The Search for Spirituality within British Modernism

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1.1 Problem statement

Focusing primarily on T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway*, this thesis will examine the search for spirituality and meaning situated within British modernism. The author John Cottingham writes of the term 'spirituality' that it refers to 'activities which aim to fill the creative and hereditary space that remains when science and technology have satisfied our material needs.'[1] No wonder, then, that spirituality came of essence in a time where science and technology had started to influence and change the world forever. Modernist literature epitomizes this move towards a new world. McFarlane and Bradbury call it 'the art consequent on the dis-establishing of communal reality and conventional notions of causality, on the destruction of traditional notions of the wholeness of individual character [...].'[2] This 'art of dis-establishment' is present in the works of Eliot and Woolf, visible in both form and content in their writings. In her 1924 essay 'Mr. Bennett and Mrs. Brown' Virginia Woolf writes:

> All human relations shifted – those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics, and literature.[3]

These fundamental changes of society all aid in the creation of a spiritual vacuum within modern man; with all of his previous, fundamental value-systems and beliefs challenged and dismissed, where is man to put his faith now? Where does he turn for comfort, relief, and solace in the new world? This 'spiritual vacuum' and the modern

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[1] John Cottingham, *The Spiritual Dimension: Religion, Philosophy and Human Value* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 3.
[2] Malcolm Bradbury and John McFarlane, *Modernism 1890-1930,* rev.edn (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p. 11.
[3] *The Modern British Novel 1878-2001,* p. 8.

search for a ‘new’ spiritual dimension in life are firmly embedded in the modernist literary tradition, not only in its contents, but also – or perhaps particularly, in its literary form.

This introductory chapter lays the basis for the structural, theoretical, and analytical content of this thesis. Following this first outline of ‘problem statement’ I will proceed towards a discussion of the period of modernism. Discussing the era’s particularity, I will look at the many challenges the modernists faced – such as the Great War, industrialism, and secularisation of society - and the impact these had on the style and themes of modernist literature. Following this section I will present the works in question, thus incorporating and commenting on the issue of genre. The problems of comparing poetry and prose will be addressed here, as well as the challenges modernist literature poses with an overview t any analysis of its works. As a fourth aspect of this introduction I will present the theoretical basis for my thesis, divided into three sub-chapters, the first of these being the theoretical approach towards modernist literature in general. I will argue that a theoretical basis leaning towards the theory of reader-response is of value to an analysis of modernist texts, as it emphasizes the role of the active reader and the notion of the ‘open work’, both valuable aids in a discussion of modernist works. Modernist poetry, as well as prose, does seem to require a new and different approach of analysis, and needs to be modified in the direction of the individual work as well as being met with an open mind. Martha Nussbaum is a valuable theorist in a search for meaning within modernist literature. Her main points which are relevant to this problem are the value of emotions, and emotional reactions within literature, as well a mapping of human development and growth that literature seems to explore. As I will explain shortly my method is that of close reading, chosen mainly on the basis of this method’s generous

nature and respect towards text's that occupy many levels of meaning. As a sixth element I will specify the problem to be discussed, thus presenting the background, and the elements needed in favour of 'the search for spirituality.' As a seventh, and final point, I will provide a general outline of the chapters in my thesis.

1.2. The period

The modernist period, from 1890–1940 approximately, was to produce a type of literature the world had never seen before. Within the breaking point between an old, rural based society and a new, industrialized one, a new way of thinking – and writing emerged. Michael Levinson's words address this topic to the point,

> Crisis is inevitably the central term of art in discussions of this turbulent cultural moment. Overused as it has been, it still glows with justification. War! Strike! Women! The Irish! Or (within the popular press), Nihilism! Relativism! Fakery! This century had scarcely grown used to its own name, before it learned the twentieth would be the epoch of crisis, real and manufactured, physical and metaphysical, material and symbolic. The catastrophe of the First World War, and before that, the labour struggles, the emergence of feminism, the race for empire, these inescapable forces of turbulent social modernization were not simply looming on the outside as the destabilizing context of cultural Modernism; they penetrated the interior of artistic invention.[4]

As masses of young soldiers perished in the trenches of the Great War and hoards of workers floated across Eliot's gloomy London Bridge towards the City, the writings that emerged from this era demanded a new individualism, a sense of belonging, and

[4] *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* ed. by Michael Levinson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 4

a place to call home. Bradbury elaborates on the effect of this 'newness' in the modern novel,

> The established form of the novel – fictional prose narrative – was acquiring a different kind of writer, a different kind of subject, a different kind of writing process, a different kind of reader, a different social and economic foundation. It was altering in length, appearance, price, and in social, moral and commercial purpose. It was multiplying, dividing its audience, reaching into new kinds of expressions, undertaking daring new kinds of exploration, demanding new kinds of attention, claiming new freedoms of method and subject: new rights to social and sexual frankness, new complexities of discourse and form.[5]

Bradbury is right to note that modernist literature represents a break with most literary traditions gone before it, the most noticeable changes being the shift of focus from the plot itself, typical of the realist novel, towards the artistic presentation of individuality and introspection. This shift is apparent through literary devices such as the break-up of narrative frames, the frequent use of interior monologue and free indirect style, and the use of multiple, or 'subjective' narrators. In 1899, Henry James wrote of the new 'self-consciousness' in fictional art that "it can do simply everything, and that is its strength and its life." And it is exactly this 'new self-consciousness' that created fruitful and innovative literary compositions of the modernist era.

However modern psychology might feel about Freud's work one cannot escape his vast influence on modernist texts, and the very fact that he himself *was* a modernist. Despite the ambivalence surrounding Freud's work, it is my view that one cannot exclude Freud from a thorough analysis of modernist texts. One might prefer to

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[5] *The Modern British Novel 1878- 2001,* p. 5

refrain from direct references to his name, or his theories, but the majority of the many psychological reflexes referred to will, inevitably, have their point of origin within the teaching of Freud. Philip Weinstein explains some of the reasons of why this is so:

> Then why use Freud at all, why see him as "plotting modernism"? The reason is that, with exemplary seriousness, Freudian thought articulates, *conceptually*, stances towards the subject in space / time that modernist writers configure and deploy, *narratively.* He provides conceptual structures that bring into fresh focus the logic of modernist imagery – structures that often shape modernist practice (the "plot" of modernism), however different the motives in play.[6]

Without submitting to a 'Freudian reading' (focusing primarily on sexual repression as the root of 'all difficulty'), one finds that many of Freud's concepts are invaluable to the understanding of modernist texts. Life and the experience of living surround modernism and its art forms,

> Such fools we are, she thought, crossing Victoria Street. For Heaven only knows why one loves it so, making it up, building it round one, tumbling it, creating every moment afresh; but the veriest frumps, the most dejected of miseries sitting on doorsteps (drinking their downfall) do the same; can't be dealt with, she felt positive, by Acts of Parliament for that very reason: they love life.[7]

The 'love of life' Woolf refers to here is of importance when interpreting modernist literature. The distress and frustration conveyed through these modern texts did not

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[6] Philip Weinstein, *Unknowing: The Works of Modernist Fiction* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2005), p. 82, original emphasis.
[7] Virginia Woolf, *Mrs Dalloway,* new edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p.4. Further references to this edition are given in the text.

necessarily emerge from a dismissal of life from the individual, but an, opposing, love *for* life. This, again, points towards the *existential phenomenology* that follows the modernist thought and practice.[8] Philip Weinstein explains,

> Here I am. To what am I exposed? To what calls on me is my annunciation of presence already exposed? The phrase points to a core drama on which this study is focused: the modernist subject ("I") located in an undomesticated spatial/ temporal scene- "here" (nowhere else) and "now" (a moment stripped of before and after, split off from the temporal project). Finally, the phrase assumes the significance of *my being in question* at a given moment. A phenomenology is already in place, in which what I do (or what happens to me) now, as I relate to what is outside, *matters.*[9]

Again one finds the individual at the core of modernist literature. However, this individual incorporates the conception of the subject related to the surrounding world, as the object, a relation that incorporates both space and time. The aftermath of the horrors of the Great War, the influence of urbanization, and an ever-growing industrialism combined with expansive technological advances, all aid in the complete change of life style for most of the western world. This 'newness' is not to be taken lightly as it positions the modern 'I' directly into this 'undomesticated spatial/ temporal scene.' Existentialism is important to my thesis as it explains the underlying drive of modernist thought. It is part of the deep-rooted humanism that modernism amplifies, the very essence of the notion of 'here I am'; life matters, the individual matters, and so does the inner life of the individual. Here is perhaps one reason why modernist texts evoke such strong emotions in the modernist audience;

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[8] See for example David E. Cooper, *Existentialism,* 2nd. edn (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers,1999), p. 5.

[9] *Unknowing: The Work of Modernist Fiction*, p. 11.

simply the fact that the reader too, acknowledges the value of life. The world matters because we matter, and vice versa – and that is worth writing about. This, in turn, reflects back to Martha Nussbaum's claim that there are certain aspects to life that only literature can describe accurately.[10] It is my hope that this thesis will shed light on these aspects of life.

Of additional importance to the expression of modernism is the vast progress in science: Freud, Darwin, and Marx create a collective, fundamental, and irrevocable change in the western way of thinking. Moreover, Nietzsche proclaims Christianity as being merely 'a gigantic fraud perpetrated by the psyche on itself'.[11] The Western world becomes a secularized one – man becomes smaller, more insignificant in the greater scheme of things. Yet he is more capable, more in control of his own life through the various advances of the twentieth century, a paradox ever present in the psyche of modern man.

It is worth adding here – almost as a final anecdote on the period – Michael Levinson's words on the art of modernism:

> And if there is one temperamental difference sharply separating our late-century selves and our early century progenitors, it may be our own instinctive distance from the belief that the publication of a poem or the exhibition of a painting can so triumphantly confirm the creator and so decisively serve the culture.[12]

One can only look back on such a mentality with a certain sense of jealousy, and a feeling that a postmodern society has lost something along the way. Art used in such a

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[10] Nussbaum and her theories will be thoroughly presented in part 1.4 of the Introduction.
[11] Michael Bell, 'The Metaphysics of Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, ed. by Michael Levenson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 10.
[12] *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* p. 5.

way as to 'serve culture' may end up closing the gaps between philosophy, politics, and religion, and it may eventually – as both Woolf and Eliot show us, become an invaluable tool in man's search for meaning within himself and the world he lives in.

1.3. Works to be discussed and the problem of genre

The two works of my choosing initially present themselves as utterly different since Eliot's work is represented in the form of a poem, and Woolf's in the form of a novel. I find, however, that this difference may ultimately become a strength to my thesis, as one of my main points will be to consider at how these texts – despite their different forms - explore many of the same themes. The modernist style of writing does, however, add an interesting twist to the problem of genre. As already noted, modernist writers moved beyond previous restrictions of style and genre, a fact nourished by both Eliot and Woolf in their writing. Eliot's free verse, dramatically constructed characters, and the emotional encounters between them, distinctly move his poetry towards the borders of general poetry. Similar effects are observable in Woolf's work. For instance, her frequent use of stream-of-consciousness and unusual employment of focalizer renders her narrative more lyrical.[13] Thus, one might find that these two works arguably share more than merely similarity in theme, they also share similarities of language – or at least – similar *ideas* of language. A comparison of these two works may therefore add valuable insight to a spiritual search within modernism.

Eliot makes frequent use of symbolic imagery and allusions in his description of his wasteland. His references to a spiritual life and a search for meaning are many; he

[13] These terms are defined below.

frequently addresses man's inability to reach faith. Already in the poem's first lines he refers to the painful process of spiritual rebirth through his metaphor of spring and growth. Eliot's use of myth is also of importance in this setting, since it represents values and beliefs that for Eliot seem to have been lost in the modern world. In *The Waste Land* Eliot boldly presents the challenges modern man faces such as the negative effects of capitalism, miscommunication between men and women, and even environmental issues. In his description of this spiritual waste land Eliot creates an ambiance of despair through his special use of language and imagery. In *The Importance of Recognition and Other Essays on T. S. Eliot* Kristian Smidt writes,

> I see *The Waste Land* as a poem where "the sequence of images coincides and concentrates into one intense impression" of civilisation which may well be called "barbaric". The separate images which are Eliot's basic units are worked into a pattern of images which in the Symbolist manner points to a central significance or, in Eliot's terms, makes up the formula of an emotion.[14]

This notion is an interesting one, and will be addressed thoroughly in the chapter on Eliot, incorporating Eliot's own 'objective correlative' into my discussion.

In T.S. Eliot's *The Waste Land,* the modernist break from previous literary norms are taken further than in Woolf`s novels. Here we encounter a poem in five parts written in free verse, where Eliot moves away from the traditional use of meter and rhyme. The fragmentation of time is even more present in this work. Eliot makes use of juxtapositions; he jumps from one narrative frame to another, seemingly without any kind of "literary system" or connection. The use of this kind of imagery is a

[14] Kristian Smidt, *The Importance of Recognition and Other Essays on T.S. Eliot* (Oslo: Unipub Forlag, 2001), p. 3.

distinctly modernist trait. It can be compared to the way we see a movie – the shift from one frame or image to another. Live pictures had its start at the time of the modernists, and had a wide impact on the public, a fact we can also see in the imagery of other modernist works such as Woolf`s *Mrs. Dalloway* and James Joyce's` *Ulysses*. This special use of imagery is also to be found in other art forms such as the collage used by modernist painters. With all these fragments and jumps it becomes difficult for the reader to find an order or system in the poem. How does one keep a poem together without any meter or rhyme? How do we create a sense of "wholeness" within this set of fragments? Eliot holds the poem together by the use of several typical modernist techniques.

Even though both Woolf and Eliot fit the label of writers of modernism very well, several differences can still be found in their writings. Where Woolf changes narrator frequently, in Eliot's poem it is difficult to find a narrator at all. The difference in the use of narrator is, of course, connected to the difference in genre between these two works. Their 'modernist nature' does, however, render them closer to each other in form than originally anticipated. For whereas Eliot's dramatic characterizations moves towards narration, Woolf's lyrical language moves towards the poetical. Eliot's writing seems more direct, even hard, compared to Woolf`s. His language is graphic and straight to the point. Woolf`s frequent use of stream of consciousness makes her language soft and introspective, effects we find little of in Eliot with his impersonal, almost fact-stating style. Eliot focuses strongly on the 'fin de siécle' anxiety strengthened by the Great War; he shows a pessimistic view of the chaos of the modern, urban society and the emptiness that capitalism seems to create. His characters hide from everything unpleasant, unable to find meaning in their lives. The fragmented structure of his poem becomes a direct reference to the fragmented world

we live in. There might be more to Eliot's project than 'just' demonstrating the importance of a spiritual connection within modern man. It is my view that Eliot's search extends beyond this: it strives towards, and in one sense the 'spiritual' search which literature offers *in itself.* This implies that the mere presence of a text such as Eliot's - and the process of reading such a work, provides introspection, reflection, and comfort for the modern human being. Wolfgang Iser sheds light to this thought by asking,

> […] is literature wholly devoid of reality, or is it perhaps imbued with a reality of its own, which sets it off from the linguistics of expository texts as well as from those texts that constitute general norms of human behaviour? A literary text neither portrays nor creates objects in the way we described; at best we can say that it is the description of reactions to objects. "All art originates," E. H. Gombrich once remarked, "in our reactions to the world rather than the world itself."[15]

Both Iser and Nussbaum refer to the human reaction of 'this world of objects.' Nevertheless one finds, as mentioned already, that the modern world is a world consisting of an increasing complexity. As Iser suggests, literature needs to contain something more that merely a description of the world, and Iser's point is of particular value when one is to view the modernist world. Thus, in order to describe the full range of works such as *The Waste Land*, one needs to activate the reader's emotions.

