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Nueva York and The Waste Land: The Post-War World Envisioned in the Modern Metropolis

by

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Introduction:
Literary Biography, Textual History, and the Birth of an Accidental Thesis

It was reading Federico García Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York,* which was written in 1929-30 but remained unpublished until 1940, that lead me to this project. I was captivated by his seemingly enclosed symbolic system, almost impenetrable to the uninitiated reader. The voice of *Poeta en Nueva York* sounded nothing like the simpler, more provincial voice of *Romancero Gitano*, Lorca's earlier book that is often wrongly used to classify his writing. I had read *Romancero* Gitano before, as it is often used in Spanish classes to introduce Lorca and his poetry. Poeta *en Nueva York* was different. The book opened a dark symbolic world, both familiar and unfamiliar.

Until it was suggested to me for purposes of comparison I had not, despite its famous reputation, ever picked up T.S. Eliot's 1922 poem *The Waste Land*. After a preliminary reading, I was struck by the relationship that seemed so obvious between Eliot and Lorca's work: they depicted the same looming modern metropolis. It seemed impossibly convenient that the same ominous figure would appear, simple and recognizable, in two such complex pieces of literature.

On closer reading, however, I discovered that what I had recognized to be the same figure mirrored in both texts revealed very different meanings. The metropolis was not at all the same. However without this recognition, mistaken though it may have been, I might never have come to a comparison of these two texts. Indeed, they are an unlikely pairing. Though the texts themselves were written less then a decade apart, Eliot's poem was "the promised major work of a writer who, in his criticism,

had exposed the delusiveness of virtually every conventional prescription for poetical newness," while Lorca's was the work of a young poet, still plagued by his inability to support himself financially as a writer (Menand 76). Eliot did not speak Spanish, as far as I have been able to tell, and Lorca, despite his time spent in New York, never progressed beyond syntax and grammar in his English language abilities (Maurer xiv). Nor are the cities featured in each poem, the similitude of which I was originally so convinced, derived from the same city. Lorca's New York, though embodying his fears for the future of mankind, is undeniably New York City; and while Eliot's "Unreal City" is a universalized one, it was inspired by London.

Any reading of these texts, too, poses unique issues. As James E. Miller, Jr. notes, "Any critic dealing with Eliot, bringing together aspects of biography and elements of poems, must be acutely aware of the 'no trespassing' signs that the poet himself conspicuously posted…in his critical career" (ix). As a critic, Eliot expounded his theory of "Impersonality," suggesting that the author himself should be entirely absent from any reading of his work. The suppression of the author is possible in many ways, but in *The Waste Land*, Eliot uses the technique of excessive citation to promote authorial voices of the past over his own (Ellmann 38). Eliot's own critical work, however, steers the reader back towards his biography as "criticism itself has significant biographical implications and connections" (Miller ix). If, then, a reader is to employ Eliot's own literary theories to understand his work, to understand the use of literary references in *The Waste Land* for example, Eliot's own biography is necessarily involved, whether or not he would condone its discussion.

Any use of biography here will necessarily be related to the author's work. Like Eliot's critical work, biographical data will be used as it is necessary to shed light on his poetry. Indeed, Eliot's critical writing has long governed the way his work has been read. His career seemed to begin at a time when "literary values had somehow lost their authority… literature had become a victim of its own reputation" (Menand 3). Eliot's critical voice, "the voice of an outsider" among competing schools of criticism, helped to re-cement the role of literature in modern society (Menand 123). His role in the reformation of criticism was certainly not small and his "critical pronouncements…served as the basis for the development of the New Criticism," focused on close literary reading (Miller ix).

This model of criticism was employed for early readings of Eliot's poetry. After New Criticism gave way to other critical movements, often influenced by multiculturalism, *The Waste Land* and Eliot's other works became subject to new interpretations. Many of these readings highlight the anti-Semitism, homoeroticism, and misogyny that appear throughout his poetic and critical writing. Some go as far as to connect Eliot's personal life with his work, drawing biographical conclusions from poetic illusions. This work will attempt to neither ignore the implications of Eliot's biography nor extrapolate any biographical conclusions that seem unfounded.

Certain basic facts of Eliot's biography do, however, reveal important facts for an understanding of *The Waste Land*. T.S. Eliot, Thomas Stearns Eliot, was born in St. Louis Missouri in 1888. He moved to London, England in 1914 at the age of twenty-five where, for the first time, "he found himself in an environment in which art and literature were taken seriously as a living force, and where he needed not be

defensive or dismissive about his own poetry as he had been at Harvard" (Ackroyd 57). Eliot's voice was heard; he was participating in the literary tradition he valued highly. He married Vivien Haight-Woods in 1915, the beginning of an unhappy marriage (Ackroyd 64). Vivien suffered from what were diagnosed as nervous disorders. Her illness has been linked to the portrayal of the Queen figure in the "A Game of Chess" section of *The Waste Land*.

The majority of the poem was written, it is suspected, in 1921. It came out in the magazine the *Criterion* in October 1922, followed one month later by publication in the *Dial*. The published editions, by Boni and Liveright in 1922 and by Virginia Woolf's Hogarth Press in 1923, unlike the magazine versions, included Eliot's 'Notes' section. (Ackroyd 126-127) Though the 'Notes' section had originally been intended to guard against charges of plagiarism, the 'Notes' took on a significance of their own. "[A] text followed by an explanation" Louis Menand explains, reproduces the mechanism by which "cultural expressions are transformed…into cultural gestures" (89). Though originally the reviews did not measure up to Eliot's high expectations, *The Waste Land* developed a following among the youth and within "less than a decade," the poem earned its illustrious reputation (Ackroyd 128).

Knowing that the inception, production, and publication occurred in England helps to inform our view of Eliot as intimately linked with European cultural tradition. This interest is made more visible and relevant by his use of literary references in *The Waste Land*, which include a wide rage of sources like The Bible, Shakespeare, Dante, Ovid, and Hermann Hesse. Eliot embedded himself into a circle

of English writers, engaged his work with that tradition, and as we will see, writes about the post-war world from a European perspective.

Though Federico García Lorca did not forbid a biographical reading of his poetry, his life and death are also implicated in a reading of his work. Lorca was born in Granada, Spain in 1898. He spent his childhood in Granada and continued to spend time there as a young man. He explored this region in his unsuccessful first book *Impresiones y paisajes* printed in 1918. Though the first literary venture was unsuccessful, the landscape of Andalusia continued to appear in his work. In his 1928 *Romancero Gitano* and in *Poema del cante jondo* published in 1931, Lorca revisited the topic of Andalusia. The depiction of his home seen in these works "is a spiritual as well as a physical entity, a palimpsest of vanished civilizations. In a sense, Lorca was recreating the Andalusia of his boyhood—a land whose fields held Roman mosaics and Arab towers, Catholic spires and Renaissance palaces" (Stainton 98).

This depiction of Andalusia made Lorca famous, yet it haunted him. His two books of poetry focused on Andalusia gave him the reputation of a 'Gypsy poet.' This reputation, however, was not the one he wanted, and proved hard to shake. He told a friend: "this 'gypsy' business gives me an uneducated, uncultured tone and makes me into a 'savage poet,' which you know I am not. I just don't want them to pigeonhole me"(qtd. in Maurer, xvi). Trying to escape this reputation, and fleeing a personal crisis at home, Lorca went to New York to write a new type of poetry that could, as Dalí suggested, "satisfy the desires of modern readers"(qtd. in Maurer, xvii).

In New York too, Lorca found echoes of Andalusia. He continually invokes the world of his 'gypsy' poems to contrast with his perception of corruption in New

York. Though he did not always enjoy New York, and certainly his portrayal of it shows this, Lorca would refer to his time in New York as "one of the most useful experiences" he had lived through (qtd. in Maurer xiii). He left New York speaking about many new books in progress, and gave talks that included selections of his New York poetry. These poems "were considered by their author to be some of his most important literary productions" (Millán 15). None of these books were realized, however. In 1936, Lorca was murdered in Granada. His tragic death left the manuscript unpublished, and the Spanish Civil War prevented any attempts directly following the tragedy.

The first publication of *Poeta en Nueva York*, in 1940, created further problems for Lorca scholars. Two editions appeared that year, one bilingual by W. W. Norton and a Spanish language version by Séneca, which were separated by important discrepancies. This confusion was made worse by the discovery of a list of manuscripts, written by Lorca. The list includes several poems that had been included in *Poeta en Nueva York* under the title of a new collection: *Tierra y luna.* To make matters worse, Lorca's own habits as a writer, "both painstaking and unmethodical," create challenges for the posthumous publication of his works (Maurer 289). Although the book was "finished" by 1930, Lorca made many changes, including contradictory ones, between 1930 and his death. These changes deal with which poems to include in the collection, the structure, title, and publishing house intended for the collection (Maurer 290). Between the problems presented in the manuscript itself, the dueling first editions, problems presented by the translation, the list for the *Tierra y luna* collection, and the poems read in his lectures, it seems impossible to

reconstruct the original work conclusively. Because of the variety of discrepancies, currently there exist different editions of Lorca's New York poems (Millán 26-27).

The differences between various editions make the choice of edition a serious issue for any scholarly analysis of *Poeta en Nueva York*. I have chosen the Spanish edition published by Cátedra and edited by María Clementa Millán. It is a scholarly edition whose stated intent is to "offer the most complete edition possible, and in accordance with the intentions of the author in 1936," has included photographs that were intended to accompany the text (Millán 16). The edition is guided by four main principals, which I feel have lead to the most precise version possible under the circumstances. These principals are a dedication, first, to the original *Poet in New York* as it was given by Lorca to his friend José Bergamín in 1936. Second, this edition gives chronological priority to editorial changes made by the author. Third, it takes into account the prior Séneca and Norton editions as well as other magazine publications of certain poems. Finally, this edition attempts to stay true to the internal order of the collection (Millán 28). All poems, or selections from poems, from *Poeta en Nueva York* that appear in Spanish will be quoted from this edition.

The selections of Lorca's work that appear in English are from Christopher Maurer's bilingual edition of *Poet in New York*. It is a revised edition that attempts to come as close as possible to the author's intentions. It is based on Lorca's recovered original manuscript (Maurer 289). My readings of the poems, however, are informed by the Cátedra edition, as translation is a precarious thing and the original Spanish permits a closer relationship between reader and writer. Any source, however, consulted in Spanish has been translated or referenced in English by me. This

includes María Clementa Millán's introduction to the Cátedra edition of *Poeta en Nueva York*.

