuyant. (Kristeva, *Pouvoirs* 16)

A deviser of territories, languages, works, the *deject* never stops demarcating his universe whose fluid confines—for they are constituted of a non-object, the abject—constantly question his solidity and impel him to start afresh. A tireless builder, the deject is in short a *stray*. He is on a journey, during the night, the end of which keeps receding. (Roudiez 8)

This passage, being reminiscent of a flâneur sauntering in the city at night, suggests that the speaker’s or Eliot’s rootless subject struggling with the abject in *The Waste Land* is able to locate itself neither within the symbolic nor within the semiotic realm, adrift between the two. Eliot himself oscillates between the Mother and the Father as a flâneur who may be construed as “the protagonist” roaming through the waste land, in spite of innumerable voices resonating polyphonously in the text.

In an article which delves elaborately into hysteria in *The Waste Land*, Wayne Koestenbaum concludes that “it [*The Waste Land*] is a feminine text” detecting the similitude between the apparent passivity of the poem and the symptoms of hysterical patients (Koestenbaum 135). Nevertheless, as we

have seen, the speaker wanders rootlessly between the maternal realm and the patriarchal order. This androgenous figure overlaps with Tiresias, who still abides at a halfway point of the two-sex realms notwithstanding going back and forth between the male and the female. Therefore, if approached from this Tiresian rootlessness, *The Waste Land* is not necessarily “a feminine text.” It oscillates between the Mother and the Father, otherwise phrased, between femaleness and maleness, though drawn more strongly to the Mother and femaleness.

While celebrating the patriarchally symbolic order in his theory of poetics, Eliot is a poet haunted distinctively by the maternal-feminine. Eliot is gendered as an effeminate poet in Canto 74 possibly because Pound perceives the Eliot who feels fear and hatred toward the feminine but is sometimes captivated by a reverie of fusion. If so, behind the deletion of the Fresca section from the drafts of *The Waste Land*, we may find Pound’s acumen in Canto 74 in recognizing his friend’s rootless anguish.

Notes

1 As Christopher Beach explains in arguing *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley*, the young Pound was under the influence of “a decadent Pre-Raphaelite sensibility” (Beach 31).

2 The young Eliot’s keen interest in vulgarity is represented in the Boston night-scenes of the original opening section of *The Waste Land* (*Poems* 1 324-25). For more on his homosocial bonding in the Harvard community, see Robert Crawford, *Young Eliot: From St. Louis to The Waste Land* (Vintage, 2016).

3 As for a possible model for the hyacinth girl, Lyndall Gordon writes that “Emily Hale became the source for a series of garden encounters in Eliot’s poetry, moments of romantic attraction to a woman” (Gordon 81).

4 If the hyacinth girl represents Eliot’s gay lover, the character could be interpreted as belonging to the abject in that their same-sex love disturbs the symbolic order where heterosexual love is prescribed as one of the social norms and therefore it is excluded from and suppressed by it.

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