Woolf on the other hand gives us small openings or windows into a meaningful existence; her focus on family and friends coming together gives us hints as to what might create richness in an otherwise fragmented world. Woolf also addresses the issue of meaning, or lack thereof, in her work. The short, simple yet effective

[15] Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), p. 6.

disruptions of war, loss and death, represented in *Mrs. Dalloway* through the character of the shell- shocked *Septimus,* appear in the midst of the elaborate descriptions of warm, intimate family settings. Through the description of a single summer- day in *Clarissa Dalloway's* life, Woolf presents us with the life-story of two people with very different destinies in life. Through her use of interior monologue, flashbacks, and a language approximating to lyrical form, Woolf maneuvers her literature into the modernist shift of focus – away from the mind of the narrator, and into the minds of the characters.[16] Susan Dick comments on the effects of such a shift in literature, 'she [Woolf] had found a method of creating character that imitated the selective process by which we know and recollect ourselves, one another, and our world.'[17] This introspective language not only aids the individual in the 'process by which we know and recollect ourselves', by our own recollection we are able to tap into the recollection of individuals around us – and eventually the world that surrounds us. This exemplifies how modernist literature, through its characters, is able to give some clues to what the modern world searches for.

Thus, Woolf adds to all of these issues a female perspective, not only from her own role as the female author – an accomplishment in itself in the 1920s, but also through the many strong female characters she creates. In *Verdens Litteraturhistorie* Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen writes that,

> feminist critics see her novels as a sharp but universal experience of the limits of the female role, what sacrifices the female creativity demands, perfectionism, isolation, depression, anxiety- and of the female language.[18]

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[16] Susan Dick, 'Literary Realism in *Mrs. Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, Orlando* and *The Waves,* in *The Cambridge Companion To Virginia Woolf,* ed. by Sue Roe and Susan Sellers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p .51.
[17] Ibid, p. 51.

Woolf not only gives us a rare insight into the modern mind, she additionally hands us a perhaps even more unique insight into the mind of the modern woman. The value of Woolf's texts from a feminist perspective is easily seen in comparison with, for example, the description of the heroines of the Victorian era - even when disregarding subjective preferences for either texts. Woolf's uniqueness, however, does not stop here, for the specificity of *Mrs Dalloway* may even be seen as existing *above and beyond* perspectival borders of feminism. Such a view is supported by the fact that out of all the characters that surround Clarissa Dalloway, the two characters that she feels the closest to, Septimus and Peter, are both men. Peter additionally holds the positions as the one who sees, and knows the character of Clarissa to the fullest. It is a bold move from Woolf to place men as the perceivers, or mirrors, of the innermost mechanisms of a woman, and such a position may be considered a small revolution even within feminist positions of today. Framed within this thesis such a notion contributes to the discussion of a search for spirituality; for it extends man's search beyond the confined borders of gender, and gender issues, towards a border-less world of equality. And such equality, then, is one based upon a deep-rooted belief in the powers of humanism as a value *in itself*.

1.4. Theory

In order to form a theoretical basis for this thesis, I will make use of Wolfgang Iser, Umberto Eco and Peter Brooks, among others. It is no coincidence that the majority of my theoretical basis evolves around a critical view of literature leaning towards

[18]Viggo Hjørnager Pedersen, 'Romanen og det litterære liv I England og Irland', in *Verdens Litteraturhistorie,* ed.by Hans Hertel, Hans Petter Lund, and more, 7 vols (Oslo and Denmark: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1992), Vl, p.148. Translation my own.

reader-response theories. As literary devices, both reader-response and close reading direct their focus mainly towards the text itself. Interestingly enough, they not only focus on what is present in the text, but also on what is missing. Eco exemplifies this issue by drawing attention to the 'narrative gaps or blanks' situated within a text. This is of particular importance when analyzing modernist texts so often constructed through fragments, temporal jumps in time and space. A modernist narrative such as Kafka's *The Castle* (1926) even comes to a stop mid-sentence. Eco´s emphasis on the ´open work´ is fully at play within Modernist literature.

However oriented reader-response theory is towards the text, it is equally focused on the individual reader. Being fully aware of this fact – and being somewhat reluctant to accept such a strong emphasis on the individual reader within a literary theory – my focus will remain situated in, and around the text. Reader-response's notion of the reader as an 'active agent' is, however, an invaluable tool when analyzing a text, and may prove particularly helpful in the analysis of complex modernist texts. This notion is taken further by Iser's concepts of the 'implied reader' and 'indeterminacy' within a text, terms that explains the fruitful interplay between the text or author, and the reader.[19] The symbiotic relationship between text and reader that lies within the term 'implied reader' is of particular value when discussing the narrative gaps of a modernist text.

From Aristotle through Chaucer in to Coleridge and the Romantic era, the history of poetry has always been associated with stringent rules of (re)presentation. Among these rules are the classification into the three familiar genres of narrative, dramatic, and lyrical poetry. Furthermore, this heritage connects the genres of poetry to

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[19] See for example Wolfgang Iser, *Prospecting,* pp. 5-7.

different modes of *representations of speech*.[20] Modernist writing – and its poetry, did not, however, conform to these rules of genre. Instead it 'roamed all over the place', mixing the genres through the use of montage and collage, challenging its poetic predecessors through its new modes of writing. Another important difference in modern poetry is the shift from the representation of speech towards the representation of the *human mind*. The free verse of the modernist era lacks the coherence and structure usually connected to poetry, thus leaving the reader in unfamiliar territory. The new complexity of modernist poetry is accurately exemplified in *Reading Poetry: An Introduction* where a discussion of Eliot's poem *Prufrock* takes place:

> The perplexing and intriguing thing about these lines is that they seem resonantly meaningful without our being able to say what they mean, metaphorically suggestive without allowing us to see what is literally being suggested. Rather than coming to a conclusion – a final moment of insight which would resolve its difficulties – the poem opens out to an incoherence and inconclusiveness which cannot be wholly accounted for by reference to Prufrock's 'character'.[21]

Such incoherence requires a new way of thinking in our meetings with modernist poetry, and it is out of this new mentality that the critical theory of New Criticism, and eventually close reading as we know it today, arose. It is important to add here, however, that close reading is not the singular 'solution' to an analysis of modernist poetry – other theories such as post-structuralism or reader-response theory might be of equal value to an analysis of the modernist poem. However one might choose to

[20] Tom Furniss and Michael Bath, *Reading Poetry: An Introduction* (London: Pearson Education Limited, 1996), p. 161.
[21] *Reading Poetry: An Introduction,* p. 154

address this 'incoherence and inconclusiveness', the 'bottom' of any analysis of modernist poetry must be fixed by an open mind, a stable connection between intellect and emotion, and with a value of the fruitful interplay between the author, the reader, and the text.

In *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction*, Jakob Lothe refers to the classification of narrative fiction as presented by Gérard Genette in 1972. These three basic concepts are: *discourse* which is 'the spoken or written presentation of events'; *story*, which 'refers to the narrated events and conflicts in narrative fiction' (paraphrasing the action); and finally *narration,* that 'refers to how a text is written and communicated.'[22] These three elements lay the basis for the use of analytical tools such as character and characterization, perspective, time and temporality and many more aspects of literary analysis. In the *Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, H. Porter Abbot writes,

> The rhetoric of narrative is its power. It has to do with all those elements of the text that produce the many strong or subtle combinations of feeling and thought we experience as we read. These include those elements that inflect how we interpret the narrative: that is how we find meanings in it. Arguably, *everything* in the text contributes to its impact and our interpretation of it, and so everything has some rhetorical function.[23]

The key to a successful analysis, then, should be a focused and thorough search for those elements that are relevant to *each individual* analysis, and the skill to separate the relevant and irrelevant parts of the analysis. It is my hope that this thesis will

[22] Jakob Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film: An Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.6.
[23] H. Porter Abbot., *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2002), p. 36.

apply this constructive separation of relevance towards a fruitful discussion of its topic.

In *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature,* Martha Nussbaum argues that 'certain truths about human life can only be fittingly and accurately stated in the language and forms characteristic of the narrative artist'.[24] As one of the few theorists that enter the field of emotion, Nussbaum's work adds considerable insight into the emotional language of modernist fiction, a language that explores the depths of human beings as individuals, and in turn also depicts the collective state of modern man. Parts of my thesis will explore the question of modernist language as a language of emotions. I will consider whether the search for meaning in a modern world should, at least partly, be based on emotions. A precondition for such a notion must, however, remove emotions – and the pursuit of meaning for that matter – from the previously dominant view of 'the opposite side of rationality', and this is exactly what Nussbaum's work sets out to do.

> It was assumed that any work that attempts to ask of a literary text questions about how we might live, treating the work as addressed to the reader's practical interests and needs, and as being in some sense about our lives, must be hopelessly naïve, reactionary, and insensitive to the complexities of literary form and intertextual referentiality.[25]

Emotions, then, need to be removed from the realm of the 'naïve and reactionary', and placed as an integral part of our cognition, of equal importance to our rational world, both inside the narrative frame, and on its outside.

[24] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 5.
[25]Ibid., p. 21

According to Nussbaum, literature and 'philosophical content' are strongly interconnected. This implies that considered as philosophy, literature is on an everlasting search for value and belief systems, moral and ethical views on life, and eventually a search for meaning of life in itself. Nussbaum goes on,

> It [literature] speaks about us, about our lives and choices and emotions, about our social existence and the totality of our connections. As Aristotle observed, it is deep, and conducive to our inquiry about how to live, because it does not simply (as history does) record that this or that event happened; it searches for patterns of possibility- of choice, and circumstance, and the interaction between choice and circumstance- that turn up in human lives with such a persistence that it must be regarded as our possibilities.[26]

Modernist literature addresses these very topics; it explores 'the interaction between choice and circumstance' in a tumultuous world after the fin de siécle and the Great War, and reviews the possibilities that lie ahead for man entering the modern world. Nussbaum exemplifies this with an excerpt from a different era of emotional writing, namely Hamlet and his speech to Gertrude, where Gertrude answers Hamlet with these lines, 'O Hamlet speak no more. / Thou turnst mine eyes into my very soul."[27] These are two powerful lines, with a powerful content. Of these lines Nussbaum simply comments, 'He made her see her soul, then, with a speech.'[28] And there is, perhaps, no need for longer comments on such powerful words.

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[26] *Love's knowledge,* p. 171.
[27] Ibid.. p. 245.
[28] Ibid.p. 245.

1.5. Method

I have chosen to conduct a close reading of the two works in question. It is, however, important to stress that my use, and interpretation of the method of close reading will not be particularly connected to the New Critical definition of close reading, but lean more towards the notion of a ´text oriented study´ of these particular works. Such a method, will need to incorporate ´all the resources of [a] language- imagery and other figurative devices, ambiguity, the patterning of sound by rhythm, rhyme, alliteration and so on – in such a way that makes them signifiers of that experience as much as it is merely paraphrasable meaning.´[29] Thus, it is my view that a text-oriented methodology should also include historical background and socio-political climates surrounding the works, not primarily as a means in itself, but as a valuable aid in the interpretation of a text. What this implies then, is that the work itself should remain our primary focus, but whatever else we might stumble upon regarding the particular work should also be valued, and might end up being a valuable aid in our analysis. A text oriented reading will aim to incorporate the linguistic, semantic, structural, and cultural parts of the work(s) in question. It is my view that the method of close reading is of particular value when analyzing a modernist text, as it considers both form and context of equal importance. Modernist literature represents exactly such a connection as its intrical language is strongly connected with its content.

[29] John Barrell, 'Close Reading'. In *Literature in the Modern World,* ed. by Dennis Walder, 2nd rev. edn, (Durham: Duke University Press, 2003), p. 146-7.

1.6. Specification of the problem to be discussed

Modernism explores what it means to be human after the fin de siécle, in a place where old, Victorian value- systems had to be replaced, and a new form of humanism grew out of the darkness of The Great War. It is my belief that the tumultuous times of this era created a spiritual vacuum within modern man, thus leaving him to pursue a new sense of meaning and purpose in life, and it is around these topics that the discussions of my thesis will take place. Through the works of Eliot and Woolf, I will look at what it means to be human in the twentieth century. Secondly, I will identify how these texts address the topic of man's loss of meaning in the modern world. Thirdly, I will examine how the multiple characters deal with this sense of loss as individuals, and the search they (might) conduct to regain their sense of purpose. As a fourth point I will explore if these texts convey particular emotions through their narrative constructions. As this is a fairly non-specific and subjective topic, I will make ample use of the theories of Martha Nussbaum to back up my discussion concerning this 'theory of emotions.' I will, in addition, refer to Eliot and Woolf's own thoughts on the issue of emotion. This is not, however, an attempt to discharge my original resolution towards a text- oriented analysis, but is based on the fact that both authors, in addition to their seminal literary works, participated actively in the theoretical debates of the era.

The time-frame in which modernist literature was situated has been, and still is, highly debated. I have nevertheless, for definition purposes, settled on the years of 1890- 1940 approximately, when referring to modernist literature in my thesis. This time- frame is chosen on the basis that it includes the works regarded as the early beginning of modernism, through the era of high- modernism- both of which my texts

are examples of, and in addition including the time towards the Second World War, a time of which many scholars seem to agree upon as the end of the modernist era. The notion of 'the modernist era' is a complex one, including many varieties of definitions. In my thesis I have chosen to follow Bradbury and McFarlane's referral to modernism as 'now generally seen as the dominant spirit in early- twentieth- century art and literature.'[30] The terms 'modernism' and 'the modernist era' will then, refer to the literary period between 1890-1940, including the different movements such as Cubism, Expressionism and so on, also incorporating art forms outside of the literary.[31] The modernist era will then, in this thesis refer to a specific period within literature and the arts in general. Whether or not this period should be regarded as an historical period in itself is irrelevant to my discussion, and will therefore be excluded from my definition of the term. I find it interesting that as I write this, in 2008, there seems to be a resurgence of interest in modernism. I am thinking, for instance, of the two-volume book *Modernism* (2007).[32] We can ask: why does a period that started at the turn of the previous century continue to fascinate readers and critics in many countries? In their introduction to *European and Nordic Modernisms,* the editor suggest that one of the reasons for this continuing interest may be that modernism rapidly became an international trend.[33] As they point out, it was not coincidental that this happened. As Michael Levinson has noted, 'crisis is inevitably the central term of art in discussions of this turbulent central movement'; and this crisis was by no means

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[30] *Modernism 1890- 1930*, p 11.
[31] See for example definition in *The Oxford Companion To English Literature,* 6th Edn. Ed. by Margaret Drabble (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000) p. 682.
[32] Astradur Eysteinsson and Vivian Liska, eds., *Modernism,* I-II (Amsterdam: John Benjamin, 2007).
[33] Mats Jansson, Jakob Lothe and Hannu Riikonen, eds., *European and Nordic Modernisms* (Norwich: Norvik Press, 2004), p. 11. Cf. Mats Jansson, Janna Kantola, Jakob Lothe and Hannu Riikonen, eds., *Comparative Approaches to European and Nordic Modernisms* (Helsinki: Helsinki University Press, 2008), pp. 7-8.

limited to merely one country or merely one identifiable group of writers.[34] There is a strong sense in which modernism grew out of an experience of various forms of crises – cultural, political, moral and aesthetic. This sense of crisis is observable in both of my text's, even though it is stronger, and more obvious, in Eliot than in Woolf. World War I represents the culmination of this crisis, and both texts considered here respond – as literature – to this shocking and disastrous historical event.