Though each text presents considerable theoretical obstacles to its interpretation, be they biographical or imbedded within the history of the text, I have found that their comparison is very revealing. Both texts were written in the twenties, a time that saw Western society still reeling after World War I. For Eliot, writing from Europe but still engaged with an American audience, the effects of the war prompted him to insist on "Tradition" as an institution necessary for the survival of western culture. The institutions he valued were endangered by the world he saw around him, and *The Waste Land* responds to that fear. Lorca's world, too, was in a state of disarray. World War I had pulled Spain from the path of economic success it had strived for before the war. Civil unrest plagued the country and Spain was divided in its support for the different sides of WWI. What Lorca saw in New York was not much more reassuring. The city was booming, as the United States gained importance as an economic power, but the progress of industrialization created great economic disparities. Lorca's feeling that the city was a cruel place was worsened as he witnessed the stock market crash of 1929, and visited Wall Street where "the sight of so many desperate human beings dazed him" (Stainton 235).

In *The Waste Land* and *Poeta en Nueva York* I have identified three themes: the main issues of common concern to link Lorca and Eliot. The authors are united by their concern about these issues, yet they often express different opinions and solutions to the apparent problems. The first theme that this project will address is that of national identity. After World War I, countries were literally dismantled and

re-drawn at the will of the victors. With this occurring on such a large scale, the validity and stability of nationhood seemed to come into question. The second theme is related to the mass deaths incurred by the Great War: that of masculinity. Each author seems to worry about the state of masculinity, as did society during this period. As masculinity itself seemed a fragile concept, reproduction and the institution of the family are also threatened. Finally, each author describes Christianity, both in terms of its failure to protect humanity from tragedies like WWI and in terms of humanity's dire need for spiritual salvation.

These three points of comparison help to describe the way that Lorca and Eliot each saw the modern world as a perilous place, the "patterns of human social relationships" that previously guided society becoming useless (Hobsbawm 15). The new world, born after WWI, is embodied in the city for these poets. It seems that they worry, as José Ortega y Gasset does, that the masses have "installed themselves in the preferred places of society" (Ortega y Gasset 5). The emergence of the masses, through the figure of the city, is worrisome. In this mind-set, the modern city assumes importance as the setting in which the future of humanity will develop. Their concerns about the breakdown of stereotypes and traditions rooted in the past are transposed on the urban landscape. Each Lorca and Eliot worries: Has Europe "been left without a moral code [?]" Is the rise of the city the disappearance of "any moral code whatsoever [?]" (Ortega y Gasset 172).

Chapter One:
National Identity and Reflections of Personal Identity in a Post-World War I World

I. The 1920s: Post-War and Social Reformation.

The Great War had re-shaped cultural perspectives on both sides of the Atlantic. Other than the heavy toll that the war took on European nations in political and economic terms, it shook the notions of tradition and culture that had pervaded Western Europe. The Great War also re-shaped American identity and helped to form the United States as a larger player in the world-economy. Although Spain had remained militarily uninvolved in World War I, it too felt the cultural and economic pressures brought on by the war. These tensions were worsened by internal political turmoil with the rise of Primo de Rivera's military dictatorship in 1923.

The cultural changes brought on by the war caused "the disintegration of the old patterns of human social relationships, and with it, incidentally, the snapping of the links between generations, that is to say, between past and present" (Hobsbawm 15). If one accepts that these "patterns of human social relationships" constitute the way that members of a culture understand and come to terms the world around them, then the disintegration of these patterns suggests considerable social chaos. This threat loomed over the United States and Western Europe after World War I.

Although the feeling of uncertainty created by the war pervaded many parts of the affected societies, the Great War itself challenged notions of national identity in that it threatened the institution of nationhood itself. Post-war, the map was "re-divided and re-drawn, both to weaken Germany and to fill the large empty spaces left in Europe and the Middle East by the simultaneous defeat and collapse of the

Russian, Habsburg and Ottoman empires" (Hobsbawm 31). As the physical boundaries of defeated and conquered countries were readjusted, the victors, too, must have been conscious of the fragility of their own sovereignty. Had the war turned out differently, their own boarders could have been dissolved just as easily. This anxiety was apparent in the ideology of the 1920s in which "a new world war was not only predictable, but routinely predicted. Those who became adults in the 1930s expected it. The image of fleets of airplanes dropping bombs on cities and of nightmare figures in gasmasks…haunted [a] generation" (Hobsbawm 35). The horrors of the Great War seemed ominously repeatable, and though the war was over, in its wake the world seemed like a dangerous place.

This chapter will discuss the ways that these anxieties about nationhood are reflected in the work of each Eliot and Lorca. In reaction to their concerns about nationhood, each forms an identity within their poetry to which they subscribe. This created identity is given primacy over categories of national identity and overrides prominent concerns about nationhood. For each the created identity also represents a platform for social criticism, permitting commentary and judgment on the world around them. For T.S. Eliot, the sense of identity created in *The Waste Land* is founded in the tradition of western literature, which he leverages to compare an idealized past with a perilous present. Federico García Lorca, however, utilizes the symbolic universe created in his 1928 work *Romancero Gitano*, and his close affinity with the culture of his birthplace, Andalusia, to critique New York City and the dehumanized future he felt it represented.

II. Post-War Europe and T.S. Eliot: *The Waste Land* and the Formation of "Tradition" as Identity

T.S. Eliot's 1914 move from the United States to London seems to be a part of Eliot's commitment to Western European culture, and it serves as an interesting jumping-off point for a discussion of the world that Eliot must have seen around him. Eliot's first years in London were a "time of great economic and political discontent, with shortages of fuel and food." However, for Eliot "the nature of the conflict, in which Europe itself might be destroyed," was so ominous that it "dwarfed ordinary personal problems" (Ackroyd 86). Though he thought about joining the American armed forces, he did not and by 1918 Eliot's friends noted that "he was well on the way to losing his American identity," setting the stage for his literary productions that would be so immersed in western European culture (Ackroyd 88).

Eliot's perception, however, that "Europe itself might be destroyed" by the conflict is a strong indication of the gravity of the effects of the war. It seemed that with the dissolving of national borders, the social scaffolding of the nineteenth century also crumbled. It seemed, too, that literature would be left behind, rendered an obsolete practice in a harsher post-war world (Menand 3). In 1919 Eliot wrote "Tradition and the Individual Talent," an essay describing the importance of past literary traditions for the modern author and a response to the threat against the literary past. The theory of "Tradition" was based in the idea that cultural tradition, which Eliot posited as the conditions for good literature, had to have deep roots in the past. He defined it as both "the maintenance of certain dogmatic beliefs" and the repetition, in "all those habitual actions, habits and customs, from the most significant

religious rite to our conventional way of greeting a stranger," of these beliefs. This continual repetition could only be created and enforced through "the blood kinship of 'the same people living in the same place'" (*After Strange Gods* 18). If, he insists, the right cultural conditions can be created, a tradition will form and quality literature will be the natural result of those conditions. "Tradition," according to Eliot's theory is the route to creating important literature. In fact, the poet himself cannot access literary greatness; rather he must submerge himself beneath the tradition from which he derives his own personal identity. Eliot "implies that the author gains his place with the immortals at the price of the suppression of himself" (Ellmann, 38).

However, his definition of tradition seems to imply hegemony. In fact the optimum conditions are such that "the population should be homogeneous: where two or more cultures exist in the same place they are likely either to be fiercely self-conscious or both become adulterate" (*After Strange Gods* 19). Eliot feels that it is through cultural isolation that this tradition can be developed, and that cultural discourse eventually leads to the destruction, not development, of the involved cultures. The way that cultural purity is heavily emphasized in Eliot's posited conditions for the development of tradition is reminiscent of Walter Benn Michaels' discussion of the changing notions of American identity during this period, specifically visible through the aesthetic movement nativist modernism. Although Eliot did move from the United States to London during this period, Michaels' discussion of this American aesthetic tendency remains relevant to the project of "Tradition" in which Eliot is engaged. In using an aesthetic and ideological strategy concerned with disconnecting national identity from citizenship, nativist modernism

formed American identity as something impossible to attain, therefore protecting it from foreigners. The concept of protecting the sovereignty national and cultural identities would be equally relevant for Europeans whose primacy of identity was threatened by the literal re-drawing of boarders in their near vicinity.

One of the essential tools used by the writers of nativist modernism was to demonize assimilation, glorifying those who chose not to threaten American national identity. They asserted not the superiority of American identity (which would encourage assimilation), but rather the merits of maintaining one's own culture. In these texts, assimilation became identified as suicide, for it meant the sacrifice of one's own cultural identity and therefore the decimation of the defining limits of personal identity (Michaels 138). Those who refused to assimilate faced racial extinction, as they could not successfully reproduce, while maintaining their own cultural identity, in a foreign culture. The insisted maintenance of identity by other cultures functioned to guarantee the integrity of American sameness (Michaels 79). We can see the similarities between these two conceptions of identity as being concerned with Eliot's "adulteration" of culture, and therefore identity. The immigration caused by the Great War no doubt stoked these anxieties, and the rise of Michaels' nativist modernism in the United States can be seen in dialogue with other countries faced with similar issues.

It is through this theory of "Tradition," that Eliot's use of citation and of literary references in *The Waste Land* can come to be understood. If, as discussed above, national (and therefore personal) identity must be inherited, it is important to align oneself as a descendent of an inherited tradition. And, if it is from "Tradition"

that good literature arises, the writing itself must be immersed in within that tradition. In *The Waste Land* Eliot achieves this through an insistence of his antecedents' presence in the text, through quotation and reference. In essence, he built a poem out of a series of literary citations, combining them sometimes to invoke their original meaning, and sometimes to subvert that meaning.

The Waste Land is explicit in identifying the tradition from which it arises. The author provides a "Notes" section at the end in which he cites his own references. For example, as the "Notes" that follow the poem state, in line twenty "Son of man," is a reference to Ezekiel II, I (ln 20). By using the Bible as the first textual reference of the poem Eliot grounds his poem firmly in western Christian tradition. The author is explicit as to what tradition he wishes to invoke, and makes the reader's understanding of that fact unavoidable by citing it directly. In fact, the poet's inclusion of the "Notes" section implies that he hopes to limit the ways in which *The Waste Land* can be interpreted. The poem remains continually anchored to Eliot's conception of "Tradition" through his use of other literary references.

Eliot's theories of "Orthodoxy" and "Blasphemy" are also essential to understanding the way that "Tradition" functions in this work. "Orthodoxy" is defined, according to Eliot, as the rules understood by society as a whole, though they may not be practiced in daily life. It is the set of rules that unconsciously govern "Tradition," as well as aspects of a culture that are held as universal, according to Eliot's view (Ellmann 46). In *After Strange Gods*, Eliot explains that "Orthodoxy" "represents a consensus between the living and the dead" (30). The dead of the past establish a set of rules by which the present is governed. "Blasphemy" on the other

hands is that which contradicts "Orthodoxy." However, a real "Blasphemy" only serves to enforce the conditions of "Orthodoxy." Eliot writes: "no one can possibly blaspheme in any sense except that in which a parrot may be said to curse, unless he profoundly believes in that which he profanes" (*After Strange Gods* 52). That is to say, a real blasphemy must come from the lips of a true believer.