If, seen from the vantage point of 2008, the range and vitality of modernism are striking, this vitality and originality are very noticeable in the texts to be discussed here. I am thinking both of thematic matters and of the innovative, experimental ways in which these matters are presented in the novel and in the poem. To ask who is the more original writer is a fruitless question; both Eliot and Woolf are literary giants, and I approach their works with humility and gratefulness.

One final reference point to be addressed is my use of the term 'spirituality' in my thesis. I seek aid in my definition from Sheldrake's *A Brief History of Spirituality,* who writes that,

> [..] despite the fuzziness [of the term], it is possible to suggest that the word "spirituality" refers to the deepest values and meanings by which people seek to live. In other words, "spirituality" implies some kind of vision of the human spirit and of what will assist it to achieve full potential.[35]

'The search for spirituality' will be a search referring to various religious thoughts and, additionally, a reference to any kind of meaning, purpose, or values that aid in human development towards its 'full potential'.

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[34] *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* p. 4.

[35] Philip Sheldrake, *A Brief History of Spirituality* (Oxford: Blackwell , 2007), p.1.

It is my belief that modernism mirrors the trials and tribulations of this particular era, and that the mimetic nature of modernism is imbued with a purpose *in its own right.* As such the search for spirituality will also incorporate the element of narrative causation.[36] The main reason for stressing the aspects of causal connections is the strong emphasis on character from both Eliot and Woolf. Almost without exception these authors have created characters that suffer *because of something*, and 'this something' turns out to be what mirrors the problems of modern society as presented through these works. Part of what stimulates a modern search for meaning is 'what lies beneath', and as such a mapping of what 'fuels' the wasteland becomes imperative in a spiritual search for modern man.

1.7. Outline of the following chapters

My thesis will consist of four main parts, each divided into sub-chapters. Chapters 2 and 3 will address the works of Woolf and Eliot, respectively, before the final part 4 will compare and contrast the two works, thus providing the basis for a conclusion. The discussion of Virginia Woolf's novel in chapter 2 will be divided into three sub-chapters. In the introduction I will present an outline of what I find to be of importance to my discussion of *Mrs Dalloway.* In part 2.2 'Emotions, Friendships, and the Self' I will discuss the many different aspects of *perspective* that Woolf presents us in her narration. In part 2.3 'Time, Religion, and Moments of Meaning' I will look at the differences between temporal time and narrative time within Woolf's novel, as well as the important discussion of religion and spirituality.

[36] For an excellent discussion of narrative causation see for example *The Cambridge Introduction to Narrative*, p. 36

Chapter 3 discusses T.S. Eliot's poem *The Waste Land*. Following the introductory remarks, part 3.2 'Birth, Fear, and the World of Objects' discusses the challenges man faces in his meeting with the world of objects. Furthermore, it addresses Eliot's emphasis on the painful aspects of spiritual birth, and rebirth. I will also discuss the fear-based mentality modern society seems to protrude, and the many negative effects such a mentality present. In part 3.3 'Madness, Myth, and Spiritual Resurrection' I will address the notion of madness and what it might represent within a modern society. I will then move to a discussion of Eliot's interesting use of myth, before addressing the notion of spirituality within *The Waste Land*.

In the final chapter 4, I will give a brief summary of the discussion this thesis has presented. I will then proceed to compare and contrast the works of Eliot and Woolf, before I move towards a conclusion seen in the light of a possible search for spirituality within modernism.

Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*

2.1. Introduction

The search for spirituality within *Mrs. Dalloway* is a search that is centred on, and around, the experience of being a modern human being. The novel brilliantly addresses how the external changes of the modern world influence and accelerate the internal changes within the modern individual. Although a diverse and complex work, there are, in my view, three key elements that stand out as invaluable contributions in my search for spirituality within British modernism. The first element concerns the pursuit for a meaningful existence *without* the connection to any particular religion. The second element explores the possibilities of personal growth that exists within a fruitful interplay between the individual and its family, and / or its friends. I will discuss how, presumably, a sense of self emerges from the character of Clarissa, as well as the emotive language used both to construct, or build this sense of self – and to convey it. Love and the connection between the self and others will also be of importance here, as the bonds between humans seem to prove imperative for change and growth within man. Such a notion becomes especially important when viewing the character of Septimus, and a discussion of his fate and his 'madness' will appear from this point of origin. Finally, the third element investigates man's adaptability to a modern society, discussing topics of mental health, and including the search for a meaningful life from a female perspective, exploring spiritual connections for the female subject outside the narrow borders of being a wife and mother exclusively. I will then proceed towards a discussion of Woolf's portrayal of religion, and religious connections, before I move towards a discussion of the spirituality found within the sacredness of the 'meaningful moments' conveyed through the novel. I will end this

chapter with a discussion of the important role emotions play in the journey of one's life. The ability to feel, and to reflect over these feelings life seem to hold a key to Woolf's presentation of a spiritual connection for modern man. In the light of these elements I will explore how a search for spirituality within the modern world is conveyed through the novel, and through the characters of Clarissa and Septimus, I will discuss man's thoughts and actions towards the creation of a meaningful existence. Woolf's portrayal of this subject is of particular importance to my thesis, as it moves beyond a mere description of a tumultuous society, towards a display of the individual actively seeking a sense of self, and of meaning, within the newness of the modern world.

2.2. Emotions, Friendships, and the Self

The *in medias res* opening line of *Mrs Dalloway* paves the way for a remarkable literary experience founded on perspectival originality and ambiguities in both form and content. In coherence with, and symptomatic of, the modernist time in which it was created, it 'answers back' to a literary heritage of one-dimensional and fixed settings of narratives and narrations. In *The Open Work* Umberto Eco describes the evolution from 'closed works' of fiction, through literary works including a fixed set of interpretations, towards the 'open work' of the modernist era.[37] Eco makes use of Kafka to exemplify the infinite possibilities of meaning that lie within an open work,

[37] Umberto Eco, *The Open Work* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), pp.5-8.

> But, unlike the constructions of medieval allegory, where the superimposed layers of meaning are rigidly described, in Kafka there is no confirmation in an encyclopaedia, no matching paradigm in the cosmos to provide a key to symbolism. The various existentialist, theological, clinical, and psychoanalytic interpretations of Kafka's symbols cannot exhaust all the possibilities of his works. The work remains inexhaustible insofar as it is "open", because in it an ordered world based on universally acknowledged laws is being replaced by a world based on ambiguity, both in the negative sense that directional centers are missing and in a positive sense, because values and dogma are constantly being placed in question.[38]

The discourse Woolf presents us with in *Mrs Dalloway* is one of openness, a discourse where objective reality is present but removed from 'centre stage', and placed in the background to work, almost as a foil, behind the reality of the subject.[39] It is as though the diegetic level takes place *within* the homodiegetic level, as the story unfolds through the inner worlds of the characters, thus replacing an 'ordered world' with a world of 'ambiguity'. This 'ambiguity' and the lack of apparent coherence, represent aspects of Woolf's work – and the work of other modernist writers – that have been thoroughly criticized through the years. In *The Concept of Modernism* this criticism is exemplified through Georg Lukács's response to modernism,

> He [Lukács] attacks modernism for not creating believable and lasting "types," but instead effecting a fading of characters into shadows or congealment in ghostly irrationality. By reducing reality to a nightmare, possibly in the nebulous consciousness of an idiot, and through its obsession with the morbid and pathological, modernism partakes in "a

[38] Ibid, p.9.
[39] When referring to 'Woolf' I am speaking of the *implied author* that is the 'image of the author that the text implies', and not the *historical author* per definition. For a valuable discussion of these topics see Jacob Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film,* p. 19.

glorification of the abnormal", in "anti- humanism."[40]

In revisiting the last paragraph of Eco's comment on modernist works, it becomes interesting to note that the statements that 'directional centers are missing' and the fact that 'values and dogmas are constantly being placed in question', might easily serve as a description of the modernist *era in itself*. This fact points towards the mimetic nature of modernist literature, namely how it mirrors the society in which it originates. From such a viewpoint then, the criticism of Lukács, and others, will ultimately end up being a criticism of the modern *world*, and not the 'mimesis' representing it. If one is to assume that Lukács's notion of modernism as 'depriving us of any kind of perspective' is basically wrong, the novel of *Mrs. Dalloway* becomes a suitable starting point to admonish this view. Thus, the story of Clarissa Dalloway is a story of different perspectives, from the complex matter in which she views herself, to the various ways her loved one's, and even distant acquaintances, perceive her as they pass her on the street.

> We cannot work out what she is like, what she *is,* merely by studying what she thinks of herself, or what Peter Walsh, or Richard Dalloway, or Doris Kilman think of her. She is all these things, and only her whole life, including all her thoughts about herself and her relationships with other people, exhausts the possible information about her.[41]

The differences of perspective work as a structuring device in a novel where the discourse would otherwise appear even more fragmented. The perspectival interpretations of the same city are striking. Objects, differently viewed from

[40] Astradur Eysteinsson, *The Concept of Modernism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press 1990), p.29.
[41] Jeremy Hawthorn, *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway; A Study in Alienation* (London: Sussex University Press, 1975), p. 16.

character to character, bind the story together, thus creating a sense of flux and continuity. An example of such objects is the plane circling over London, connecting its viewers together. As a rhetorical device the plane enables the narrator to create a 'zoom' effect of characterization, similar to that of a movie. Like the lens of a camera, the plane tracks the different inhabitants below it, thus connecting them together. Woolf's third-person narrator operates much in the same fashion; moving in and out of the minds of the characters by way of their interior monologues, a procedure David Dowling refers to as the 'locks and floodgates that the narrator quite openly manipulates throughout the novel.' [42] Woolf, as Lisa McGarry so accurately states, 'develops her characters through complex examinations of their thoughts, feelings, and actions, thus blending body and soul.[43]

The self emerging in Clarissa, then, is one gestalted through life long experiences of interaction between others and herself, between festive happenings and quiet moments in solitude. 'Woolf seems to be fascinated by the fact that a human being's distinctness only reveals itself through the contact with other people, and can only be fully perceived by another person.'[44] Within these meetings between human beings, powerful emotions arise; the emotive aspects of such encounters seem to be the driving force behind these lasting memories. These emotional encounters educate the soul of the characters, Peter Walsh reflects,

> Looking back over that long friendship of almost thirty years her theory worked to this extent. Brief, broken, often painful as their actual meetings had been, what with his absences and interruptions, (…), the effect of them on his life was immeasurable.

[42] David Dowling, *Mrs Dalloway: Mapping Streams of Consciousness* (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1991), p. 49.
[43] Lisa Coughlin McGarry, *Orts, Scraps, and Fragments:The Elusive Search for Meaning in Virginia Woolf's Fiction* (Lanham: University Press of America Inc, 2007) p.13.
[44] *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway..*, p.12.

> There was a mystery about it. You were given a sharp, acute, uncomfortable grain- the actual meeting; horribly painful as often as not; yet in absence, in the most unlikely places, it would flower out, open, shed its scent, let you touch, taste, look about you, get the whole feel of it and understanding, after years of lying lost. (130)

This passage introduces an element of distance within close relationships while the actual meetings may appear 'brief, broken, often painful', the acknowledgement of their importance seems only to grow with a distance in time and space. These friendships, add to the spiritual dimension in the lives of the characters, connecting individuals together across time and space, thus creating lasting elements of meaning in a fluctuating world. Woolf conveys a beautiful imagery through a language filled with emotion as these meetings, in retrospect, border on the physical, allowing the individual to 'touch, taste, and feel' the connection to another human being. Emotions, then, are invaluable tools in the mapping of a self, but the real challenge lies in incorporating them into the learning process of life, thus allowing them to 'work' for you. Martha Nussbaum continually stresses the negative effects of our Platonist heritage, a heritage where emotions where discarded from debates on philosophy and science. Aristotle, however, becomes a frequent reference point for Nussbaum concerning this difficult question,

> The Aristotelian conception contains a view of learning well suited to support the claims of literature. For teaching and learning, here, do not simply involve the learning of rules and principles. A large part of learning takes place in the experience of the concrete. This experimental learning, in turn, requires the cultivation of perception and responsiveness: the ability to read a situation, singling out what is relevant for thought and action. This

> active task is not a technique; one learns by guidance rather than formula.[45]

For it is exactly this that Clarissa has experienced, and what she now reflects upon, namely the learning process of her own life. It is the very reason her mind is so pre-occupied with the happenings of her youth, and how her life has unfolded over the years. Leaving youth behind opens up for new perspectives on life as Peter Walsh's pondering in the park shows us,

> The compensation of growing old, Peter Walsh thought, coming out of regents Park, and holding his hat in his hand, was simply this; that the passions remain as strong as ever, but one has gained – at last! – the power which adds the supreme flavour to existence – the power of taking hold of experience, of turning it round, slowly, on the light. (67)

The symbolism that lies within Peter's way of 'taking hold of experience, of turning it round, slowly, on the light' is a powerful metaphor – viewing one's life experience in the same manner as one would hold a prism towards the light, turning it slowly in order to view the light penetrating its different angles. Although cut from one single body the prism, through its many faces, will inhabit the ability to separate white light into a myriad of colours. As symbolized through the prism, the individual will thus, consist of a multitude of faces and colours, all different according to the way one turns it, and the individual that views the light shining through it. There exists a distinct spiritual connotation through the use of the prism as a symbol; it offers the possibility that lies within a change of perspective, and of learning how to turn

[45] *Love's Knowledge: Essays on Philosophy and Literature,* p. 44.

towards the direction of the light. Interestingly, the similar imagery of the 'diamond-shape' is to be found in Hawthorn's discussion of Clarissa. Here Hawthorn discusses Clarissa's view of herself as 'composed of incompatible parts,' a passage where the diamond image is 'calling to mind artificiality and the philistine display of wealth, as well as a certain hardness […].' [46]

The similarities between Peter and Clarissa are present in many forms through this passage. Clarissa, in the same manner as Peter, also inhabits 'passions strong as ever', and they both show a remarkable ability to remember and reflect upon these passions that lie within them. But whereas Peter seems fairly content with his 'passions of youth', incorporating them into adult life, Clarissa is unable to find an outlet for her passions as a grown woman. A certain sense of despair and regret coagulate in between the beautiful memories of her youth. The dawning realization that she might have sacrificed her passions for a safe and stable life is one she struggles to accept. Here Woolf enters into the paradox of looking back on ones life-choices through the eyes of maturity. It is one of those eternal questions: knowing what one knows now, being the person one has become, would one have made the same choices all over again? 'Oh if she could have had her life over again! she thought, stepping on to the pavement, could have looked even differently'(9) Clarissa´s ponderings over her past should, however, by no means be interpreted solely as moments of self-pity, as Clarissa´s meeting with Peter shows:

> And Clarissa had leant forward, taken his hand, drawn him to her, kissed him,- actually had felt his face on hers before she could down the brandishing of silver-flashing plumes like pampas grass in a tropic gale in her breast, which, subsiding, left her holding his hand, patting his knee, and feeling as she sat back

[46] *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway…,* p. 11

extraordinarily at ease with him and light- hearted, all in a clap it came over her, If I had married him, this gaiety would have been mine all day! (40)

A strong sense of irony exists within this passage as the character of Mrs. Dalloway (although fairly uneducated in her own words) is generally portrayed as an intelligent, stoic, and mature woman. It is fair to assume here that she is fully aware of the fact that– even if she had married Peter – a life- long marriage would not only be filled with exclamations of the sort of 'this gaiety would be mine all day!' The very notion that this passage belongs to a different era, and a younger, more naïve Clarissa, is strengthened by the fact that Woolf suddenly switches from present to past tense when describing this meeting.

Peter, and the friendship between them, does not however, belong solely to Clarissa's past, as their shared history has created a friendship that ties them together even as life moves forward. It is interesting to view Nussbaum's Aristotelian approach to narration also incorporates the importance of the strong bonds between humans:

> There is a further way in which novels answer to an Aristotelian view of practical learning. The Aristotelian view stresses that that bonds of close friendship or love (such as those that connect members of a family, or close personal friends) are extremely important in the whole business of becoming a good perceiver. Trusting the guidance of a friend and allowing one's feelings to be engaged with that other person's life and choices, one learns to see aspects of the world that one had previously missed. One's desire to share a form of life with the friend motivates this process.[47]

[47] *Love's Knowledge*, p. 44.

What Nussbaum is emphasizing is that the emotions and the trust experienced within close relationships, play an imperative part in the progression towards a meaningful existence. The role as the perceiver is of great importance to the characterisation of Mrs. Dalloway. The way she incorporates her surroundings into her flow of thoughts, and most importantly, how she perceives the world around her is essential in the narrative display of her character. It is, in addition, one of the few positive amenities she gives herself: 'Her only gift was knowing people almost by instinct, she thought, walking on. If you put her in a room with someone, up went her back like a cat's, or she purred '(7). Her friendships have enabled her to perceive people 'almost by instinct', and within her instincts lies her deep- rooted empathy, evolved through years of 'allowing one's feelings to be engaged' with other human beings.

The value of these relationships streches further than this, however, towards a meaningful existence for Mrs. Dalloway herself as her memories of – and her present interaction with, her loved ones remind her of who she once was, and consequently who she is today. These relationships are imperative in the foundation of a self, stretching her identity beyond merely being 'Mrs. Richard Dalloway, hostess and wife'.

> She had the oddest sense of being herself invisible; unseen; unknown; there being no more marrying, no more having children now, but only this astonishing and rather solemn progress with the rest of them, up Bond Street, this being Mrs. Dalloway; not even Clarissa anymore; this being Mrs. Richard Dalloway.(16)

Significantly, out of all her relationships with other people, the one person Clarissa devotes the least time to – both in her interior monologues, and her actual encounters

– is her husband Richard. Throughout the novel his character almost takes the form of a shadow, he is referred to- but is never really present.

In her work on Woolf Lisa McGarry writes that

> In *Mrs Dalloway*, marriage is unfulfilling for all of the characters. Although some, such as Mrs Dempster, endorse it, and Sally Seton professes to be happy, none of the major characters is completely satisfied with either their or their spouse's contribution to the marriage. Clarissa respects Richard but she also feels the emptiness and isolation of their home as an extension of herself.[48]

Although one might question McGarry's reasons for doubting Sally Seton's self-professed marital bliss, there is little questioning the quiet co-existence between Richard and Clarissa. The lack of intimacy between them is further strengthened by Richard's insistence that – due to his long hours at work and Clarissa's recovery from her illness – they should sleep in separate bedrooms. Yet again passion seems to slip away from Clarissa,

> The sheets were clean, tight stretched in a broad white band from side to side. Narrower and narrower her bed would be. The candle was half burnt down and she had read deep in Baron Marbot's *Memoirs.* For the House sat so long that Richard insisted, after her illness, that she must sleep undisturbed. And really she preferred to read of the retreat from Moscow. He knew it. […] She could see what she lacked. It was not beauty; it was not mind. It was something central which permeated; something warm which broke up surfaces and rippled the cold contact of man and woman, or of women together. (27)

[48] *Orts, Scraps, and Fragments,* p.83.

Love then, seems to serve a dualistic purpose in Woolf: it brings people closer, but at times it might drive people apart. This passage reveals another side of Clarissa Dalloway, namely her need for solitude. Clarissa 'preferred to read of the retreat from Moscow' instead of the possibility of the erotic love that might arise when sharing a bedroom with one's husband. Additionally, Richard 'knew this', thus revealing his consideration for her needs – or lack thereof. It is not Richard that retracts from intimacy, it is Clarissa. Initially, this seems like a contradiction of terms considering the passionate nature of Clarissa. However, a passage from another of Nussbaum's works *Upheavals of Thought*, sheds some light might be shed on this paradox,

> Erotic love involves an opening of the self toward an object, a conception of the self that pictures the self as incomplete and reaching out for something valued. The object is seen as valuable and radiant, the self as extending itself toward that radiance. But that type of opening up to the self to value is risky, and […] such a risky existence , depending so greatly on another brings ethical problems with it. There may be no way of surmounting those ethical problems without living a life that bounds the self off against objects, denying the need for them and involvement with them. But if that is so, then compassion (and grief) will also need to be eliminated, as the Stoics held: for they too are proofs of a self that is too world- dependent, too "wonderstruck by external things."[49]

The 'opening up of the self', then, requires the realization that the individual is *in need* of other people. For Clarissa this particular need is a constant debate within her; for where does 'Clarissa the person' end, and where does 'Mrs Dalloway, wife and mother' begin? Where should one draw the (invisible) line between oneself and

[49] Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 461.

others, and ultimately, what is a healthy choice of closeness? This is, as Nussbaum states, a choice filled with risk because through extending oneself towards others, and their love, one is also opening for the possibility of being hurt. Erotic love represents not only a mental need for others, but adds a physical need to the equation, thus placing the subject in a vulnerable state of nakedness – both literally and figuratively. Within this vulnerable state of nakedness lies an ever-present possibility of rejection, and for Clarissa the process of growing older strengthens this fear of rejection. Looking in the mirror she comments that her hair has 'gone completely white after her illness', a comment that might have its origin from her previous suffering of influenza. Alternatively one might find that this illness is a reference to menopause – a condition few spoke aloud of in the twenties; 'the bed grows narrower and narrower, there will be no more having babies now.' Her fears of rejection also presents themselves in other areas of her life, her agony and irritation over Mrs. Kilman who clearly is critical of her, and her fear of the outcome of her party. Clarissa constantly struggles with this two- faced nature that real love represents, 'love and religion […] how detestable they are!' she exclaims (107). Could these factors provide some explanation of why Clarissa so often seeks contentment in her *memories* of love, and not in her loving relationships of the present?

For Septimus, often referred to as Clarissa's 'double', the notion of love has become too much to bear (29). His painful experiences during the war have left him unable to feel; Septimus has – literally, 'bound the self off against objects'. The result, however, is far from the disentangled calm the Stoics sought; Septimus is constantly haunted by the images of his dead friend, incapable of escaping the terrors of his memories. Could it be that Septimus holds a key to a certain lack of meaning in the modern world? For what is this character if not a human being out of place, out of touch with

the reality of his era? There is no place for Septimus-like persons in the modern world. He has fought, he has tried to rebuild his life, tried to love, but somehow – no matter what direction he turns, he ends up finding himself unable to feel anything but his own fear.

> And there the motorcar stood, with drawn blinds, and upon them a curious pattern like a tree, Septimus thought, and this gradual drawing together of everything to one centre before his eyes, as if some horror had come almost to the surface and was to burst into flames. It is I who am blocking the way, he thought. Was he not being looked at, pointed at; was he not weighted there, rooted to the pavement, for a purpose? But for what purpose? (13)

This passage suggests that even the physicality of the modern world represents a source of distress for Septimus, the traffic, the noise, and the crowds of people gathering – they are all too much to bear when paired with his inner turmoil. Hence, hidden within the character of Septimus lies a critique of modern society; modern society appears to be deficient in the acceptance of human vulnerability, and in particular the vulnerability of the mind. This derogatory view of vulnerability has become firmly internalized within Septimus; in his anxiety-filled state he feels he is the one causing the commotion, and not the accident in itself. 'It is I who am blocking the way, he thought', and he might be more right than we initially think, for what is his madness really if not a failure to conform to the 'normality' of modern society? Septimus becomes an unwanted product of his own era. Unable to 'de-humanize' his painful experiences in the War, he is left out, and discharged by the same society that placed him in this situation. As a result he might literally be the one who is blocking the way for an evolving modernity, a modernity that lacks both the time and the room

for anything outside of 'normality'. And this is perhaps why modern society seems to fear 'madness' to such an extent, 'For Dr Holmes had told her to make her husband (who had nothing whatever seriously the matter with him but was little out of sorts) take an interest in things outside himself' (18).

Love then, seems to require both an opening up of the self, and the ability to 'surrender' before the object of one's love. Such a surrender does, however, leave the soul exposed to painful experiences of grief and sorrow. In the same manner as Septimus, Clarissa too has experienced this pain; losing her sister and mother at a young age has given her solid testament for the kind of pain love might bring with it. It is a difficult choice to partake fully in life, on all levels of emotions. An opening of the self towards all life has to offer seems to require some kind of choice, either a conscious or subconscious one. Moreover, such a choice would have to derive from questioning the self if it really is worth it, and subsequently, how much pain is too much? On the 'weight scale' of life, will it be love, or sorrow, that eventually tips the scale?

Out of all the people in Clarissa's life Sally Seaton seems to be the one that has evoked the strongest emotions in her,

> But this question of love (she thought putting her coat away) this falling in love with women. Take Sally Seton; her relation in the old days with Sally Seton. Had not that, after all, been love? She sat on the floor – that was her first impression of Sally – she sat on the floor with her arms round her knees, smoking a cigarette. […] But all that evening she could not take her eyes of Sally. It was an extraordinary beauty of the kind she most admired, dark, large eyed, with that quality which, since she hadn't got it herself, she always envied – a sort of abandonment, as if she could say anything, do anything; a quality much commoner in foreigners than in Englishwomen. (29)

Several fruitful debates are tied to these passages as examples of homoerotic love between Sally and Clarissa, but however interesting and valid they may be, it is my intention to move in the opposite direction, away from a discussion of homosexual versus heterosexual love. My reason for this is that I interpret Woolf's purpose with this passage to include something of the same; that is a move away from a connotation of love that can only be interpreted in the context of gender. The importance of, and what brings meaning in, life is the very *ability* to feel love, not the specificity of the object one directs one's love towards. Moreover, Clarissa meeting with Sally may also say something about the human capacity to love different objects in different ways,

> The strange thing, on looking back, was the purity, the integrity, of her feeling for Sally. It was not like one's feeling for a man. It was completely disinterested, and besides, it had a quality which could only exist between women, between women just grown up. It was protective, on her side; sprang from a sense of being in a league together, a presentiment of something that was bound to separate them (they spoke of marriage always as a catastrophe), which led to this chivalry (…). (29)

A strong, feminist critique of society surrounds this passage, the feeling of unity connecting them through their awareness of sharing the same fate, the fate of being a woman, and ultimately a married woman.

2.3. Time, Religion, and Moments of Meaning

> It was precisely twelve o'clock; twelve by Big Ben; whose stroke was wafted over the northern part of London; blent with that of other clocks, mixed in a thin ethereal way with the clouds and wisps of smoke and died up there among the seagulls – twelve o'clock struck as Clarissa Dalloway laid her green dress on the bed, and the Warren Smiths walked down Harley Street. Twelve was the hour of their appointment. Probably Rezia thought, that was Sir William Bradshaw's house with the grey motor car in front of it. (80)

Temporal time and narrative time differ greatly within the pages of *Mrs Dalloway*, thus adding to the ambiguous nature of the novel. Through Clarissa's many flashbacks to the encounters of her youth, up until the present, the density of compressed temporal time within the narrative measures that of a complete life's worth. It does, however, as one views the paragraph above, also serve as an important structuring device in the story, as it aids in connecting the characters together. But time serves a far greater porpoise than merely a structural aid in the discourse,

> Time in modernist texts developed folds and involutions; instead of being chronological or sequential, narratives began to break and flow like waves, with an altering rhythm that was also reshaping the idea of the self from a static entity into something that was more generally unstable, although it also fluctuated regularly from the mind to the world and back again.[50]

I concur with this observation, both generally and with a view to the novel under consideration. Such a concept of modernist time is fully at play within the novel of

[50] Vicky Mahaffey *Modernist Literature: Challenging Fictions* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007) p. 10.

Mrs Dalloway. Through Clarissa (as well as the other characters), time flows from her interior monologues, through her memories, and as the striking of Big Ben is heard; 'from the mind to the world and back again'. Susan Dick explains it as a 'time measured by the clock (that) moves ahead ceaselessly and audibly as the narrative progresses.'[51] Subsequently, time moves from mere temporality towards a representation of our very existence, perhaps even foreseeing the end of our existence.

In the characterization of Clarissa, however, it is not the lack of time one is sensing, because time is already there, structured – however coincidental – by the striking of Big Ben. It is the lack of a sense of self firmly imbedded in the world that appears in between her memories and her meetings. Time, although secondary in relevance to meaning, is of vast importance as a representative of life experience, a life experience that can only be explored and understood through time, the paradox being that when one reaches a sense of understanding, time may have run out.