Maude Ellmann finds an example of this strategy in Eliot's own work. The first lines of *The Waste Land* read:

> April is the cruellest month, breeding
> Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
> Memory and desire. (lns 1-3)

Ellmann sees in these lines a "Blasphemy" "(in Eliot's sense) against the first lines of *The Canterbury Tales*, which presented April's showers as so sweet" (95). These lines recall the reader's own experience of April, and directly contradict them. The effect reinforces the reader's perception that April should be sweet, not cruel, thereby describing the world from which Eliot's narrator speaks. This world, the first lines of the poem explain, is one in which April is a cruel month, developing the image that the Waste Land is a place where things are not as they should be.

As a text, *The Canterbury Tales* is a part of the tradition to which Eliot wants to attribute his poem, and reference to it is a "nod to [these] origins." However, the use of "Blasphemy" simultaneously converts this reference into "a flagrant declaration of beginninglessness," as the modern city has rejected the view of April accepted by "Orthodoxy" (Ellmann 95). In this example, however, the "Notes" section creates a problem in this reading. Though Ellmann sees this reference as a reference to Chaucer, the notes do not cite it as such. Though the "Notes" section

directs the reader towards Eliot's idea of "Tradition," this lack of citation suggests further references throughout the work, creating a sense that a definite interpretation of the poem is impossible.

Through the citations that he chooses, Eliot establishes "himself and his work as belonging to a tradition older than Romanticism" (Menand 127). Eliot connects his first cited reference to Ezekiel with the importance of belonging to a tradition.

> 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. (lns 19-22)

The narrator seems to ask: what tradition can modern society cling to? And, worse, is it possible to re-new a tradition in the "heap of broken images" that is the modern city? By speaking from biblical tradition, transforming the "you" into the "Son of man," the poet makes these questions universal, addressing all of humanity. For Eliot, this is a serious concern, and certainly a self-reflective one. If, as both "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and *After Strange Gods* insist, "Tradition" is needed to create great literature, a tradition that is unable to "grow / out of this stony rubbish," Eliot faces a difficult task as a writer. Though "he would like to believe that his poem is expressive of some general reality…he fears that it is only the symptom of a private disorder" (Menand 90). The rootlessness that Eliot senses in the modern world has affected him too, making his project of reestablishing literary tradition more urgent.

Another way that Eliot grounds his poem in "Tradition" is through the use of important historical events. These events are recognizable to the reader, placing the narrator in western history, linking the present as a direct descendant of these past events. At the end of the section "The Burial of the Dead," the narrator watches the

dead walk over the London Bridge and "There I saw someone I knew," recognizes him, replying: "'You who were with me in the ships at Mylae!'" (ln 70). This reference to Rome and the Punic wars help to construct a lineage in which Eliot figures as a descendant of these epic events and this tradition. Carthage is invoked in a similar way in the lines: "To Carthage then I came/ Burning burning burning burning" (lns 307-8). The narrator is figured as a witness to both of these events. He not only is their descendant, but in the way that the past and present are compressed in this poem, he is the actors of these historical events themselves. He is linking the "whole of all the poetry that has ever been written," and in doing so compresses the past and present in his work. In order to capture this past, "his poetry re-twines as many straying strands of tradition as possible" (Matthiessen 10).

Other than the theoretical belief that "Tradition" produces important literature and other cultural productions, Eliot's insistence has a historical significance. To establish oneself as a part of a tradition that extends beyond romanticism is to remain unaffected by the collapse of nineteenth-century culture. The world depicted by *The Waste Land* is one that has experienced a collapse, as though a vision of the future. "The year in which *The Waste Land* was written was one of intense political and economic discontent: the post-war 'boom' had collapsed, there were two million unemployed and the economic chaos was exacerbated by the indecisiveness of the coalition government" (Ackroyd 109). These socio-economic conditions only increased the feeling of dehumanization made prevalent by the massive casualties of the war. Many people, especially those most affected by the economic downturn, felt the need for radical social upheaval. "[T]he ignorance and backwardness of these

masses, their commitment to the overthrow of bourgeois society by social revolution, and the latent human irrationality so easily exploited by demagogues, were indeed cause for alarm" (Hobsbawm 110).

The presence of the masses alarms the poet too, as they are prevalent in his description of *The Waste Land*'s city. In the world of the poem, they are transformed into the living dead:

> 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 (lns 61-64).

The city both created the masses and transformed them into the dead figures that the narrator witnesses on the bridge. If, for Eliot, this nightmarish city represents humanity's future, it is these masses that will populate the future. They become implicit in the foundation of the culture that would emerge from the ashes of failed nineteenth-century structures, thus destroying any possibility of developing or renewing a possible "Tradition" in the Waste Land. The presence of the masses implies, within them, an "unexpected violence and danger [that] must be kept at bay" (Ortega y Gasset 44). The city itself becomes culpable for this. The poem depicts the "intolerable burden of [the] 'Unreal City,' the lack of purpose and direction, the inability to believe really in anything and the resulting 'heap of broken images' that formed the excruciating contents of the post-War state of mind" (Matthiessen 21).

The poem itself vigorously fights against the collapse of "Tradition," an urgency felt through *The Waste Land*'s citations, "the images and themes of *The Waste Land* are both [Eliot's] own and not his own, a continual movement of other poets' words just beneath the surface of his own," as though to re-inscribe each

author's work within his own (Ackroyd 120). One of the effects of the use of "Tradition" in *The Waste Land* is that it renders concerns of national identity moot. By creating this "Tradition," Eliot creates a sense of belonging among his readers. To recognize the references to Shakespeare, the Bible, Dante, others of the western tradition, and even other spiritual texts, like the Upanishad, is to belong to the tradition from which Eliot writes. This "Tradition", as we can see through the references that he makes, is composed mostly of the white, male, Christian authors that compose a cannon of Occidental writing.

The inclusion of non-Christian religious texts too, functions to include certain groups that hold Eliot's same spiritual priorities. Those shared values overcome any racial or cultural difference that might otherwise separate individuals from Eliot's manufactured identity. The "notion of tradition" created in *The Waste Land* "proposed a line of development that leapfrogged over most of the previous century," thereby disregarding the problems posed by the current cultural climate" (Menand 127). In the construction of a tradition that does not rely on these collapsing systems, Eliot creates a mode of self-identity that remains unthreatened despite the social chaos he saw around him. The conception of "Tradition" as it is developed in *The Waste Land* provides an alternative mode of identity and describes the method to restore society's place within that lineage, through the same texts that compose "Tradition" itself.

III. America and Andalusia: Cultural Collision in *Poeta En Nueva York*

Just as Eliot struggled with the European present in relationship with the idealized past captured in "Tradition," in New York Federico García Lorca confronted a city that undermined his understanding of humanity, an understanding deeply rooted in Andalusia. When Lorca arrived in 1929, New York was a bustling metropolis.

> The era that saw America become the world's most powerful nation also saw New York gain recognition as the world's most powerful city. The census of 1920 declared America for the first time in its history an urban nation…[and] New York was the largest city (Douglas 4).

The nation's ascension to economic and international political prowess corresponded with cultural and social transformations.

During this period, the conception of what it was to be an American changed. Citizenship no longer meant belonging to the nation, the "rights and obligations conferred upon the subject by his or her legal status as a citizen" no longer qualified the individual for American-ness (Michaels 15). The immigrant, though naturalized, could not wield the full cultural rights of an American. What was emphasized was "not the inferiority of 'alien' races but their 'difference'" (Michaels 11). The use of this ideological strategy called nativist modernism functioned to transform American identity into something inherited, and therefore protected it from foreigners.

Though Lorca's *Poeta en Nueva York* does not seem explicitly conscious of these strategies, the book presents the poet/speaker as being disconnected from the city and from American identity. The book opens with a photograph of the Statue of Liberty[1], as though to remind its reader that the speaker is an outsider, an observer. He, like an immigrant, must pass through Ellis Island to reach America. The poetic

[1] The photograph is included in the Cátedra edition, 108.

speaker's alienation from American identity comes from Lorca's own biography as well. "His sense of rootlessness in New York fueled a poetic vision of an alien metropolis where life has no value (Stainton 237). His personal reaction to the city certainly adds to the confession-like tone of the book, leading to a reasonable conflation of narrator and poet. It seems that in New York, "the aloof dispassionate voice" used in his earlier books "no longer sufficed. If he was to decry an inhuman world, Lorca must acknowledge his own humanity," and transmit that vulnerability through his poetry (Stainton 237).

As he adopted a personal voice in his New York poetry, Lorca also found a lens through which to understand his experience in the city. Before his journey to New York, Lorca was heralded as the Gypsy poet for his very popular 1928 book *Romancero Gitano*. The book is a tribute to the culture of Andalusia, creating a rich symbolic world inextricably tied to that region (Josephs and Caballero 17). For Lorca, like for many Andalusians, Andalusia was the center, the "ombligo" (bellybutton), of the western world (Josephs and Caballero 22). We will not address Spanish identity here because Lorca did not subscribe to it. For much of Spain's history, it was not a nation united by common cultural practices. Andalusia retains a unique mixture of Moorish and Jewish influences. From the architecture to the food, Andalusia maintained a distinct culture inseparable from these "un-Spanish" influences (Kamen 62-63). Lorca draws from this cultural background to compare with, and as a lens through which to understand, New York.

A key part of that symbolic world is the way that memory and time function, a system recalled in *Poeta en Nueva York*. The present evokes even the remote past, as

if it were equally present in an interpretation of the present itself. For Lorca, memory does not move from the present into the past, but rather the two coexist as extensions of each other (Josephs and Caballero 32). That is to say, the entire world is an extension of Andalusia in the same way that an entire lifetime is an extension of any point of that lifetime. Lorca's early work presents little distinction between these categories. *Poeta en Nueva York* understands time in the same way. If time, for Lorca, only exists as an extension of previous or future moments, Andalusia is present in each of his interactions.

This appearance of Andalusia, and Lorca's past, are important to understanding Lorca's conception of New York, as they are constantly defined in opposition to each other. In the second poem of the collection, Lorca presents a nostalgic vision of his childhood. He creates a binary, separating his childhood, a time of innocence, and his present in New York, which he saw as corrupt.

> Aquellos ojos míos de mil novecientos diez
> no vieron enterrar a los muertos,
> ni la feria de ceniza del que llora por la madrugada ("1910 (Intermedio)" 112).
>
> Those eyes of mine in nineteen-ten
> saw no one dead and buried
> no village fair of ash from the one who weeps at dawn ("1910 (Intermezzo)" 7).