It becomes important to note here, however, that the concept of time by no means should be interpreted as a purely negative device. As time fluctuates between Clarissa's past and the present, and between the characters' interior and the exterior world, the concept of time is being explored from different angles. There exists, within *Mrs Dalloway*, a distinct difference between time experienced internally, and the temporality of the world outside. Susan Dick refers to this difference as the move between 'mind time' and 'actual time', a move where 'time seems suspended as the focus shifts from external to internal events.'[52] The 'laws of temporality' do not seem to exist within 'mind time', within the subject time moves at its own pace, pushing forward – or pausing where it pleases. The pleasure Clarissa experiences in her recollection of her youth provides proof to this notion; her memories are still as lively

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[51] 'Literary Realism in *Mrs Dalloway, To the Lighthouse, Orlando* and *The Waves*', p. 51.
[52] 'Literary Realism', pp. 53-54.

as the experience itself, and her love for the characters involved is still as strong as it was. Thus the past does not belong to an era left behind; it is forever present, providing lessons, and love, within the person that carries the past with him. Age, as time, holds the same individual subjectivity, Sally Seaton speaks of herself as 'fifty-five in body, but her heart was like a girl's of twenty' (164). It is almost like one can detect a certain sense of mockery of time in Woolf's writing,

> *Mrs Dalloway*, like *Ulysses*, is formally structured by the motif of the passing hours of the day, set in this case by the standard of Big Ben. Again like Joyce's novel, however, it undercuts that structure, both mentally (emphasising the inability of an hour of the clock to mark the experience of 'duration' in the mind), and scientifically (exposing the arbitrariness of the standardisation of time).[53]

The temporality of time is not what dictates one's life, as time reveals itself as being both 'arbitrary' and 'unable to mark' subjective experience. Thus letting the self be removed from temporality, if only for short periods, and allowing the self to marvel in its memories, meetings, and moments, paves the way for a spiritual experience within life itself.

In *Mrs Dalloway* organized religion is not included as a path that leads towards a spiritual existence, and the many references to Christianity seem only to add to the ambivalent nature that exists within *Mrs Dalloway*. Initially one is reminded of the Protestant heritage that lies within British High Church, and in so many other countries, a heritage where life is depicted as a life in sacrifice eagerly awaiting one's reward in heaven. Obviously, in a novel that is all about life itself, such a view will not be easily incorporated into the narration. These negative connotations of

[53] *Theorists of the Modernist Novel*, p. 114.

Christianity are all represented through Mrs Kilman and the religious arrogance she displays through her petty and jealous nature. 'If only she could make her weep; could ruin her; humiliate her; bring her to her knees crying, You are right! But it was Gods will, not Mrs Kilman's. It was to be a religious victory. So she glared; so she glowed'(106).

Nussbaum writes that 'the universal compassion for human suffering which one associates with Christianity at its best is difficult to imagine apart from the paradigm of human suffering and sacrifice exemplified in Christ.[54] Hence, the human life of Christ, his trials and his sufferings, does not appear out of place within a novel such as *Mrs Dalloway*. Thus, the problem with religion must therefore rise from a different point of origin:

> Then, while a seedy- looking nondescript man carrying a leather bag stood on the steps of St. Paul's cathedral, and hesitated, for within was that balm, how great a welcome, how many tombs with banners waving over them, tokens of victories not over armies, but over, he thought, that plaguy spirit of truth seeking which leaves me at present without a situation, and more than that, the cathedral offers company, he thought, invites you to membership of a society; great men belong to it; martyrs have died for it; why not enter in, he thought, put this leather bag before an altar, a cross, the symbol of something, which has soared beyond seeking and questing and knocking of words together and has become all spirit, disembodied, ghostly – why not enter in? he thought, and while he hesitated out flew the aeroplane over Ludgate Circus.(24)

[54] *Love's Knowledge,* p. 376.

In this passage*,* Woolf is *not* showing us a man in solitude, hesitant to fold his hands in prayer – an image Woolf easily could have conveyed. What we do see however, is a man hesitant to enter a church where he is welcomed by 'many tombs with banners over them, tokens of victories not over armies, but [...] that plaguy spirit of truth seeking.' In her work *Women's Spirituality in the Twentieth Century,* Heather Ingman works through Woolf's personal correspondence looking for a background for the religious views in Woolf's works. Ingman pays particular attention to Woolf's statement of 'how repulsive the Christian religion as conveyed by the Christian clergyman is!' explaining that 'even in her letters Woolf implies that it is not Christ's teachings, so much as the way they have been interpreted by the Church of England, which sets her at odds with religion.'[55] Woolf's objection to Christianity then, is an important questioning - and criticism, of what organized religion has turned Christianity into; an example of what Woolf objected to most, as Ingman writes, the 'attempt to force people's souls.'[56]

Despite the general reluctance to partake in organized forms of worship, spiritual encounters stand out as important aspects of the characters personal lives within *Mrs Dalloway.* They might initially, however, not be viewed as such, exactly because their point of origin is of the personal realm within the individual.

> It was her life, and bending her head over the hall table, she bowed beneath the influence, felt blessed and purified, saying to herself, as she took the pad with the telephone message on it, how moments like these are buds on the tree of life, flowers of darkness they are, she thought (as if some lovely rose had blossomed for her eyes only); not for a moment did she believe in God; but all the more, she thought, taking up the pad, must one repay in daily

[55] Heather Ingman, *Women's Spirituality in the Twentieth Century: An Exploration through Fiction* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2004), p.72.
[56] *Women's Spirituality*, p. 72.

life to servants, yes, to dogs and canaries, above all to Richard her husband, who was the foundation of it – of the gay sounds, of the green lights, of the cook even whistling, for Mrs Walker was Irish and whistled all day long – one must pay back from this secret deposit of exquisite moments […]. (25)

The sacred moment that Clarissa experiences here is of vast importance in the search for a spiritual dimension within the self. In this passage Clarissa feels both 'blessed' and 'purified', standing in the hall of her house. Many critics see this passage as an example of Clarissa's need to 'hide' from the unpleasantness of the world outside.[57] One can easily disagree with such a view, however, finding in such moments as this a strong similarity to the Christian, and Catholic, tradition of entering a church solely for the purpose of quiet contemplation. In *A Brief History of Spirituality* Philip Sheldrake enters the difference between the spiritual search of traditional and modern day society,

> The decline of traditional forms [of Spirituality] seems to be part of a process of the dispersal of spirituality into wider culture. In a previous world where there was a two- tier view of holiness and where spiritual seriousness demanded separation from everyday life, it was natural for large numbers to enter traditional religious life. Nowadays, however, it is engagement *with* the world rather than the escape from it that is the increasingly the focus for the spiritual quest.[58]

This moment then, is not an escape from the world, but a moment in silence in order to *take in* the world, hence gaining the strength needed to cope with the difficulties of being of this world. These moments of private contemplation become essential in the

[57] See for example McGarry's *Orts, Scraps, and Fragments*, pp. 28-29.
[58] *A Brief History of Spirituality,* p. 208.

individual's point of contact with the modern world. Deborah Parsons refers Woolf's own manuscript ' A Sketch of the Past' where she describes such encounters as 'moments of being' explaining them as 'exceptional moments of emotion, qualitative states of heightened intensity or shock. Often these might on the surface seem trivial [...] but the feeling they evoke is so significant that the mind stores the moment as a mental image that can be revisited.'[59] There are multiple examples active within *Mrs Dalloway* pressing the importance of such moments, one of the more important one's being her own party. This particular 'sacred moment' is of specific value as it is the only one appearing in the company of others. It is perhaps an attempt to reach beyond the preferred solitude and anonymity – not only of modern society but also for Clarissa herself. For what aids in Clarissa's ability to survive modern society is her support – the invaluable system of loved ones surrounding her. Septimus, on the other hand, is far less fortunate, his only support being his wife Rezia being an alien within this country herself. Consequently, as Clarissa opens up towards life and her loved ones, Septimus gives in to his struggles. In one sad instance Clarissa chooses life, while Septimus chooses death, thus emphasizing their doubleness. Hawthorn writes of this passage that 'the embrace that Septimus finds in death is sought because he cannot find it in that human contact achieved momentarily at her party that recharges Clarissa's spiritual reserves.[60] As Clarissa gathers all her acquaintances and loved ones that give her spiritual strength, Septimus gives out – for he has nowhere to turn for comfort and 'spiritual refill.' Furthermore it is in hearing of his death that we find Clarissa's second reason for survival, namely the sadness and empathy she feels for Septimus and his fate. My understanding of 'empathy' is consonant with the

[59] Deborah Parsons. *Theorists of the Modernist Novel: James Joyce, Dorothy Richardson, Virginia Woolf* (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 75.
[60] *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway,,* p.33.

definition given by M. H. Abrams. As he writes, empathy ‘signifies an identification of oneself with an observed person or object which is so close that one seems to participate in the posture, motion, and sensations that one observes’.[61] Again one sees the value of emotions within the modern world.

> They (all day she had been thinking of Bourton, of Peter, of Sally), they would grow old. A thing there was that mattered; a thing, wreathed about with chatter, defeaced, obscured in her own life, let drop every day in corruption, lies, chatter. This he had preserved. Death was defiance. Death was an attempt to communicate, people feeling the impossibility of reaching the centre which, mystically, evaded them; closeness drew apart; rapture faded; one was alone. There was an embrace in death. (156)

Standing on top of the stairs at her party, Clarissa summons her emotions, her past and her present, and views the fellow human beings she has invited in. For these moments truly are the spiritual moments of Clarissa’s life, forever connecting her past and her present, piecing together, constructing, revising and refining her personality. Like the modernist artist piecing together a collage of old and new parts, Clarissa summons her life experiences into one, massive collage of life, narrating her own sacred moments into spiritual meaning and value. In ‘stopping up’ for brief periods and revisiting the past and taking in the present, Clarissa makes sure she does not lose herself in the tumultuous world of modernity. Heather Ingman gives a valuable definition of women and spirituality in her work, ‘The term ‘women’s spirituality’ implies women’s developing recognition of the divine within themselves and in their

[61] M.H. Abrams, *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* 8th ed. (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), p. 78.

relationships with others and the world around them.'[62] Such a definition describes what the story of Clarissa is all about, thus enhancing Woolf's secularized notion of a higher purpose or meaning in life. Such 'secularization', though, does not renounce the notion of a spiritual connection in life, for it is through the description of life, and the novel's ability to welcome life, that the spiritual connection is found:

> Odd, incredible; she had never been so happy. Nothing could be slow enough; nothing last too long. No pleasure could equal, she thought, straightening the chairs, pushing in one book on the shelf, this having done with the triumphs of youth, lost herself in the process of living, to find it, with a shock of delight, as the sun rose, as the day sank. (157)

There is a deep sense of respect and gratitude in favour of life deriving from the imagery used to describe these moments, and for Woolf the search for spirituality starts and ends within these moments as they encompass what is of value and importance in a life. In revisiting them one creates a place of worship and reflection within the self, the sum of these moments – collected through a long life – making each individual a spiritual entity in itself. And perhaps this is why modernism touches its readers, through the art of modernism we might glimpse pieces of our own devoutness, and that is truly spiritual.

The appraisal of the self, or the individual, as conveyed through *Mrs Dalloway* is not an aspect of egotism – but rather – an important aspect of humanism. And this value, and growth of the self is interconnected to close relationships surrounding the self. Emotions consequently become imperative in a search for meaning and value in life, providing lasting and empathic bonds between humans – and thus developing the self in the process.

[62] *Women's Spirituality,* p.14.

T. S. Eliot *The Waste Land*

3.1. Introduction

As indicated already, *The Waste Land* is a vast and complex poem, and arguably no analysis of this work can claim to be exhaustive. The focus of this analysis will, however, revolve around the topic of man's search for a spiritual connection in the language modernism was built around – considering the duality of emotions deriving from both the modernist language *and* its emotional impact on the (modern) reader. I will discuss how the poem evolves and changes, first and foremost through its multitude of narrative and / or poetic techniques. Secondly, I will identify and discuss possible changes of ambience and emotion. Furthermore I will look at the immense volume of mythical, and intertextual references Eliot's provides his reader, thus analysing their meanings and their contributions to the poem. My understanding of 'intertextuality' is inspired by Julia Kristeva's definition: 'any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another.' [63] Yet I want to not only to appropriate but also to distance myself from this definition, which I find too open and inclusive. Discussing a work such as *The Waste Land*, we could say that intertextuality describes the wide range of literary, historical and religious echoes which Eliot has integrated into his poem, and which greatly contribute to its structural and thematic complexity. Some of these echoes take the form of direct references, some are more indirect in that they presuppose the reader's knowledge about the relevant intertextual link. Interestingly, Eliot made a number of the indirect references direct by adding footnotes to his own poem. An important point to make here is that the rich intertextuality of *The Waste Land* makes the poem more, rather than less, original.

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[63] Julia Kristeva, 'Word, Dialogue, Novel', in Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1980), p. 66.

Finally I will present and discuss how Eliot seems to view a possible spiritual resurrection for modern man. I will discuss of what importance *The Waste Land* assesses a religious, or spiritual, connection to be for its inhabitants, and what fertile effects a higher sense of purpose might bring to the wasteland.

It is interesting to note that critics like Virginia Woolf and R.G Collingwood, both eminent scholars in their own right, seem less preoccupied with Eliot's fascinating use of language – and all the more preoccupied with the emotions his writing creates.[64] This may indicate multiple things. First, it suggests something of the emotive strength of the modernist language, of what reactions "a heap of broken images", to borrow Eliot's own phrase, might induce.[65] It also tells us something about the way a text such as Eliot's engages, provokes and includes the reader. It becomes clear, then, that Eliot's *Waste Land* reflects upon topics that resonate deeply within human beings. Wolfgang Iser elaborates,

> Literature as a mirror, though, is by no means a new discovery, and we are well acquainted with the multifarious types of subservience to which literature has been subjected down through the ages. The question, however, which now arises, is whether literature – in relation to history and society – reflects something special that neither philosophies of history nor sociological theories are able to capture.[66]

Iser's general thought is particularly thought-provoking if linked to *The Waste Land.* This 'certain something' that literature reflects according to Iser, might just be the particular evocation of emotion reflected through modernism. Eliot himself sheds light to this view with his "objective correlative", a term that was first introduced in

[64] See for example R. G. Collingwood*, A Collection of Critical Essays on The Waste Land*, ed. by Jay Martin (Engelwood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1968), p. 51.
[65] Graham Hough, 'The Modernist Lyric', in *Modernism: 1890-1930,* p.320.
[66] *Prospecting: From Reader Response to Literary Anthropology,* p. 263.

his essay on Shakespeare's *Hamlet,* where he discusses the certain ambience, or emotion, that Shakespeare so masterly conveys in his works. Eliot theorizes the emotive reactions found through literature,

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative", in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such as when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.[67]

The ideal then, is to use images that "terminate in sensory experience, images that reveal themselves as concretely as possible, in order to build more complex structures. Eliot describes a similar effect in his own reading of *Hamlet*, "We find Shakespeare's Hamlet not in the action, not in any quotations we might select, so much as in an unmistakable tone [...]."[68] One finds, then, that within this 'heap of broken images', within this seemingly unstructured, unfinished poetic world of *The Waste Land*, a powerful structure binding the poem together does in fact exist. That structure is one of the evocations of emotion. And through this rediscovery of emotion, man may achieve the ability to discover his own, inner landscape, thus realizing that he is *in need* of something more that a materialized, objectified world. My aspiration for this chapter will be a mapping of Eliot's use of emotion, both as a structural device, and as a concept in its own right – conveyed through the eyes of an implied author towards an implied reader.[69] It is through the mapping of personal, and

[67]T.S. Eliot, *Selected Essays: 1917 – 1932* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1932), p. 125.
[68] *Selected Essays...*p. 124.
[69] By 'implied author' I mean the image or impression of the author – including his or her views, norms, and attitudes – which we assemble and form by reading the text. By 'implied reader' I mean the reader that the author is addressing. For a discussion of these terms see Lothe, *Narrative in Fiction and Film,* pp. 17-20.

collective, states of emotion that my search for spirituality in *The Waste Land* will take place. Emotions become imperative in such a search, as a portrayal of a human sense of loss, and thereby a human need for something more, and can only be validated through the individual – or the individual's collective, emotional experience. That man is *in need* of something more becomes difficult to discuss without an emotional 'drive' behind that particular need. Thus, as human beings our emotions become necessary reference tools in our interaction with this 'world of objects', and in viewing *The Waste Land* as a whole one finds that a need for spirituality is of equal importance. Seen in this light, it becomes apparent that both an emotive, and a spiritual approach are preconditions for each other in a world that seems to lack a definite purpose. Without a spiritual "bottom" within modern man, the "world of objects" becomes as difficult to live in as a *Waste Land* without water.