In these lines Lorca establishes a comparison between youth and consciousness of death, and between Granada and New York. In 1910 Lorca would have been twelve, and he longs for that era of innocence. He had not witnessed death or cruelty, which he seems to imply that he has now witnessed. While in 1910 in his childhood home of Granada "la madrugada," or dawn, was a positive symbol, in New York it is

transformed into a tragic event. From the beginning of the collection, Lorca transforms New York into a place that offers neither hope nor redemption.

Though Lorca yearns for his youth and idealizes it as a time of innocence, he simultaneously dismisses his childhood as a part of the past inaccessible to the poet. For example in "Tu infancia en Menton," "Your Childhood in Menton" Lorca distances himself from the past:

> Sí, tu niñez: ya fábula de fuentes (114).
>
> Yes, your childhood: now a fable of fountains (15).

The past is both invoked and dismissed. The effect of this seemingly contradictory strategy is to recreate the past within the collection of poems itself: reliving the poet's past, while defining it as the past. In *Poeta en Nueva York*, we are constantly aware of the poet's personal past as it participates in the performance of each poem itself.

The construction of nostalgia and the creation of a past within the book, helps to ground Lorca as he takes on an important role for the book, that of el cantor. This figure comes from the tradition of Virgil, the bard who sings the tale of his people. Lorca's narrative use of el cantor also helps to create the Calvary structure that the book assumes, as will be discussed in the fourth chapter. Lorca assumes this role, using a personal and anguished voice to recount what he sees in New York. El cantor, however, also recalls *el cantaor*, the Gypsy singer of ballads from the Andalusian region of Spain. The role of *el cantaor* is to "represent the anguish of his race as he sings of his own private torment, striving for catharsis" (Stone 493). It is "by giving vent to his deepest, most personal anguish, *el cantaor* also aims to exorcise his audience" (Stone 497). It is possible, and useful, to conflate the "I" of the New York

poetry and the poet himself. Although it can often be dangerous in interpretation of poetry, as it assumes a kind of fidelity of representation of the poet's interior, that danger is mitigated by Lorca's assumption of the role of el cantor. He "appropriate[s] the urban nightmare of New York as the perfect reflection of the inner turmoil which he was experiencing at this time" (Stone 495).

By placing the poet/narrator in the role of el cantor, Lorca introduces the poetic world of his earlier works. This figure would have been a familiar one for other Andalusians, and the symbols that enter the work are intimately related to Andalusia. One such instance is the poem "Danza de la muerte," "Dance of Death." The title recalls the dance of death of fifteenth-century Castilian culture in which death embodied came to earth and choose to take someone with him regardless of the person's status on earth. By titling a poem with this, Lorca describes the following scene as an imitation, or in this case, a perversion of this ritual.

> ¡Que no baile el papa!
> ¡No,
> que no baile el papa!
> Ni el rey;
> ni el millonario de dientes azules
> ni las bailarinas secas de las catedrales (141).
>
> But don't let the Pope dance!
> No,
> don't let the Pope dance!
> Nor the King,
> nor the millionaires with blue teeth,
> nor the barren dancers of the cathedrals (45).

The dance of death, representative of the great equalizing force of death, is rendered powerless in New York. Power and money overcome the natural force of the life cycle. What functioned as a social and moral equalizing force in Spain, and remains a

part of traditional culture, has been perverted into maintaining the social hierarchy that Lorca so despises in the city. Instead, it is he, the poet himself, who is forced to fight with death. "Yo estaba en la terraza luchando con la luna" (139). "I was on the terrace, wrestling with the moon" (45). In *Romancero Gitano*, the moon comes to represent death, as part of a natural life cycle. The symbol is recalled here. It seems that death has turned its focus on the poet; it too has been persuaded by the powers that govern New York.

The use of Andalusian figures and the perversion of these figures when transported to New York appear later in the collection as well. The figure of the bull, or toro, of Spanish bullfighting tradition is recalled. For many, especially in modern popular culture, the bullfight is symbolic of Spain. For Lorca, too, the bullfight and the bullfighter represented the culture of Andalusia. In 1935 Lorca published a lament for renowned bullfighter Ignacio Sánchez Mejía on his death. The poem is both lament for his death and pays tribute to the tradition of bullfighting. In the New York poems, the figure of the bull, or toro, appears in the poem "Vaca," or "Cow." The title calls the toro to mind, and as with the danza de la muerte, perverts it. "Vaca" represents the emasculated, stripped down, bull of the Spanish bullfights. The cow does not stand a chance against the torero, or bullfighter. The bull has been stripped of its majestic power, and the bullfight has been stripped of its cultural significance; the cultural ritual has been rendered senseless killing.

One of the most important elements of Andalusian culture that appears, though in a different form, in *Poeta en Nueva York* is the presence of the Gitanos or the Gypsies, ironically the influence that Lorca was trying to shed in his New York

poetry. Gypsies were a strong figure in both his two earlier major books. He was familiar with their customs and music. "His most fundamental interest and instincts found resonance in the Gypsies' ancient and tangled roots, in their sensual embrace of life, in their innately religious existence, and in their status as a persecuted minority" (Stainton 187). In his poetry and plays the Gitano comes to represent a connection with nature, deep cultural roots, and they are inherently tied to music. In New York this role is assumed by the Blacks of Harlem. The second section of the book is entitled "Los negros," or "The Blacks," and depicts scenes that Lorca saw there. The presence of Harlem in New York is what allows hope for human kind, for they maintain a full culture that Lorca values even within the dehumanizing city. The blacks of Harlem have retained their cultural heritage, which connects them to nature. He describes:

> Con la ciencia del tronco y el rastro
> llenan de nervios luminosos la arcilla
> y patinan lúbricos por aguas y arenas
> gustando la amarga frescura de su milenaria saliva ("Norma y paraíso de los negros" 124).
>
> They use the science of tree trunks and rake
> to cover the clay with luminous nerves,
> and as they glide with easy desire over water and sand,
> they taste the bitter freshness of their millenary spit ("Standards and Paradise of the Blacks" 21).

In these lines the blacks of Harlem are depicted participating in a project of connecting themselves to nature. These connections give them power in an almost symbiotic relationship to nature, gliding over sand and water. They seem to understand nature, though they live in a city, and can access a type of knowledge about the natural world that the poet seems to value.

What may have attracted Lorca to the culture of Harlem was the flourishing of black artistic production during that period. World War One had been a "catalyst for the black renaissance of the 1920s," and this cultural productivity sparked a kind of optimism in Harlem (Douglas 87-88). Unlike their white counterparts who felt themselves to be the "Lost Generation," the artists of the Harlem Renaissance "felt themselves to be not lost but found; the description and reification of a modern world desperately in need of a lost religious significance, insistent in contemporary white expression, was not the preferred mode of the Harlem literary mind" (Douglas 90). For someone like Lorca, who shared similar anxieties with the "Lost Generation" yet identified the causes of those fears within the society of that generation, Harlem's optimism must have seemed as though it offered the possibility of cultural rebirth.

This rebirth, however, seems to necessitate revolution. "Rey de Harlem," or "King of Harlem" depicts the underside of the cultural optimism visible in Harlem's artistic production, a seething violence waiting to be freed. Lorca accesses insight into the relationship between Black culture and mainstream American culture during this period. He describes a certain kind of violence, a submerged aggression in the black population. Virginia Higginbotham writes that the portrayal of Harlem's culture in the "Los Negros" section, its "hierarchy and violence deftly hidden from whites is an entirely factual representation based upon practices of black cults and indicates that Lorca may have had a closer understanding of Harlem than is generally credited him" (Higginbotham 780).

> ¡Ay, Harlem! ¡Ay, Harlem! ¡Ay, Harlem!
> No hay angustia comparable a tus ojos oprimidos
> a tu sangre estremecida dentro del eclipse oscuro,
> a tu violencia granate, sordomuda en la penumbra,

a tu gran rey prisionero, con un traje de conserje (127-128).

Ay, Harlem! Ay, Harlem! Ay, Harlem!
There is no anguish like that of your oppressed reds,
or your blood shuddering with rage inside the dark eclipse,
or your garnet violence, deaf and dumb in the penumbra,
or your grand king of a prisoner in the uniform of a doorman (27).

The 'Rey,' King, of Harlem is forced to dress as a doorman, and equally, in the doorman lies the potential of a King. In order, however, for the cultural rebirth promised by Harlem, to be realized, violent revolution must occur. Lorca seems to both wish for and fear this uprising.

He describes the blacks as filled with rhythmic life, yet imprisoned by the culture in which they live. These lines describe the hidden anger that Lorca sees in Harlem. Black culture was experiencing a renaissance at this time, yet blacks remained repressed economically and socially. World War I had helped to create the conditions of this renaissance, creating hope in the disintegration of nineteenth century social structures. This optimism, however, was held simultaneously with a frustration that social and economic conditions had not changed for African Americans. In a way they both held the promise of freedom and felt betrayed by this promise (Douglas 87).

Though the Gypsies of Andalusia are certainly visible beneath the blacks of Harlem in New York, the Guardia Civil, the force Lorca saw as inherently opposed to the Gypsies' positive attributes, are also present in New York. The "Guardia and Gypsies symbolize opposite principles in Spanish life: the Guardia represents law, the Gypsies absence of law, for they steal; the Guardia represents the state, the Gypsies freedom and autonomy" (Brandes 71). In New York, the Guardia Civil is

transformed into Wall Street, a place where numbers and money seem to be in control. In "Panorama ciego de Nueva York," "Blind Panorama of New York," he describes the controlling power of Wall Street: "un traje abandonado pesa tanto en los hombros" (157), "the abandoned suit weighs so heavily on the shoulders" (67). It seems that the people on Wall Street have been utterly dehumanized, the suit itself presses down on humanity.

Wall Street dehumanizes New York, but it is also representative of a larger problem. Lorca sees the same greed and disregard for life and nature in Coney Island.

> Llegaban los rumores de la selva del vómito
> con las mujeres vacías, con niños de cera caliente
> con árboles fermentados y camareros incansables
> que sirven platos de sal bajo las arpas de la saliva ("Paisaje de la multitud que vomita (Anochecer de Coney Island)" 143-144).

> There were murmurings from the jungle of vomit
> with the empty women, with hot wax children,
> with fermented trees and tireless waiters
> who serve platters of salt beneath harps of saliva ("Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude (Dusk at Coney Island)" 49).

The whole world is transformed as it looses the connection with nature and with the subconscious into a place of corruption and filth. The people of New York lost touch with nature, succumbed to greed, and became inhuman themselves. The women are "empty," the children are without substance, and they all live in filth.

Lorca highlights the connection that he sees between this filth and the 'rootlessness' by which he saw New York. In the poem, it is "la mujer gorda" who embodies the way that the city, and modern society, erases roots, disconnecting people from their very humanity.

> La mujer gorda venía delante
> arrancando las raíces y mojando el pergamino de los tambores.

La mujer gorda,
que vuelve del revés los pulpos agonizantes.
La mujer gorda, enemiga de la luna (143).

The fat lady came first,
tearing out roots and moistening drumskins.
The fat lady
who turns dying octopuses inside out.
The fat lady, the moon's antagonist (49).

The fat lady, symbolic of consumerist American culture, pulls up the roots that connect people to one another. She also "moistens the drumskin," and mutes *el cantor*, he who could have expressed the peoples' troubles. She is identified as the "moon's antagonist," and although the moon was discussed before as a symbol for death, the fat lady does not function as a symbol for life. The moon's role as a death figure is also incorporated into a positive reading of a circular life-structure. The moon is a symbol of a *right* death, tragic as it may be, that completes a life. She has broken the natural cycle of life, she goes against that which is natural.

Lorca's horror at the way human beings treat each other and the world around them fills the entire poem. The vomit of the poem's title is not only that, it becomes representative of the transformation of humans into the living dead. The decay and corruption that Lorca sees around him is representative of the desperation of human kind.

No es el vómito de los húsares sobre los pechos de la prostituta,
ni el vómito del gato que se trago una rana por descuido.
Son los muertos que arañan con sus manos de tierra
los puertos de pedernal donde se pudren nublos y postres (144).

It's not the vomit of hussars on the breasts of their whores,
or the vomit of a cat choking down a frog,
but the dead who scratch with clay hands
on flint gates where clouds and desserts decay (49).

Lorca sees vomit, sex, and death, around him, and though his descriptions of these bodily actions reveal his repulsion, they come to represent humanity's desperation. These acts represent a corruption of all that he sees as good. New York takes on significance as a place in which the human project, that of forgiveness and love, has failed and humanity is now decaying.

This scene of filth and moral decay is interesting compared to the poem "1910 (Intermedio)," "1910 (Intermezzo)" in which Lorca describes the innocence of Andalusia and of his childhood.

> Aquellos ojos míos de mil novecientos diez
> vieron la blanca pared donde orinaban las niñas (112).
>
> Those eyes of mine in nineteen-ten
> saw the white wall where little girls pissed (7) .

The poet's eyes were fixed "en un jardín donde los gatos se comían a las ranas" (112), "on a garden where cats devour frogs" (7). Though in content the scene describes is very similar to that which appears in "Paisaje de un multitud que vomita." These acts are pure, part of an innocent child's understanding of life.

The dehumanization that Lorca sees around him in the city, is identified as "el hueco," or the void. It comes to take on many meanings, but ultimately signifies the nothingness of modern existence. Lorca uses "el hueco" in opposition to "sueño," or dreaming, which signifies humankinds' infinite capacity for understanding and forgiveness, linked, for Lorca, intimately with imagination. In "Norma y paraíso de los negros," "Standards and Paradise of the Blacks," the two are constructed opposite each other to describe and protest, the lynching of a black man.

> Es allí donde sueñan los torsos bajo la gula de la hierba.
> Allí los corales empapan la desesperación de la tinta,

los durmientes borran sus perfiles bajo la madeja de los caracoles
y queda el hueco de la danza sobre las últimas cenizas (124).

It's there the torsos dream beneath the hungry grass,
there the coral absorbs the ink's desperation,
the sleepers erase their profiles under the skein of snails,
and the emptied space[2] of the dance stays above the last of the ashes (23).

Lorca accompanies this poem with a photo of a lynched black man. It serves to remind the reader of how terrible "el hueco," actually is. The "torsos" referenced in the stanza, are those of the victims of these acts of violence. In death, however, they regain "sueño," deprived of them by modern life. What is left on earth, however, is the horrifying presence of "el hueco," testament to the way that mankind has become dehumanized.

Lorca names another poem after "el hueco." "Nocturno del hueco," or "Nocturne of Emptied Space," is a poem that laments the impossibility of love. The narrative voice offers his love, fruitlessly, yet is continually conscious of the impossibility of this love.

Para ver que todo se ha ido,
para ver los huecos y los vestidos,
¡da me tu guante de luna,
tu otro guante de hierba
amor mío! (185)

If you want to see that nothing is left,
see the emptied spaces and the clothes,
give me your lunar glove,
your other glove of grass,
my love! (103)

[2] Maurer translates "el hueco" as "emptied space," but I agree with Martha Nandorfy who prefers "void," as it "resonates with the abyss circled by the *duende*" (Nandorfy 292). The *duende* is the dark, creative, and allusive spirit that inspired Lorca. *Duende* is a recurrent figure from Spanish mythology.

The speaker offers his love, but in doing so, must show his lover "el hueco," that surrounds them. This is a portrayal of an utterly dehumanized world, one that prohibits love or humane interaction. In "Ciudad sin sueño (Nocturno del Brooklyn Bridge)," "Sleepless City (Brooklyn Bridge Nocturne)," the poet connects "el hueco," and the inability to dream, with life in the city itself. "No es sueño la vida ¡Alerta! ¡Alerta! ¡Alerta!" (151). "Life is no dream. Watch out! Watch out! Watch out!" (63). If "sueño" is the force that allows humanity to connect with nature, and life is not a dream, humanity is has little hope, and no power to protect itself.

This responsibility comes to rest on el cantor, as the bard of the people. However, even he, immersed in this unnatural and dehumanizing world, finds himself unable to recognize his surroundings. As he speaks from his realm of familiarity, which resides in Andalusia and Andalusian culture, he becomes disoriented in New York.

> No es el infierno, es la calle.
> No es la muerte. Es la tienda de frutas ("Nueva York (Oficina y Denuncia)" 205).

> This is not hell, but the street.
> Not death, but the fruit stand (" New York (Office and Denunciation)" 135).

What he sees before him, although they may be the places and events of the every day, can be interpreted as hell or death through a mindset based in Andalusia. To el cantor, the New York fruit stand resembles death and the street resembles hell. Through the city the daily events and places that would have been comprehensible and perhaps beautiful to the poet have been transformed into nightmarish images. "It is precisely an Andalusian vision that observes the New York metropolis with such horror" (Josephs and Caballero 15).

Chapter Two:
Masculinity and Homosexuality: Responses to a New World

As post-War national and cultural boundaries were re-drawn, and in the aftermath of the high casualties of World War I, one of the social constructions that changed drastically was the construction of masculinity. Millions of young men died during the Great War, military mobilization formed a context that fostered male-male intimacy, and as the women moved into the workplace to fill the void left by young men, they came to be seen as masculine themselves. Pre-war definitions of the masculine no longer functioned. The issue of masculinity seems to have preoccupied T.S. Eliot and Federico García Lorca. The poets locate masculinity as a source of anxiety, and each develops a homoerotic discourse to describe important male bonds. This chapter will examine masculinity as a defining anxiety of this period, focusing on its "importance for the literary and cultural imagination," and the interplay between historical and imagined reality (Cole 175). Both poets construct discourses around remarkably similar aspects of this question, namely constructing the masculine body and the development of a homoerotic discourse to speak about this body.

I. The Masculine Body and the Great War in *The Waste Land*

In the literature of the post-World War I era, the human body, particularly the masculine body, comes to be used as an important metaphor for discourse about the social body, taking on meaning beyond the physical body's biological limits. "The human body, disordered and displaced physically and psychologically, is presented as

the most accurate measure of the material consequences of warfare, in effect uncovering the old lies of the dominant group(s)" (Waterman ix).

Two simultaneous urges appeared in response to these deaths. On the one hand, the effort to remember and mourn the war-dead was nationalized. World War One is unique in that it resulted, for the first time, in a national effort to commemorate every soldier, no matter how low his rank. "We know, for example, the *name*, rank, and regiment of the first British soldier killed in the Great War" (Laqueur 150). The cemeteries that resulted, preserving the names of the fallen, came to "symbolize the ideal of the national community" in the national imagination (Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* 95). This effort to preserve the individual identities of the fallen soldiers contrasts with attitudes about commemoration of war-dead in previous eras. The memorials of previous wars, like Waterloo, give the impression "not only of anonymity but of complete individual dissolution" (Laqueur 151).

Ironically enough, however, the effort to preserve the identities, through names, of the individual fallen soldiers of WWI resulted in a similar individual dissolution. Though the names of these soldiers were remembered, they were often disconnected from the bodies themselves. There were "517,000 or so [unknown soldiers] by the time the counting stopped," a phenomena that prompted the creation of the Cenotaph, or empty tomb, in Britain (Laqueur 156). The response to this memorial was unprecedented; thousands visited the site as it seemed to complete the process of mourning. It was a way to reconnect the name of the individual with the body, a body that could have belonged to anyone (Laqueur 157). By making an effort to preserve the name or identity of the individual, the state created a single identity

for all the unknown war-dead, through the body of the Unknown Soldier buried in the Cenotaph. In the attempt to remember, to pay tribute to the massive losses of the war, the state produced a common identity for all of those lost. Thomas Laqueur writes:

> Bodies, of course, being in the ground, are hidden and cannot be their own memorials, but markers of their skeletal uniformity serve the purpose. Numbers. The human imagination is forced to see, as concretely as possible, what a million dead men look like (161).

The Unknown Soldier was forced to become part of the larger number of the war-dead, despite the massive attempt to protect his individuality. The state felt a huge responsibility, surely reinforced by public opinion, that they would have to do better by these soldiers "if it sent them by the hundreds of thousands to die abroad" (Laqueur 160).

Yet, though the government was trying to pay adequate tribute to those who gave their lives, it seems that the state was unable to understand what the war meant for masculinity itself. For, as the governments that participated in the war tried to rebuild their nations, the cost of war, in human bodies, was submerged beneath rhetoric promoting the healthy nation thorough the image of the healthy male body. In her book on surrealism and post-war France, Amy Lyford argues that the images of the nation propagandized by the French government did not accurately represent the health of masculine bodies post-war. The state intervened in the cultural sphere to enforce traditional conceptions of masculinity and the family as a part of its rebuilding campaign. The state's intervention emphasized masculine strength and that relationships between the sexes should be geared towards marriage, resulting in procreation (Lyford 4).