3.2. Birth, Fear, and the World of Objects

Already in the first lines of *The Waste Land* the reader is confronted with the metaphor of spiritual rebirth, 'April is the cruellest month, breeding / Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing / Memory and desire, stirring / Dull roots with spring rain' (lines 1-4)[70] Through his first four lines, Eliot introduces the main themes of his poem, namely the notion that all birth hurts, and as such, a spiritual birth – or rebirth, will also be a painful experience for man. The second theme Eliot hands the reader lies in the notion that even from dead land, life can again begin to sprout and grow. Whereas metaphors of spring are generally connected to positive connotations within poetry,

[70] All references to *The Waste Land* are from *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* ed. by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, 7th edn, 2 vols (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), II, pp. 2370-2383.

Eliot connects distinctly negative associations to the subject, through his harsh description of April. It is almost as if one can detect a certain mockery pertaining to Eliot's rotation of the Romantic imagery of spring. Mockery or not, Eliot positions his reader directly into a modernist era of Freudian realism; that is to say a world that utilizes symbolic imagery into real life coping- strategies. The Freudian influence on modernist literature is highly visible through the characters and their loss of direction, as he describes in his Waste Land. Freud is also a referent in Nussbaum's *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions*,

> As Freud writes […], the story of human birth is a story of the emergence of a sentient being from the womb of secure narcissism to the sharp perception that it is cast adrift in a world of objects, a world that it has not made and does not control. In that world, the infant is aware of being an unusually weak and helpless being. Bodily pain is nothing by contrast to the terrifying awareness of helplessness, close to unendurable without the shelter of a womblike sleep. When we wake up, we have to figure out how to live in that world of objects.[71]

Nussbaum's quote explains some of the psychological background for Eliot's *Waste Land*; in a world suffering from the aftermaths of the Great War, and coping with the effects of an ever growing industrialism, man's sense of purpose is lost. How does modern man face this "world of objects", a set of objects that changes faster than man is able to follow? Eliot describes the characters of *The Waste Land* as both spiritually and emotionally crippled. We need to ask the question of whether their lack of spirituality is the very reason they do not display their emotive language beyond a certain extent. Eliot writes, ' What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,' (lines 19-22). Man cannot see- or will

[71] *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions,* p. 16.

not see, a larger purpose with his life. Eliot's own notes on the quote 'Son of man' from Ezekiel 2.1, describe a sequence where God tells man to 'stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee'.[72] This intertextual reference stresses the need for modern man to 'open his eyes' towards a spiritual resurrection. This lack of spirituality does not, however, produce the desired effect of *indifference* towards life that modern man seems to seek, but does, as Eliot's next line shows us, render an opposite effect; ' And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief' (line 23). A life in search of the mental states of indifference and detachment will paradoxically leave man filled with anxiety, unable to hide from his emotions.

The elements of nature, as nature itself, incorporate transformation and rebirth. Such transformations always imply an element of uncertainty, which lays the basis of fear and anxiety in modern man.

> (Come in under the shadow of this red rock)
> And I will show you something different from either
> Your shadow at morning striding behind you
> Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
> I will show you fear in a handful of dust. (26-30)

Eliot emphasizes that everything in life is connected – nature and humans, water and growth – we are all part of the cycle of life. The world is not a dualistic one; joy implies sorrow, and life implies death. To hide from the difficult and hurtful parts of life leads, as Eliot shows us, to an empty existence. The fact that death is always present in life strangles any attempt to live. The strength of this anxiety increases as the poem progresses: 'There is always another one walking beside you / Gliding

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[72] *The Norton Anthology of English Literature,* ed. by M.H. Abrams and Stephen Greenblatt, 7th edn, 2 vols (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2000), II, p. 2370

wrapped in a brown mantle, hooded' (lines 363- 364). The fear of death is forever present within modern man. Anxiety and fear-based emotions, however, are as necessary as their positive counterparts. Nussbaum refers to the importance of emotions such as fear, and even anger, in a modern environment. Such a need is apparent even from childhood:

> It was all right for the people of the Golden Age to be emotionless, since that condition was suited to the world in which they lived. But in our world emotions are needed to provide the developing child with a map of the world. [...] Fear and joy and love and even anger demarcate the world, and at the same time map the self in the world, as the child's initial appraisals, prompted by its own inner needs for security and well- being, become more refined in connection with its own active attempts at control and manipulation, through which it learns what good and bad things are part of its self, or under its control, and what are not.[73]

The emotionless state of the Golden Age might have aided its inhabitants, but such a state of mind will not be a fruitful approach to a modern world, as its complexity requires all aspects of our emotions. For Eliot it becomes important, then, to know one's emotions as they lay the fundament for man's survival in the world, 'rescuing it from a sense of helpless passivity before the world.'[74] And it is exactly such a "helpless passivity" that the inhabitants of the *Waste Land* display, hiding from the rain and thereby any chance of growth. The empty lives within *The Waste Land* are described accurately in the poem's first stanza: 'A little life with dried tubers / Summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee / With a shower of rain, we stopped in the colonnade, / And went on in sunlight, into the Hofgarten, / [...] / I read, much of the night, and go south in the winter' (lines 7-10, and line 18). It becomes

[73] *Upheavals of Thought,* pp. 206- 207
[74] Ibid. p. 207.

apparent that, even for Eliot, topics such as transformation, growth, and the notion of madness are too complex to be described only by words. Eliot's choice of words, his intertextual allusions, his use of assonance and onomatopoeia all aid in the display of emotion. From Eliot's general introduction of spring in the first lines, the poem moves swiftly towards the use of the personal pronouns of 'I' and 'we'. Although the poem is too impersonal – and consists of too many voices – to be referred to as stream of consciousness, there remains no doubt that the voices that spring from *The Waste Land,* are the voices of its inhabitants. These voices are many, and diverse. Nevertheless they all speak of inner turmoil and distress in one form or another: 'And I was frightened. He said, Marie, / Marie, hold on tight. And down we went.' (15-16).

In almost epic proportions Eliot depicts 'the vices and follies' of mankind, touching upon most of the important aspects of human life. The spiritual dryness in the Waste Land manifests itself on many levels, 'Winter kept us warm, covering / Earth in forgetful snow, feeding' (lines 5- 6). These lines are a reference to the horrors of World War One, the snow representing a blanket of forgetfulness that society draws upon itself. The senselessness of thousands of dead soldiers, lost in the battle over yards and feet, was especially close in the 1920s. The topic of war is repeated in the reference to Mylae, and the so-called Trade War (line 70). Man's destruction on the basis of profit is also seen in Eliot's many descriptions of the city. London (and other cities such as Paris) personifies the real- life images of the Waste Land, where the water is polluted, and where nothing grows, 'Unreal City / Under the brown for of a winter dawn'(lines 60- 61). Eliot describes the harm which a profit- based society inflicts upon the environment. The capitalist heart of the "City" is disturbingly described and alluded to through Eliot's own "purgatory", 'Unreal City, / Under the brown fog of a winter dawn, / A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many, / I had

not thought death had undone so many' (lines 60- 63). In the juxtaposition to Dante's limbo, the speech to Stetson in the following lines, becomes particularly important. 'There I saw one I knew, and stopped him, crying: 'Stetson'! / You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!' (69-70). As "just another face in the crowd", Stetson becomes the representative of the vast majority of the inhabitants of the Waste Land. This majority avoids taking a stand on what is of value and importance in life, ' 'That corpse you planted last year in your garden, / 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?' (71- 72). Brooker and Bentley state of this passage that

> The speech to Stetson is particularly appropriate for someone who has never dealt with issues of good and evil, someone who, in a moral sense, has never been alive. It is an utterance carefully confined to the codes of temporary cognition [...] The two meeting in contemporary London seem to have asked themselves the following question: "How can a dead man, whether he was god, hero, or peasant, restore fertility to the land?"[75]

In this spiritual dryness, everyone is alike, and everyone is a hypocrite, 'You! hypocrite lecture! – mon semblance – mon frère!'(76).

Relationships between men and women suffer in the Waste Land, and there seems to be a complete loss of communication between the sexes. In *A Game of Chess* this void between human beings is painfully described. In the first line Eliot creates a baroque ambience through his descriptions of the luxurious home: 'The chair she sat in, like a burnished throne, / Glowed on the marble, where the glass / Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines' (lines 77- 79). The warmth displayed from this imagery is contrasted through the lack of warmth between the couple Eliot describes. Their surroundings are filled with objects, and her perfume fills the air, a feeling of

[75]Jewel Spears Brooker and Joseph Bentley, *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1990), pp. 35- 36.

suffocation is brought to the reader. Nothing happens during the dinner scene, and a strong sense of apathy and boredom is keenly felt in between all the luxury. Initially this scene bears witness to the downfall and corruptibility of modern society, a downfall addressed later in the poem through Eliot's referral to the fall of the Roman Empire.

At second glance, however, this section extends far beyond a general social criticism; bearing Eliot's objective correlative in mind, we realise that *A Game of Chess* becomes the most emotional part of the poem. The setting surrounding this couple is overwhelming and over the top, candles and art surround them, and the warm light from the fire glows on their faces. They seem to have it all, but still they have nothing. 'Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair / Spread out in fiery points / Glowed into words, then would be savagely still.' (108-110). The loneliness within them seems to grow even stronger in comparison to the luxury around them. *The Waste Land* is filled with images of women being let down; ' My nerves are bad tonight. Yes, bad. Stay with me. / Speak to me. Why do you never speak. Speak' (lines 111- 112). These lines show the hurt feelings and desperation that arises from this lack of communication. Without a connection to a spiritual dimension, the despair becomes constant. Man has nowhere left to turn, nowhere to seek shelter from the pain. The lack of spirituality, and meaning, creates not only avoid between the sexes, but also within the self. This void manifests itself through anxiety and fear, a fear that keeps modern man within his spiritual vacuum. The lack of communication between men and women is particularly visible in the characters of Albert and Lil, the saddest part being, however, the dialogue between Lil and her friend, ' You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique. / (And her only thirty- one.)' (Lines 156-157). Lil is worn out by childbirth at the young age of thirty-one, and the abortion pill she took

to avoid a sixth child has left her even more exhausted. ‘ I can’t help it she said, pulling a long face / It’s them pills I took, to bring it off, she said / (She’d had five already, and nearly died of young George.)’ (lines 158-160). Returning from war, Albert demands ‘his share’ of Lil, seemingly oblivious to the fact that is wearing out his wife. The real hurt lies, nevertheless, in the lack of empathy and understanding from Lil’s close friend. Even she takes Albert’s side in this matter. How heroic, then, are Eliot’s ‘heroes’ really, when we see them with their women? A large void exists between the positive ambience in Eliot’s description of nature’s fruitfulness and the negativity in man’s procreation. There is no celebration of the fruitfulness of life here, no joy in the act itself, and the fruits of the act only add more burden to man. If modern man has spent generations learning to hide from the self, how can he open up to such a notion of trust in life, or in others around him? Moreover, if nature within us creates such a fear, is it any wonder that man disentangles himself from the nature surrounding him? A Stoic worldview of disentanglement is not, then, a state of mind to strive for, as it eventually leads to the removal of all emotions, and thereby our last connection to the world.

3.3. Madness, Myth, and Spiritual Resurrection

As we read and reread this demanding poem, we realise that Eliot breaks not only with the narrative methods of his past, but also with a heritage based upon scientifically measurements of cause and effect. In his essay ‘A Material Civilization’, René Guénon states that

> It seems that nothing exists for modern man other than what can be seen and touched; or at least, even if they admit theoretically that something else may exist they hasten to declare it not merely

> unknown but "unknowable," which absolves them from having to give it further thought. […] and some philosophers, such as Kant, go as far as to declare "inconceivable" and "unthinkable" everything that is not capable of representation. In the same way everything that goes by the name of "spiritualism" or "idealism" usually transports to no more than a sort of transposed materialism […].[76]

What Eliot as well as Guénon are describing is a modern mentality detached from any kind of higher purpose and meaning in life. For Eliot, a way out of such a detachment might come from rethinking the devaluation of human emotion so symptomatic of this era. This 're-introduction' of emotion is also conveyed through Eliot's innovative use of language, and especially his frequent use of imagery, allusions, and intertextual references.

Water is also highlighted to in Eliot's reference to Shakespeare's *Hamlet.* More precisely, the reference is to Ophelia and her last words before she drowns herself in the lake outside the castle, ' Good night, ladies, good night, sweet ladies, good night, good night.' (172). Intertextual echoes of Shakespeare are found especially in the parts of *A Game of* Chess and *The Fire Sermon,* where the essential elements of fire, earth, water, and air are drawn together. ' Those are pearls that were his eyes/ "Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head? / But/ O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag - '(lines 125- 127). The Shakespearian characters that Eliot refers to all seem to incorporate the notion of madness. There are Ophelia and her suicide, Hamlet and his struggles, and from the above citation, the reference to *King Lear* and the realisation that out of his madness nothing fruitful can be produced. Could it be that by the removal of these characters' sanity, they, like Phlebas with his lack of sight, receive

[76] René Guénon, 'A Material Civilisation', in *The Betrayal of Tradition: Essays on the Spiritual Crisis of Modernity,* ed. by Harry Oldmeadow (Bloomington: World Wisdom, 2005), p. 17.

the ability to see something more? Is it perhaps not their madness that drives them to their deaths, but rather the inability of their surroundings to understand them? Eliot shows us that there is a certain risk involved in partaking in a spiritual search, namely that the strain the emotional outcome which such a search inevitably presents, might eventually become too much to bear. Can the 'fire' such emotions create then, lead to madness? Alternatively, has such 'madness' perhaps become a convenient excuse for modern man not to "succumb" to such emotions? It might appear so, for the search for meaning will always run the risk of ending up fruitless. Better then to hide from our emotions, 'And if it rains, a closed car at four' (136). Eliot, however, seems to offer an alternative through *The Fire Sermon*. In his notes he refers this section to The Fire Sermon of Buddha and his preaching's 'against the fires of lust and other passions that destroy people and prevent their regeneration.'[77] According to Buddha, the way to overcome this 'fire' is to enter the process of admitting its presence and thereby release its hold on mankind.[78] Towards the end of *The Fire Sermon*, fire is referred to once more through the allusion to Augustine's *Confessions* and his reminiscence of his lustful youth, ' To Carthage then I came / Burning burning burning burning / Oh Lord Thou pluckest me out ' (307-309). Initially these lines show the reader a complete condemnation of the 'fire' of emotions, and of sexual emotions in particular. But hidden within this passage lies the biggest paradox of *The Waste Land*. Brooker and Bentley write of *The Fire Sermon* that

> First, this section of the poem does not even remotely resemble a sermon. Its language can be called descriptive and mimetic, but by no means can it be called hortatory or any other term appropriate to a sermon. Second, its dominant image is not fire but water.

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[77] *Norton*, p. 2375.
[78] *Reading The Waste Land,* p. 121.

> […] Third, its sexual episodes are not characterized by passion or hatred or remorse or by any other emotion that could be compared to fire.[79]

Fire then, is recognized through its *absence* and not its *presence.* And this absence shines through, yet again, in the meetings between men and women:

> The meal is ended, she is bored and tired,
> Endeavours to engage her in caresses
> Which still are unreproved, if undesired.
> Flushed and decided, he assaults at once;
> Exploring hands encounter no defence;
> His vanity requires no response,
> And makes a welcome of indifference. (236-242)

Man thus seems to have lost 'both ways'. Not only does he lack a spiritual connection – or fire, towards a higher power, he also lacks the passionate human emotions that could distract him *from* obtaining a spiritual connection. The lack of fire protrudes all of *The Waste Land,* it is literally and figuratively 'a land left barren.' The personal, almost dramatic way Eliot describes his characters' stories only serves to enhance this pervasive emptiness. Though the frequent use of personal pronouns such as 'I' or 'we', alliteration and onomatopoeia Eliot personalize the drama of *The Waste Land.* And as this drama steadily grows on its reader, the emotionless states of the characters grow accordingly thus making a reading of the poem not intellectually demanding but also a truly emotional experience.

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[79] *Reading The Waste Land,* pp. 122-123.

The massive amount of intertextual intertextuality in *The Waste Land* is Eliot's way of paying homage to the literary traditions gone before him, and his way of emphasizing the importance of culture. This sophisticated use of allusions creates meaning and interpretations on a number of interlinked levels in his writing. In an essay titled "Ulysses, Order, and Myth", Eliot comments on Joyce's use of the *Odyssey* as a basis for *Ulysses.* Eliot writes that

> In using the myth, in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr. Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him… It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and significance to the immense panorama of ordering, of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history… Psychology…, ethnology, and *The Golden Bough* have concurred to make possible what was impossible even a few years ago.. instead of narrative method, we may now use the mythical method.[80]

We see that like Joyce, Eliot looks to the past to find a structure and a basis of ordering modern life and all its impressions. The use of myths thus becomes a tool that helps the poet sorting his material. In his essay 'The metaphysics of Modernism' Michael Bell explains some of the background for the modernist use of myth,

> The casual process enacted within historical and personal time is set against, not so much the timelessness, as the intrinsic, values represented emblematically in myth. For this is the important emphasis: not a withdrawal into some realm of the timelessness but a

[80] T. S. Eliot, 'Ulysses, Order, and Myth', in *T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land,* ed. by Michael North (New York: W.W Norton & Norton, 2001), pp. 128- 130.

recognition of the intrinsic and foundational import of these values for the given community or "world."[81]

Already in the poems epigraph the importance of antiquity is emphasized. Through the quote from *Satyricon,* the reader is introduced to several of the themes of *The Waste Land.* In this short passage, the topic of death is addressed through the words of the Sibyl, and the poems emphasis on myths and the classical Greek literary tradition becomes apparent. In addition, an 'allusion within the allusion' exists in Sibyl's guidance of Aeneas through Hades. This becomes a future reference to Eliot's use of Dante and his *Divine Comedy,* already referred to in Eliot's introductory dedication to Ezra Pound. Dante's *Purgatory* and Virgil's role as a guide are supported by Eliot's role as a non- intrusive author. The Sibyl holds an interesting role in *The Waste Land;* from roman mythology she is Aeneas' guide to the underworld. Thus, the Sibyl comes to represent a journey of resurrection and rebirth. This might also be a reference to *The Sibylline Books*, a collection of oracle writings reputedly predicting the future. The nine volumes of the collection were offered three times to the Roman Empire, which rejected them twice. And as a result the female offered burned six of the volumes as punishment, eventually forcing the Empire to buy the remaining three.[82] This is Eliot's specific criticism of the disrespect of tradition shown by modern man. Here it may be of importance to note that Eliot often drew parallels between the Roman Empire and the modern world, a parallel interesting in itself as history blames its fall on the decadence of its own inhabitants. Once again, we find that Eliot draws important lines from our historical past to the present day. In his essay 'Pope; Eliot,

[81] Michael Bell 'The Metaphysics of Modernism', in *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism*, p. 15.
[82] Arthur Cotterell, *A Dictionary of World Mythology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 185.

and the Mind of Europe' J.S. Cunningham states, 'Phlebas, Eliot, Tiresias; Silenus, Pope, the gloomy "clerk": we are provoked to seek distinctions among them and to know the thresholds beyond which such distinctions will not hold.'[83] Tiresias and Phlebas come together in the lines 218-221 of *The Waste Land*, ' I Tiresias, though blind, throbbing between two lives / Old man with wrinkled female breasts, can see / Homeward, and brings the sailor home from sea,' (218- 221). Tiresias is seen, in Eliot's own words, as the most important character in the poem, since he holds the role of the observer.[84] As the two sexes that occupy Tiresias meet Phlebas the sailor (the Phoenietian), the theme of the feminine versus the masculine, of water, and of growth appears. It is interesting to see how Eliot makes use of binary oppositions of multiple shapes in his work, and Tiresias may be viewed as an example of such a use. In his work *From Philosophy to Poetry: T. S. Eliot,* Donald S. Childs explains,

> [...] Eliot recognized that the subject – object dichotomy in philosophical constructions of reality belies a fundamental identity between subject and object, leading him to conclude that such patterns of opposition – whether in philosophy in particular or in the culture at large – are a function of a dialectical habit of denying that opposites can be identical. Eliot saw this dialectic as a western habit motivated by the need of philosophers, as Pearl puts it, `to evade the painful knowledge that they could not be sure what they believed`.[85]

Thus, the realist worldview of the present has removed man from seeing the positive effects of a symbiosis of opposites. Man's eagerness to 'know it all' erases everything else, except pure logic, and as a result faith is lost too. ' And if it rains. A closed car at four / And we shall play a game of chess / Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a

[83] J.S Cunningham, 'Pope, Eliot, and the Mind of Europe', in *The Waste Land in Different Voices*, ed. by A.D. Moody(London: Edward Arnold Publishing, 1974), p.69.
[84] *The Cambridge Companion to Modernism,* pp. 120- 121.
[85] Donald S. Childs, *From Philosophy to Poetry: T.S. Eliot* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), p.86.

knock upon the door' (135-137). In his fear of the mystical and the unexplainable man closes his eyes, and "hides from the rain." Nature, and thereby everything that grows, are excluded from this modern world of logic. For nature itself is all about the notion of symbiosis, fertility, and rebirth. The need for subject-object relations, and the western preoccupation with cause and effect, removes man from seeing that "everything is connected to everything else", and that "reality is one and, therefore, that all relations are internal.[86] Brooker and Bentley make use of Eliot's own thoughts concerning this topic:

> The life of a soul does not consist in the contemplation of one consistent world but in the painful task of unifying (to a greater or less extent) jarring and incompatible ones, and passing, when possible, from two or more discordant viewpoints to a higher which shall somehow include and transmute them.[87]

For modern man then, the challenge becomes one of letting go of his hubris – a hubris that brought down even the Roman Empire – and of the need to demystify the world. What Eliot describes in his work is a non-dualistic, non- linear world, a world where everyone and everything is linked together in the cycle of life. Eliot's use of myth now becomes far more complex than merely the need to respect our past. His use of the ancient fertility myths incorporating thoughts such as 'the marriage of trees and plants [that] could not be fertile without the real union of the human sexes', is an allegory of our own fertility and growth.'[88]

This 'union of fertility' is linked to the myth of the Fisher King and, even more importantly to the legend of the search for the Holy Grail. Not referred to specifically

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[86] *Reading the Waste Land..,* p. 35.
[87] Ibid. p. 34.
[88] Sir James G. Fraser, 'The Influence of the Sexes on Vegetation', in *T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land,* p.30.

in the poem, it nevertheless serves a multi-purpose in *The Waste Land*, not only as a (or perhaps *the*) metaphor, but also as a 'recipe' for the reading of the poem – much in the same way as the *Odyssey* is used in Joyce's *Ulysses*. The Grail Legend depicts a land left barren after its king is wounded at war – or on some occasions, suffering from old age (impotence). The land suffers a drought because of this, and it becomes the task of the hero to bring water, and life, back to the land. The same lack of water, and thereby growth, is both theme and title in Eliot's poem. In her essay 'Faith and Modernity' Karen Armstrong addresses the disparity between a historical and a modern approach to the notion of faith,

> Originally the meaning of the word "faith" was akin to trust, as when we say that we have faith *in* a friend or an ideal. Faith was not an intellectual position but a virtue: it was the careful cultivation, by means of the rituals and myths of religion, of the conviction that, despite all the dispiriting evidence to the contrary, life had some ultimate meaning and value. […] This attitude is foreign to modernity. Today people feel that before they live a religious life, they must first satisfy themselves intellectually of its metaphysical claims. This is sound scientific practice: first you must establish a principle before you can apply it.[89]

A spiritual quest such as the quest for the Holy Grail relies not on 'sound scientific progress', but on the very notion of faith deriving from a fundamental feeling of *trust*. And as such, writing about a spiritual quest requires more that a mere collection of words. The reference to the search for the Holy Grail is an important metaphor for modern man's own need to search for faith, and for truth. In *The Waste Land* the

[89] Karen Armstrong, 'Faith and Modernity', in *The Betrayal of Tradition,* p. 73.

world is barren because of man's own destructions and the *hubris* that caused it. Again we find a reference to the Roman Empire.

> If there were water we could stop and drink
> Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
> Sweat is dry and feet are in the sand
> If there were only water amongst the rock[90]

This 'spiritual dryness' rests not in the hands of only one man, as in the Grail legend, but on mankind as a whole. One way to approach such a search is through literature, "Literary form is not separable from philosophical content, but is, itself, a part of content – an integral part then, of the search for and the statement of truth."[91] Such a thought coincides with Eliot's use of intertextuality in describing his Waste Land, which is why "a Holy Grail behind the Waste Land" gives the poem such strength.

Once again man refuses to listen to nature: ' The river sweats / Oil and tar' (lines 266- 267). The world has become brown and empty, and the wind meets no resistance in its way. Not even the signs of "happy- garbage" from picnics and outings are to be found, only empty waste polluting the shores remains,

> The rivers tent is broken: the last fingers of leaf
> Clutch and sink into the wet bank. The wind
> Crosses the brown land, unheard. The nymphs are departed.
> Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song.
> The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,
> Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends
> Or other testimony of summer nights. The nymphs are departed. (173-179)

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[91] *Loves Knowledge,* p. 3

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This image stands in stark contrast to London during the imperialist Victorian Age, when ‘the sun never set on the British Empire’. The rise of a capitalistic society, the loss of ‘the illusion of superior being’, and the increasing lack of religious beliefs, renders modern man confused, disillusioned, and lost.

In their work *Reading The Waste Land: Modernism and the Limits of Interpretation,* Brooker and Bentley presents valuable insights concerning language and the loss of community in *The Waste Land.* As Nussbaum refers to the infant and its world of objects, so too do Brooker and Bentley return to this stage of life for possible answers. They refer to the research of Piaget and his notion that the world of infants is all about discovering the new, and ‘immediate experiences.’[92] These immediate experiences are universal, and repeat themselves throughout life, although never with the same strength as in infancy. When the small child starts to walk, Piaget states, it also starts to develop language. Language becomes both a means to re-establish the intimacy lost with the use of movement, but also a symbol of the distance from this intimacy. This ambivalence of language, Brooker and Bentley propose, works in the same way for Eliot, who ‘seems to have been intrigued with speech as a means of simultaneously establishing and preventing contact.’[93] In *The Waste Land,* we find many such examples; the characters speak- often without stopping to breathe, yet they continuously talk past each other, never really grasping what has been said. Eliot describes this continual talk, this meaningless ‘chatter’ in his poem: ‘Twit twit twit / Jug jug jug jug jug jug’ (lines 203- 204). Eliot’s fragmented use of language, including his use of parataxis, enhances the lack substance and understanding in *The*

[92] From *Reading the Waste Land,* p. 209.
[93] *Reading The Waste Land,* p. 213.

Waste Land. 'Parataxis', Brooker and Bentley elaborate, 'is peculiarly appropriate for a poem taking the loss of community as its central subject, a poem evoking wasted lands, failed love, and bereft mothers as its central symbols.'[94] Thus, as the child moves about in its world of immediate experiences, it senses the world itself as fragments. Experiences of joy, of sorrow, and of happiness all blend, slowly creating a basis for the self to grow out of.

> In *The Construction of Reality in the Child,* Piaget summarises many experiments conducted with infants during the first two years of life. His description of what the child perceives has much in common with many descriptions of works like *The Waste Land*, *Ulysses,* the *Cantos,* and paintings using cubistic techniques. [..] We speculate that a primary aspect of the inner subject matter of modernist literature is the presence of our first world as a ground of which everything else is constructed. Another way of putting this is to say that the inner subject matter is inseparable from the various epistemological modes of infancy.[95]

This quote may bring new life to Eliot's theme of rebirth and growth. In this a setting the notion of regression does not solely consist of going back through history, but also the notion of going back to ourselves. Children are on a constant search for evolving the self, for finding a connection within all the fragments of the world. Children will have no problem connecting the mythical to the real world, for them such a notion will still only add further dimensions to the world we live in. Perhaps the Waste Land can learn a lot from its smallest inhabitants? Much of the wonder and magic Eliot uses to describe nature is also found in Brooker and Bentley's description of children,

[94] *Reading The Waste Land,* p.213.
[95] Ibid, p. 214.

> They perceive the world as both free- floating flat image and substantial object. When they see the world as congeries of flat images – as they do exclusively in the first six months and intermittently during the remainder of their first two years – children are unable to conceive themselves as objects among other objects occupying and thus creating space. They are so egocentric that, paradoxically, they have no egos. [..] Piaget applies the term "magico- phenomenalistic" to this early condition. It is phenomenalistic because, from a spatial perspective, it consists of qualities – free- floating adjectives of "broken images" – not yet configured into objects. It is magical because, from a temporal perspective, it consists of incoherent events.[96]

Brooker and Bentley's description of the child's 'free-floating' world reminds us of the strain of thought that Child's used in his reference to Eliot, and the subject-object relation it incorporates. The child does – in concordance with our ancestors, or the 'primitive' tribes of today, not relate to the world in a matter of cause-and-effect. In this view we find that, once again, everything belongs together, and that everything is connected.