The male ideal, it was felt, needed to be protected. Certainly, the stakes were high. The ideal masculine prototype relied on both the formation of the mind and body. A perfect man was to have both (Mosse, *Image* 19). And the maintenance of this ideal man held national significance. The image of the man himself "came to symbolize a healthy and progressive society" (Mosse, *Image* 28). If the nation wanted to identify itself as healthy, or at least healing from the war-wounds, it needed to present its men as representative of that ideal masculinity. "A failed manhood," would serve to "threaten the established order" (Mosse, *Image* 55). As much as the state employed the idealized version of masculinity to define itself as healthy, the state had its own effect on that image as well. A part of the justification for war was the rhetoric that the act of war completed the ideal man. Certainly, "a messianic element was introduced into the formation of the male body, never to leave it entirely. The notion that a true man must serve a higher ideal became in the end an integral part of what could be called the militarization of masculinity" (Mosse, *Image*, 44). This rhetoric seems to explain away, at least in part, the violence of the Great War, describing it not as the loss of masculinity, but as its fulfillment.

The image of the muscular, able-bodied man featured in propaganda, however, did not represent the experiences of the veterans themselves. In the national propaganda concerning the war, there were "contradictions between individual experience and national consensus" (Lyford 12). As the national discourse contradicted the personal experience of veterans, it was soldiers' bodies that "reminded everyone who saw them of the horrible and ongoing physical and psychological effects of the war; the sight of mutilated bodies strained people's belief

in their government's promises about social and economic progress" (Lyford 4). In post-war France, a discourse about the realities of war took place on these bodies themselves.

Although France stands out as a striking example for the severe losses it suffered during WWI, this ideology and the tension between the promoted view of the "national body" and the personal view of veterans' bodies can be extended to apply to other countries in Europe and to the United States. It is in the face of these tensions that the body appears in literature as "the primary site of resistance" to the propagandized national fiction; the body itself becomes "a text which can be read and interpreted" (Waterman ii). Because it was the common soldiers that suffered the highest number of casualties and injuries, their story was more easily ignored by the national fictions of masculinity. The memorial sites that commemorated WWI soldiers did not recognize the way that these deaths, and those wounded in the war would change what it was to be masculine. Despite the national conception of masculinity, these soldiers often returned to their homes from the front and found that their pre-war lives no longer existed. Their homes, relationships, communities, and sometimes their own bodies had all been immeasurably altered (Lyford 2).

> For returning veterans, economic instability and their uncertain relation to the national economy were two of many postwar anxieties they faced. These men also required physical and emotional assistance from their families, and many of them had to rely on wives, sisters, and mothers as never before. Published testimony of some returning soldiers reveals that many men were anxious about their postwar relationships, particularly with women (Lyford 58).

If before the war, men had identified with strength, physical and emotional, and in their role as providers for their families, they returned to find these modes of identity empty of significance. What was masculinity if the ways it had been understood

before the war had changed? The war left physical and emotional scars on the soldier; and even if he was unharmed physically, he was still stripped of his role as sole provider as women had usurped this status. If the body functions as a text, and the pre-war script for the male body no longer functioned in the post-war world, how could the post-war man be re-written?

In *The Waste Land*, T.S. Eliot uses the fragmented figure of the body to resist myths of strength about the post-war man and to question the usefulness of the national efforts to commemorate war-deaths. He portrays the male body as dismembered, directly countering the ideal of able-bodied masculinity, as a way to fight against the discourse that designates male bodies as "expendable, in war" (Phillips 11). T.S. Eliot's investment in the past, most visible through his aesthetic theory of "Tradition," was challenged by the war, as it "seemed to have violated not only the nation's physical and economic infrastructure but its moral, ethical, and social structures as well" (Lyford 115). The male body comes to be one of these structures violated by war; the poet's vision of the post-war male body as dismembered argues that by promoting a vision of the healthy male body in national propaganda, western nations attempted to justify the loss of life by erasing it. He engages, through these bodies, in a process of mourning for the men who had lost their lives and for the social system that fell-away post-war.

In this post-war cultural crisis, *The Waste Land* portrays the national rhetoric surrounding male bodies and their national commemoration as doing a disservice to those who lost their lives. In this national discourse, the dead were transformed into casualties whose deaths, nobly, made possible a future. Yet, Eliot protests against this

portrayal of loss of life. If the deaths function to make the future possible, they are no more important than the machines that made the war possible and helped win it. In order to fight this idea and revalorize the lives claimed by war, Eliot uses the device of blasphemy, writing against the established rules of society, to emphasize this point:

> At the violet hour, when the eyes and back
> Turn upwards from the desk, when the human engine waits
> Like a taxi throbbing waiting (lns 215-217).

These lines convert the human into a machine, an engine waiting to be directed towards a cause. The war is portrayed as an act that converts humans to machines, driven by the will of the government. Eliot seems to be responding to the rhetoric that the war would "reconcile the conflict between modernity and its enemies. [As] it used modern technology to its limits, making the most of the machine while putting it in the service of the nation." (Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* 66). By literally transforming the body into a machine, Eliot protests against that very point. The poem, and its various speakers, mourns the loss of life, equally lost in death as in this transformation of men into machines.

The narrative construction of the poem, narrated by a speaker whose identity continually changes, helps to advance this argument about the worth of human life. As the narrative voice guides the reader through the rubble around him, the narrator seems to take on the voice of one such injured soldier.

> 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 (lns 27-30).

The narrator dissolves the body of the reader, stripping him of his shadow. The handful of dust functions as a representation of the body after death; it is, these lines

suggest, what we all become. By transforming the reader's body, the narrator brings the topic closer to home, involving the reader in the mass deaths that occurred during the war. The dust can be seen as a direct threat against the body of the reader, making the disappearance of the physical body an eminent possibility. To threaten the reader's body recalls national commemoration of the war-dead, threatening the reader not only with the loss of the body, but also with the dissolution of identity itself. Literarily it also functions to dissolve the reader into the text, and by threatening the body of the reader, the poem argues that those who were lost in war were worth no less than the reader, questioning any and all justifications for the loss of life seen in WWI.

The "handful of dust" also comes to mean the future that had been promised by the war. It was "supposed to bring about fundamental change, fulfilling the dream of youth: creating a new man who would put an end to bourgeois complacency, tyranny, and hypocrisy, as they saw it" (Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* 57). After the war, however, those young people who had seen in the war an opportunity for regeneration, felt entire disillusioned. What had been the possibility of change had only caused the death of many.

As the body of the addressee is dissolved into the social body of the war-dead, the narrator moves into a passage in which he mourns a death. The merger of the reader's body with the bodies lost in WWI allows a symbolic convergence, in which mourning for one functions to mourn for all others, and equally for any specific other. That is to say, mourning draws the collective from the individual and vise-versa. The

lines that follow the disappearance of the reader's body can be understood as mourning both for the collective dead and mourning a specific death.

> Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
> Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
> Living nor dead, and I knew nothing (lns 38-40).

Although these lines have been linked as a reference to Shakespeare's Ophelia, they also function as a distorted memory of war. The narrator seems to remember a specific death and the profound affect it had on him, yet this death recalls many others, including the narrator's own.

Faced with this, the narrator's sense of identity falls away. He becomes like the dead body in his arms. The identification of the narrator's voice with the body itself "dissolves the distinction between mourner and corpse" (Lamos 31). These lines convert the narrator too, at least momentarily, into another casualty of war. Though the poem is "at once impersonal, a reflection of a crisis in culture in postwar Europe," it also functions personally as "a reflection of Eliot's own life" (Brooker 132). This conflates Eliot himself with the narrator of the text, despite how fiercely his theory of "Impersonality" would struggle to resist the author's presence in the text. The conflation of the individual with the collective dead and of the mourner with the corpse transforms all male bodies into both mourners and corpses.

The shifting boundaries between the living and the dead imply the overwhelming presence of the dead in the lives of the living. The state's response to war commemoration attests to this continual presence. The burial of the Unknown Soldier in Westminster abbey created what Laqueur calls "perhaps the first national holy site" (156). Although the war was over, the dead remained constantly present:

> Who is the third who walks always beside you?
> When I count, there are only you and I together
> But when I look ahead up the white road
> There is always another one walking beside you (lns 359-362).

The narrator speaks about the presence of the 'ghost' of the lost soldiers. He who 'walks always beside you' is recalls marches during the war. This companion, however, has been transformed into a memory, and stands in for any and all lost-war comrades. The war was a unique space for the development of personal relationships because, "while men confronted mass death everywhere, another aspect of life in the trenches impressed them: the camaraderie of soldiers…living together and depending upon each other for survival" (Mosse, *Fallen Soldiers* 5). These lines recall simultaneously both the experience of death and camaraderie. The narrator, who before assumed the role of a soldier explaining the death of a companion to the narrator, now places the reader into the role of ex-soldier carrying the memory of a companion. The constantly shifting roles generalize the effort to remember and mourn the dead.

In light of the convergence of social and personal trauma, the poem's declaration through Madame Sosostris' that the narrator is the Phoenician Sailor serves to sentence to death both narrator and reader. She draws a card from her tarot deck: "…Here, said she, / Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor" (lns 46-47). The sailor, by trade someone who should be accustomed to water, drowns, signaling unnatural and unexpected death. The narrator and reader's death sentence further conflates the mourner and the corpse. It also poses the question: when does death begin if mourner and corpse are the same?

> I remember

> Those are pearls that were his eyes.
> 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?' (lns 125-127).

These lines recall the death scene earlier in the poem. The scene occurs during the dressing-room scene of "A Game of Chess," and the quotation can be read as simultaneously addressing both narrator and corpse. As these lines occur in a context where the narrator is being pestered by his wife, the lines reflect his inability to communicate with her, and his symbolic convergence with the corpses he mourns. The reader understands that the narrator may be asking the same of the corpse he holds. Both figures, mourner and mourned, are rendered equally lifeless.

The interactions between the mourner and the corpse, and the subsequent equation of the mourner to the life-less body, reference the millions of bodies destroyed by the Great War. The bodies of the World War I dead appear constantly in the text. These deaths almost seem to come as a surprise to the narrator who, watching them pour over London Bridge, says:

> I had not thought death had undone so many,
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet (lns 63-65).

The narrator seems shocked by the very number of deaths that he has protested against earlier in the text. Considering the way that the text has constructed an equation between mourner and corpse, the sheer number of deaths seems to scare Eliot because it would transform every living man, mourner, into a corpse. "*The Waste Land* does not fear the dead themselves so much as their invasion of the living" (Ellmann 94).

> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> Ringed by the flat horizon only (lns 368-370).

The dead are so many that they themselves as well as their memories swarm the living and due to their numbers, control the earth. The same system that Eliot has constructed in his poem to emphasize the loss of male bodies worries him for it suggests that the dead may out overwhelm the living. Just as he substitutes the theme of collapsing boundaries with the bodies of the dead, these lines invert that comparison again, using the symbol of bodies to revert to his concerns about the collapse of tradition post-war; "for [Eliot suggests] it is the collapse of boundaries that centrally disturbs the text, be they sexual, national, linguistic, or authorial (Ellmann 94). If the dead, and the dead traditions of the past, overpower living people and traditions, Western Europe itself seems to face a death sentence.

II. Revalorizing the Masculine Homosexual in *Poeta en Nueva York*

Whereas Eliot's depictions of fragmented masculine bodies engage in a discourse against the identification of male bodies as expendable at war, in *Poeta en Nueva York* Federico García Lorca reconstructs the masculine around a homosexual identity. Recent scholarship has broken through the barrier of silence, for the most part, to recognize Lorca's homosexuality, and its appearance, though coded, in his work. However, the project of revalorizing masculinity through the figure of the homosexual is not only related to Lorca's own identity, but also linked to a larger crisis in terms of masculinity in Spain. During this era, Spanish notions of masculinity began to collapse, and the blame came to rest on the homosexual as a corrupting influence. Lorca's defense of a certain model of homosexuality should be understood as an effort to revalorize that identity.

The beginning of the twentieth century was a turbulent era for Spain, as it was for the rest of Western Europe. In 1898, Spain lost its colonies Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Philippines, in an episode called "The Disaster." The loss of these colonies made real the decline in Spanish influence across the globe. Internally, it was viewed as a national loss of virility, resulting in a diminished caliber of nationhood (Cleminson 178). The nation itself was defined by the parameters of masculinity, "equated with bravery, sacrifice, strength and willpower" and "any decline in their values was understood as an attack on the substance of the nation" itself (Cleminson 175). In the face of the disaster, many felt that their fall from a position of global power must have resulted from a decline in those masculine values. And, subsequently, a decline in those masculine values must have been derived from some sort of failure on the part of the national body.

This sense of national inadequacy was turned inwards, looking for the effeminized culprits who had emasculated Spain. As both decadence and homosexuality were identified as upper-class traits, early twentieth-century Spanish culture located this effeminacy in the upper class, and located masculinity in the workingman of the lower classes. The "ills of the nation" were "represented as the result of a battle between the powers of masculinity and the weaknesses of femininity," the solution to which rests in "the restoration of masculinity over and above feminine values (Cleminson 177). Linked intimately with the felt need to reassert masculine over feminine values was the identification of impotence as an "endemic condition" which resulted in the "lack of vigorousness and decisiveness" that lead to Spain's fall as a world power. "Fears of weak masculinity were reinforced

by….the 'virilization' of women and" the new era of "subjectivity afforded by feminism" (Cleminson 198). The figure of the affluent homosexual became the culprit for Spain's anxieties about its own virility, producing "a society with an ideology in which the doors are closed to homosexuals, in spite of their fame and their degree of friendship" (Sahuquillo 42).

In this context, someone who identified as homosexual, even discreetly, like Federico García Lorca, could not have helped but feel constantly under attack and endangered by the society around him. The changing times not only presented uncertainty in national and international political matters, but also within Spanish culture. As the social codes of the Victorian age began to crumble across Western Europe, so did a space for male-male love; "during the Victorian period, an ambiguously pure love flourished between men" (Sahuquillo 74). Because Victorian era heterosexuality presented women as either chaste 'saints' or as un-pure women, heterosexuality itself was problematic. It seemed that the heterosexual had one of two choices: to violate the saint in order to achieve sexual fulfillment, or to be tainted himself by the un-pure woman. The "pure love" between men was a type of emotional bond in some ways privileged *above* heterosexuality: the man did not need to either violate the saint or be tainted by the 'un-pure' woman. Often this ideal relationship was not considered at all sexual, and seemed to provide an answer to the moral vices of sex. This ideology implied that in loving men "his emotions seemed nobler and purer" (Sahuquillo 74).

In the face of the collapse of this value system, just as we saw T.S. Eliot re-constructing 'Tradition' in the face of cultural collapse, Lorca's book, specifically

"Oda a Walt Whitman," "Ode to Walt Whitman," attempts to recapture and revise this Victorian vision of male relationships and redefine the homosexual a masculine figure. Walt Whitman was a natural choice to represent the "ambiguously pure love" that Lorca longed for. In the gay subculture of New York, "Whitman stood for a non-effeminate gentleness, a love for other men that was unquestionably masculine" (Chauncey 105). For many homosexual men, Whitman's poetry stood for the idea that male "love for men was more *masculine* than love for women. Walt Whitman was heralded as a prophetic spokesman by many such men, who regarded Whitman's celebration of 'the manly love of comrades' as an affirmation of the nobility of their love" (Chauncey 104).

The poem can be read as a part of the tradition of viewing Whitman as a "man" in his love for men. The descriptions in the poem link homosexuality to purity and separate it from the ideology that presented homosexuality as a negative influence on masculinity and nationhood.

> Tú buscabas un desnudo que fuera como un río,
> toro y sueño que junte la rueda con el alga,
> padre de tu agonía, camelia de tu muerte,
> y gimiera en las llamas de tu ecuador oculto (222).
>
> You looked for a nude like a river.
> Bull and dream who would join wheel with seaweed,
> father of your agony, camellia of your death,
> who would groan in the blaze of your hidden equator (161).

Lorca describes Whitman's poetry as the search for that natural and pure love. The attributes that Lorca attaches to the lover are consistent with the positive symbols that Lorca develops in his poetic universe. "Río," or river, usually appears to invoke the natural processes of life: a circular relationship between birth, life, and death. Water

that flows, like a river, is seen as a natural fulfillment of that process, while stagnant water is an unnatural intervention. Lorca also identifies Whitman's lover with "toro" and "sueño." "Toro," as discussed in the previous chapter, is a reference to the symbolic world of Andalusia and has symbolic connotations for masculinity. In the New York of Lorca's poetic world, however, the masculine "toro" of Spain has been substituted for the castrated, "vaca." The lover is also associated with "sueño," an important symbol for Lorca as it signifies the ability to dream the real, or rather to allow the subconscious to see truth in the corruption that Lorca identifies in New York. Despite the association of Whitman's ideal lover with positive symbols from Lorca's poetic universe, Lorca also broaches the issue of sexual desire. He describes the desire between the two lovers as "agonía," facing the reality of how their desire might be received in society.

As a way to erase the sexual, and controversial, aspect of this union, and thereby privilege the masculine purity of this relationship, Lorca's construction of Whitman is practically virginal. The poetic voice speaks directly to Whitman, to communicate the failure in the modern world of what he sees as Whitman's dream: "the brotherly love of comrades," what Whitman called "adhesiveness." While Whitman wanted a "nude like a river," Lorca sees the gay culture of New York and sees that:

> ninguno quería ser río,
> ninguno amaba las hojas grandes
> ninguno la lengua azul de la playa (219).
>
> none of them wanted to be the river,
> none of them loved the huge leaves
> or the shoreline's blue tongue (159).

Lorca cries out at the discrepancy he sees between Whitman's love and the version of love he sees in the New York gay culture, a subculture that did not necessarily share Lorca's ideal vision of male homosexuality. He sees, reflected in Whitman, the vision of male relationships that he longs for, and searches to recreate.

> Ni solo un momento, Viejo hermoso Walt Whitman,
> he dejado a ver tu barba llena de mariposas,
> ni tus hombros de pana gastados por la luna,
> ni tus muslos de Apolo virginal (220).
>
> Not for a moment, Walt Whitman, lovely old man,
> have I failed to see your beard full of butterflies,
> nor your corduroy shoulders frayed by the moon,
> nor your thighs as pure as Apollo's (159).

Whitman is physically described in masculine terms. He has a full beard, worn shoulders, and virginal thighs. His image is that of the workingman's masculinity. Apollo is invoked as a representative of a pure, almost virginal, homosexual identity (Binding qtd in Nandorfy 290). These two figures serve as the principal models for Lorca's ideal homosexuality: both are strong figures of intellectualism and western culture. The model of homosexual identity created by invoking them erases the effeminacy that categorizes one homosexual stereotype.

Whitman not only embodies the masculine male love that Lorca wishes to promote, but Lorca also uses him as a countertype to the type of homosexuality that Lorca did not endorse. The image of homosexuality that Lorca wishes to discredit bears a striking resemblance to the "fairy" of the New York gay subculture. The "fairy" was a gay man who played the part of women, not only sexually, but in the public sphere as well: socializing with the "normal" men, participating in their own "feminine" culture, and soliciting sex. The gay subculture was remarkably accepted

and a fairly common part of the life of working-class men (Chauncey 45). The interactions between these "normal" men and the "womanly" fairies developed a nightlife in which the two groups interacted and often participated in sexualized ways. The "fairy's" female role-playing "allowed men to interact with [fairies] as if they *were* women, even though all parties understood that anatomically they were males" (Chauncey 56).

The "fairies" were a visible part of New York's gay culture, and it is against them, or rather their social role, that Lorca reacts so negatively. He employs the figure of Whitman, using him as an example of "male" homosexuality, to speak out against the "fairy" stereotype.

> enemigo del sátiro,
> enemigo de la vid,
> y amante de los cuerpos bajo la burla tela (220).
>
> enemy of the satyr,
> enemy of the vine,
> and lover of bodies beneath rough cloth (159).

In Lorca's verse, Whitman seems to be the bard who speaks against the hedonism and effeminacy that categorized a visible part of the gay scene in New York and other big cities. Lorca identifies these qualities as being cultivated by cities, the product of the corrupt metropolis he sees around him. This connection is exposed when he lashes out, using derogatory terms, against homosexual types, like "fairies":

> Faeries de Norteamérica,
> Pajaros de la Habana,
> Jotos de Méjico.
> Sarasas de Cádiz,
> Apios de Sevilla,
> Cancos de Madrid,
> Floras de Alicante,
> Adelaidas de Portugal (223).

Fairies of North America,
Pájaros of Havana,
Jotos of Mexico.
Sarasas of Cádiz,
Apios of Seville,
Cancos of Madrid,
Floras of Alicante,
Adelaidas of Portugal (163,165).

This passage has lead to the interpretation of "Oda a Walt Whitman" as an anti-homosexual poem, and perhaps the poet intended it to be misinterpreted that way (Walsh 257). Yet the poem is more complex in its understanding of homosexuality, as Lorca seems to link these homosexual types with the cities they come from, and aligns Whitman as an ally in fighting against the homosexuality developed in those cities. He locates Whitman outside the city, the image of a "lover of bodies beneath rough cloth" serves to suggest both a masculine object of desire and a rural setting for this love.

Lorca blames the effeminate gays for the suffering of those who he sees as Whitman's heirs, and is particularly frustrated by the use of Whitman's name to represent the gay subculture he disapproves of. "For Lorca, the injustice is that a panoptic sexual category has been manufactured to swallow Whitman as well as those he would notice to be slithering, loathsome subtypes of the city" (Walsh 262).
He describes that in claiming Whitman as a figure of their own subculture, the gay men of the metropolis, or rather the "fairies," are subsequently spoiling all that he stands for and values.