In *What The Thunder Really Said* Eliot brings forward a certain sense of hope for the Waste Land. The thunder itself offers a promise of relief, however not in the modern sense of cause-and-effect. We are not *promised* rain- and thereby growth, but are offered a hope that the thunder *might* bring rain. The salvation of the Waste Land lies, then, in the notion of pure faith. Such a faith is what Kierkegaard referred to as a leap to the "depths of forty thousand feet," and such a notion of faith is an uncompromising one. This aspect of faith reflects back to the important fundament within modern Christian thinking, namely the concept of free will. One either takes that leap, or one does not, but the decision is ultimately up to each individual alone. However, with such a notion of free will comes the aspect of responsibility, and with responsibility comes fear. This fear can only be overcome through a search within the

[96] *Reading the Waste Land,* p.215.

self, and through incorporating the notion that “all is one”; nature, man, and the awareness of spirituality. One way of reaching such awareness is through poetry. In his critique, Collingwood addresses society’s need for the poet,

> As a spokesman for his community, the secrets he must utter are theirs. The reason why they need him is that no community altogether knows its own heart; and by failing in this knowledge a community deceives itself on the one subject concerning which ignorance means death. For the evils which come from that ignorance the poet as a prophet suggests no remedy, because he has already given one. The remedy is the poem itself. Art is the community’s medicine for the worst condition of all, the corruption of consciousness.[97]

The introspection into the self is not an egocentric use of one’s life, it becomes an investment to the self, and the future of the self. As we saw in Piaget’s “magico-phenomenalism”, children are “so egocentric that, paradoxically, they have no ego.” Modern man needs to invest in the “openness” a child displays towards the world. He also needs to invest in the spirituality such an openness brings, and believe in the hope that the thunder will bring water, and growth. The child would perhaps hide from the sounds of thunder, but it would certainly go out and play in the rain.

[97] *A Collection of Critical Essays,* p.51.

4. Conclusion

> All living is interpreting; all action requires seeing the world *as* something. So in this sense no life is "raw" life, and […] throughout our living we are, in a sense, makers of fictions. The point is that in the activity of literary imagining we are led to imagine and describe with greater precision, focusing our attention on each word, feeling each event more keenly – whereas much of actual life goes by without that heightened awareness, and is thus, in a certain sense, not fully or thoroughly lived.[98]

In chapter two we saw that Woolf portrays lives lived surrounded by ideals such as individuality, autonomy, and the value of perspectival changes throughout one's life. Perspective also underlies the construction of Woolf's characters. Clarissa, for example, is never merely one thing - her character is developed and cultivated through the descriptions of the people she encounters. Clarissa's relationship with Peter exemplifies exactly this, as Peter seems to be the person who mirrors and completes Clarissa's character to the fullest. In common with Sally, Peter knows Clarissa's past, and thereby the foundations for present-day Clarissa. One finds, then, that individual life is always in a state of flux – forever changing and evolving. Aspects of this self may be experienced within the meaningful moments of life such as the quiet moments in solitary contemplation, a beautiful memory, or perhaps a valued encounter between loved ones. In *Mrs Dalloway* these moments suggest a spiritual connection both with the self and with the world surrounding the self. They stimulate the growth of the individual, and eventually of the world. Thus, in-between one's meetings, one's past and one's present, a self emerges through life, and this self is a collage of experience and emotion, always ready to move beyond one's original

[98] *Love's Knowledge,* p. 47

borders. Through Clarissa, Woolf shows us the complexity of human beings; the powerful language this complexity is presented through creates emotional writing – and reading.

We have seen that Woolf focuses less on external, objective events and more on the inner workings of the mind. Through her introspective and emotional nature Clarissa paradoxically manages to connect strong emotional bonds towards the world around her. But these bonds often require sacrifices of some sort, thus making emotional connections difficult and, sometimes, even hurtful. To validate one's emotions seems to become an imperative necessity within the modern world. Septimus, however, often emphasizes his own lack of ability to feel, and whether he makes a conscious or unconscious choice, he ends up shutting out the pains and horrors of the modern world. Paradoxically and tragically, the horrors do not leave him, they only seem to escalate in strength. The characters of Clarissa and Septimus are linked together, and seem to merge towards the end of the novel. A deep spiritual connection lies between these two as Clarissa 'chose life' through her party, while Septimus's choice is one of ending life. These final scenes epitomize the duality of life; there can be none without death, and there can be no joy without sorrow, and in this realization lies the true spirituality of life.

In chapter three we have found that Eliot emphasises the importance of birth, and rebirth, already in the first lines of *The Waste Land*. His frequent allusions to nature and its life-giving forces are contrasted by descriptions of modern man hiding and seeking shelter from these same forces. Eliot describes a fear-based society where the notions of sorrow and death strangle all attempts to feel joy in life.

The inhabitants of the Waste Land appear to be drifting restlessly, unable to settle down and find peace with themselves, and the world around them. A deep void

between men and women is presented, linking modern man to the ancient fertility myths, and to the importance of seeing the symbiotic character that nature represents. The most important mythical referent is the many allusions to the search for The Holy Grail. Too preoccupied with the notion of cause-and-effect, modern man loses his natural inclination to see the world as nature intended: everything connected within the cycle of life. And as such man also stops his search for a spiritual connection to something greater than himself – in a westernized, modern society man himself seems to be enough. Eliot accomplishes, as we have seen, the remarkable task of connecting nature, myth, and religion into one meaningful whole. He connects our past with the present, while at the same time managing to lay a spiritual foundation for the future. Man *The Waste Land* suggests, has to realize that he is in need of a spiritual search in his life, and that this search needs to be undertaken without the 'hubris' so typical for modern society. The Grail Legend also serves as an example of how to approach the notion of faith. The search for the grail is a task that, due to its near impossible nature, must be based on the notion of faith alone. It seems that the purpose of this search is the search *in itself*, and not the end result. Eliot hints at a similar approach to bring growth back to the wasteland. Man gains hope through the realization that he needs a spiritual search in life, and this need is only felt through listening in on one's own emotional language. Emotions and spirituality, then, serve as preconditions for each other in modern society and, as such, need to be validated and taken seriously. Hope for the Waste Land rests within adopting the openness and innocence of the child, and summoning these traits in order to achieve the courage to take the leap of faith necessary to regain a meaningful existence.

Mrs Dalloway and *The Waste Land* appear utterly different in genre, mood, and ambience. We have seen, however, that these key modernist texts share a similar

attitude towards modern society and man's attempt to manoeuvre its many pitfalls. Hawthorn comments on the comparisons between these two works in a fairly humorous manner,

> Now searching for literary echoes can be a dull and sterile business: we should have in our minds the awful warning of Charles Tansley in *To The Lighthouse*, writing his thesis on the influence of something upon somebody and unable to absorb the beneficent influences all around him. But it does seem to me that to be of importance to stress that both Virginia Woolf and T.S. Eliot see certain characteristics of London to be representative of a deeper inadequacy in their time.[99]

Searching for similarities might thus end up being a tedious business; however, I do find that the points these two works share will give valuable support to a search for spirituality within the modernist landscape. What makes Eliot and Woolf descriptions of London similar, across the generic divide of poem and novel is found in the way they articulate the contents of the modern metropolis. There are crowds of anonymous people moving in the streets, heavy traffic clutters up the roads, and people appear to be in a hurry. It is interesting to note that both incorporate the 'closed car' into their city image. For Woolf, this imagery serves as a structuring device as well as an example of the British class- system, while for Eliot the closed car is a potent metaphor for modern man's wish to hide from the unpleasantness of life. Nonetheless, they both address the will to 'draw the blinds' on the world, and stress how easily this may be done within the anonymity of the metropolis. The image of the closed car is a dark and depressing one, similar to the image of a hearse moving slowly through the city. While this gloomy ambience is symptomatic of the atmosphere of *The Waste*

[99] *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway*, p.73.

Land, it is a fairly unfamiliar ambience within *Mrs Dalloway*. Part of *Mrs Dalloway's* possible approach towards spirituality lays, as we have seen, in the meaningful moments encountered by the novel's characters. Interestingly enough, a similar concept is introduced when Brooker and Bentley refer to *The Waste Land,* and also, albeit more indirectly, through Piaget's notion of 'immediate experience' as discussed in chapter 3. Although Piaget initially directs such a notion towards the infant, such experiences occur throughout human life. The concept of immediate experiences within *The Waste Land* and the meaningful moments in *Mrs Dalloway* are similar in value and importance. Both seem have the strongest impact when excluded from language, and both seem to develop spiritual growth within the individual. These moments, or experiences, appear to be a common denominator on the road to spiritual enlightenment for both Eliot and Woolf. Again we find a deep humanism seeping through modernist thought. To acknowledge such a strength within each modern individual is in itself a source of hope for human kind. It is, however, through Woolf's characterization of Septimus that the two works seem to approach each other in thematically. As with Eliot's reference to the Shakespearian Ophelia and her madness, one might also question the nature of Septimus's madness. Septimus and Ophelia are both traumatized by their life experiences, and without close bonds to friends or family they remain alienated from the world of objects that surrounds them. Ophelia and Septimus's faiths are painfully similar, and they are both utterly alone in the world. What both Eliot and Woolf communicate here is, first, that madness in general seems to be inflicted upon individuals through 'disturbances' from the *outside* world and, second, that such madness may be eased through a genuine encounter with one's own emotions combined with personal relationships with others. Thus we have seen that Septimus incorporates an emotionless state similar to that of the inhabitants

of *The Waste Land.* Where the blind Tiresias in *The Waste Land* achieves the ability to see beyond the visual world, Septimus – however involuntary – conveys a similar notion. His fate narrates the destructive and damaging nature of modern society at its worst. Conversely, one may even refer to this nature as *anti-nature*, which would explain a modern mentality that goes against the fruitful and symbiotic character of the natural world. Hawthorn elaborates:

> Septimus's refusal to have children, like the reference to abortion and contraception in 'The Waste Land', ties in with the general feeling that there has been an artificial stifling of the springs of human fruitfulness and fecundity that we find both in 'The Waste Land' and in *Mrs Dalloway*. If it is correct to see Septimus as symbolically analogous to the drowned sailor of the fertility myth, then it is possible that his death is to be seen as a necessary prelude to the releasing of the powers of rebirth in Clarissa and in her party.[100]

This particular 'refusal to procreate', which we have noted in both works, strengthens a notion of 'anti-humanism' deriving from modern society. The negative view of procreation can be interpreted both literally and figuratively, referring to the act itself, as well as reluctance towards the notion of rebirth. Spiritual rebirth involves the perilous concern of letting go of one's need for control. Once there, however, the rewards such a birth gives are numerous. For the releasing powers of rebirth are exactly those powers of fruitful openness and genuine warmth towards others, and through this warmth one receives the wonderful gift of thawing one's own self in the process. Here lies, however, the biggest difference between the two works. *The Waste Land* does not offer such 'directions', or 'solutions' as *Mrs Dalloway* appears to do. Yet although Woolf does not claim to offer a final solution to the problems of modern

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[100] *Virginia Woolf's Mrs Dalloway, pp. 73- 74.*

society, she does suggest one possible path in the search for meaning through Clarissa's spiritual awakening. Eliot, on the other hand – whether reluctant to 'preach' possible solutions, or merely being too disillusioned by modern society to offer any – does not propose any solutions concerning the spiritual resurrection of man. What he does do, nonetheless, is to present the problems of modern man in a disturbingly direct, dramatic, and emotional manner. Such a presentation activates us as readers by opening up for an emotional response to the work at hand. And it is through this 'formula of emotion' that Eliot presents us with a reality so desperate that we are forced – as are the inhabitants of *The Waste Land* – to take action to restore 'the land.' As the search for The Grail, this restoration becomes too important to ignore – even though the mission itself may appear impossible. 'The rite of *The Waste Land* is one to save the self alone from an alien world' A. D. Moody writes, thus revealing both differences and similarities with *Mrs Dalloway.* For where Woolf offers hope through possible directions in life, Eliot's glimpse of hope lies hidden in the words 'Datta, dayadhvam, damayta' (line 433). These words, meaning 'give, sympathize, and control', are surprisingly similar to Clarissa's actions in the party-scene. For in this last scene she *gives* from herself to her loved ones, she *sympathizes* deeply with Septimus's tragic faith, and finally, she enters a place of equality and *control* between her need for solitude and her equally strong need for fellow human beings.[101]

It is a main concluding point of this thesis, then, that *The Waste Land* and *Mrs Dalloway* share many of the same elements of thought, however different in form and ambience they may appear. From the discussion conducted in this thesis one may extract the following fundamental understanding deriving from these works. First, we have seen that modernist literature established that modern man has lost the ability to

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[101] See for example Michael North, *T.S Eliot: The Waste Land,* for valuable translation of line 433.

connect to any form of spiritual entity, or purpose in his life. This lack of spirituality is conveyed by both authors as lack and / or fear of emotions within modern society. We have seen how modern man attempts to flee from the difficult parts of life, 'hiding from the rain' and a chance of growth within *The Waste Land*. A similar retreat is found in *Mrs Dalloway* and the way Septimus's painful experiences have driven him to a complete shut down in his emotional apparatus. It appears as if the demanding nature of modern society push modern man towards an idealized, stoic form of disentanglement, away from the challenges of this era. However ideal such an approach might appear, the result paradoxically ends – as we have seen – with an opposite effect of anxiety and grief within modernity. Without a connection to a meaningful entity sought both within, and outside of the self, man remains lost in the modern world.

Second, we have seen that the validation of emotions paradoxically became the only approach towards the realization of this spiritual deficiency, and thereby the only way out of this vacuum. Emotions are imperative to the search for spirituality within modernist society, since they are the only way to recognize that man is *in need* of something more in his life. Emotions seem to serve as 'warning-lights' where spiritual vacuums exist. The importance of emotions does not stop here, however. In both works, the emotive 'ambience' or 'objective correlative' provides valuable and unprecedented insight also for the reader, thus stressing what literature can silently instruct us about life. A re-visitation of Nussbaum's theory of emotion may be in order here; in this passage she uses Proust to exemplify her point,

> If emotions involve judgments about the salience for our well- being of uncontrolled external objects, judgements in which the mind of the judge is projected unstably into a world of objects, we will need to be able to imagine those attachments, their delight and

their terror, their intense and even obsessive focus on their object, if we are ever to talk well about love, fear, or anger. But then it seems that we will have reason to turn to texts such as Proust's novel, which encourage us in such imaginings, deepening and refining our grasp of upheavals of thought in our own lives. If Proust is right, we will not understand ourselves well enough to talk good sense in ethics unless we do subject ourselves to the painful self – examination a text such as his can produce.[102]

The third quintessence of common ground between Eliot and Woolf is the very notion that Nussbaum speaks of, namely that only literature is capable of teaching us particular aspects of life such as value, meaning, and emotion. This is so partly because human beings tend to think narratively, and partly because literature speaks to us through our emotions, thus making it possible as well as valuable for us to listen. What Eliot and Woolf are saying then, is that the artist may hold a key to modern society, for through his art he might penetrate a secular, modern society, and activate spiritual connections once lost. As such, the search for spirituality within British modernism might begin with its artists, and end within its inhabitants.

[102] *Upheavals of Thought*, p. 2

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