¡También ése! ¡También! Dedos teñidos
apuntan a la orilla de tu sueño
cuando el amigo come tu manzana
con un leve sabor de gasolina

y el sol canta por los ombligos
de los muchachos que juegan bajo los puentes (221).

He's one, too! That's right! Stained fingers
point to the shore of your dream. When a friend eats your apple
with a slight taste of gasoline
and the sun sings in the navels
of boys who play under bridges (161).

These lines seem to be a protective gesture, as though Lorca worries that his project of revalorizing a masculine vision of homosexuality will be spoiled by the identification between "fairies" and Whitman. Lorca describes, then, the "fairy" in terms of the corrupting, industrial influence of the city. The "fairy" is associated with "gasolina" and "dedos teñidos." While Lorca's ideal image of homosexuality is associated with images like "sol," "canta," "ombligos," and "muchachos que juegan." Lorca's attempt to polarize his reader's vision of homosexual types is certainly clear. The apple, which may recall for the reader the biblical apple, is tainted by gasoline, and the shore of Whitman's dream no longer holds the promise of masculine love for those like Lorca.

Lorca's attack against those who identify with the "fairy" image of male homosexuality is vicious, but does more than to only condemn homosexuality. Lorca distinguishes between those who he condemns and those he does not:

ni contra los hombres de mirada verde
que aman al hombre y queman sus labios en silencio.
Pero sí contra vosotros, maricas de las ciudades,
de carne tumefacta y pensamiento inmundo (222-223).

nor against the men with that green look in their eyes
who love other men and burn their lips in silence.
But yes against you, urban faggots,
tumescent flesh and unclean thoughts (163).

The narrative voice seems to sympathize with those men with the "mirada verde," as though he too had experienced this. In Lorca's verse, Whitman becomes a figure who glorifies the ambiguous "pure love" between men that appeared in the Victorian age. The Metropolis, however, home to a gay stereotype that threatens Lorca, has tried to usurp his idol and taint him. The figure of the homosexual, and his reformation as hyper-masculine, serve to combat the Spanish conception of homosexuality as the cause of Spain's fall as a powerful nation. Though Lorca still seems to blame the effeminacy of the urban homosexuals, he also blames the metropolis that forms this community.

III. Constructing Masculine Body and Condemning Female Sexuality in *The Waste Land*

While Lorca constructed his version of the masculine around a defense of homosexual love, in Eliot's construction of the masculine it is hard not to notice the ways that his construction of masculinity also seems to engage themes of homoeroticism. As discussed before, *The Waste Land* is concerned with bodies and the dead, presumably the young men who died in World War I. The concern with male bodies, the de-valorization of the feminine, and the invocation of wartime constructions of male friendship combine to create a homoerotic discourse within the text, whether Eliot had intended it or not.

The discussion of bodies is centered on mourning the dead. As Eliot tenderly describes Phlebas and "the other drowned young men," his speakers "seem to wish to *become* them as well as to touch and possess them" (Lamos 29). The speaker's

careful attention to their bodies, "A current under sea / Picked his bones in whispers. As he rose and fell," seems tender and links the speaker intimately to the corpse (lns 15-16). Sarah Cole, in her discussion of the construction of male friendship during World War I, explains that the body, especially the body of the injured soldier, becomes a site of union for his comrades. "If the physical body effects a union among these men, it is a tragic union in dismemberment, a form of mutual dependence and shared incapacity" (165). In the body of the dead or wounded soldier, his peers are united as if all wounded themselves. The bodies of *The Waste Land* can take on this same significance, signifying not only the incapacity of the wounded individual but even of "the body politic in a wider sense" functioning as "a form of cultural adjustment," to conceptions of identity, national and personal, and the masculine (Cole 189).

Understanding the body as a place of 'union' for World War I soldiers post-war, as well as a site of comfort for them during the war, adds homoerotic meaning to the text. Although in the ideology of the era, "the intimate relations between men [were] imbued with a religious ethos, and comradeship absorbs the transcendence traditionally associated with Christian self-sacrifice and patriotic duty," in reality they functioned more intimately than society might have intended (Cole 141). War was supposed to reinforce masculine values and isolate men from immoral behaviors. During the war, however, venereal disease rates increased as men encountered women outside constricted social settings. Men also had more intimate contact with other men than might have been possible otherwise. The war normalized male-male interactions, ridiculing the idea that war "would stop men from noticing the bodies of

other men, when military life throws soldiers together intimately day and night" (Phillips 27).

Yet in Eliot's poetry, the dead men are eroticized as well as mourned. Even the dead man, Stetson, with whom he speaks, as though with a lost war comrade, at the end of "The Burial of the Dead" section, is a part of the marching dead throng. Eliot's narrator also notes the "White bodies naked on the low damp ground/ And bones cast in a little low dry garret" (lns 193-194). By describing the bodies as 'white' and 'naked', the speaker seems to pay a lot of attention to them, protesting that their resting spot is the ground. This tone is tender, and makes the masculine body of the soldier vulnerable. The narrator pays little or no attention to the men of the poem who are not dead, like the "My cousin" from "Burial of the Dead" or "Albert," Lil's husband.

This contradiction, between the overt and tender attention to the bodies of the dead and the narrator's inattention to the live men of the poem, can be understood based on the constructions of same-sex interactions of the era. The early-twentieth-century defined peace and the love of men as womanly, yet war "provided many opportunities to view male nakedness" and provided the need for supportive and intimate male-male relationships. These relationships provided "comfort not only" to those "aware of their homoerotic interest, but also [to] quite a few other soldiers—no matter what their sexual orientation" (Phillips 55). By eroticizing the dead, Eliot erases concerns about gender deviation through a love for men: eroticizing dead soldiers does not threaten normative social expectations with homosexual activity. Phillips discusses the way that war has been used as a "sadomasochistic machine" to

present homoerotic desire. Just as war presents the possibilities of intimate male-male interactions, the deaths of soldiers remove the possibility of lasting relationships or the fulfillment of erotic desire (Phillips 61). War, and more explicitly death, functions in a similar way in *The Waste Land*. Indeed, it is the same literary devices that permit Eliot to use homoerotic registers as to deny them: namely by intertwining of the mourner and the corpse and by eroticizing of the dead (Lamos 24).

The subtle eroticization of young men in the poem is more telling when read against the portrayal of women within the poem. While living men are ignored and dead men are eroticized, women and their sexuality are portrayed as repulsive and linked closely with tropes of violence. Male-male intimacy is privileged, through this comparison, which links female sexuality with the senseless violence of war. The poem's second section, "A Game of Chess," showcases the poem's vision of the woman. She is at once portrayed as frigid and as hysterical, both Freudian conceptions of female sexuality. She is first described as cold, a frigid monarch, "The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne" (ln 77). She is surrounded by luxuries, yet seems not to notice them. One of the paintings displays the rape of Philomel, from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, described by the narrator:

> The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
> So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
> Filled all the desert with inviolable voice (lns 99-101).

Female sexuality is portrayed as inaccessible, and sexual acts become something taken rather than given. By describing a rape at the beginning of the section of the poem that deals most directly with women, the poet seems to link inextricably female sexuality with a mixture of violence and resistance.

The rape of Philomel is a prelude to the sexual encounter portrayed in "The Fire Sermon." Tiresias, the narrator for this section, though blind, describes the scene. The young man is described as "One of the low on whom assurance sits/ As a silk hat on a Bradford millionaire" (lns 233-234). And, as the meal ends, he:

> 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 (lns 237-242).

The woman has no access to passion or sexuality, and her inability to either consent to a sexual act or to reject him converts the man into a sexual monster. The encounter criticizes what Eliot seems to feel is a rising trend in society. The "Bradford Millionaire" refers to those who became very wealthy profiting from the war, and in a certain light, profited from the deaths of so many. This new class, developed after the war, represents the ways in which modern society no longer appreciates the values that Eliot sees in "Tradition."

What Tiresias "sees" is a world in which female inability to be sexual has combined with male arrogance to convert both figures into beasts. The woman seems sick, unable to even identify what has just occurred. She thinks: "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over" (ln 252). The world in which these characters act is one in which sexuality has become a meaningless act. It seems as though only the blind observer, Tiresias, is able to register the violence of what has occurred. This act is stripped of its categorization as violent. These lines connect the sexual violence of the scene with the violence of the war. The "Bradford Millionaire" becomes the focal point of both these acts of violence. He represents the new group of people who

become powerful after the world war. With this group in charge, Eliot's lines seem to wonder, what sort of actions will be justified as profitable?

The classification of female sexuality with disease and violence helps to formulate reminiscence between interactions with a woman and warfare. From the beginning of the section, the woman is described as sitting on her "burnished throne," which places her in the position of power, as though she were the king or queen ordering her troops to war. In the seemingly intimate dressing-room conversation that follows, the narrator seems to be transposed back to his time in war. The woman speaks to him:

> 'My nerves are bad to-night. Yes, bad. Stay with me.
> 'Speak to me, why do you never speak. Speak.
> 'What are you thinking of? What thinking? What?
> 'I never know what you are thinking. Think'
> I think we are in rats' alley
> Where the dead men lost their bones (lns 11-16).

The woman begs to know what the narrator is thinking. Her questions are hysterical, seeming to require from the narrator an answer that will comfort her. They, however, seem to prompt a war flashback for the narrator. She, and her dressing room, reminds him of the places in which so many men lost their lives. The interaction for him is violent and damaging enough to recall the massive loss of life seen in the war. In a sense, considering the mourner/corpse equation developed throughout the poem, the woman becomes responsible herself for the violence of the war. Considering the ideology promoted by governments emphasizing the family as the cornerstone of the nation, and in part, in the defense of which the war was fought, heterosexual relations did seem in part responsible. In remembering lost war comrades, he contrasts the

bond of male-male intimacy with the "confines of the family and its cultural and political authority" (Cole 21).

The poem goes on to describe the inability of women, standing in for all those who did not participate in warfare, to understand the experience of war itself.

> 'Do
> 'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember
> 'Nothing?'
> I remember
> Those are pearls that were his eyes.
> 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?' (lns 121-126).

The woman mistakenly conflates his inability to express his thoughts, his vivid memories of war, with the lack of thoughts. The narrator remembers the war, but cannot express it to her. His memories, "Those pearls that were his eyes," transpose the image on her, transforming the woman into both cause and product of the violence. This further separates the woman, and family, from the experiences of war and of the privileged intimacy that was developed during that experience.

The relationship between violence and female sexuality is further explored through the conversation, taking place in a pub, which establishes the separation between sex and sexuality for women.

> He's been in the army four years, he wants a good time,
> And if you don't give it to him, there's others will, I said (lns 148-149).

The husband's sexual needs are seen as a part of the family arrangement, chores that need to be filled as part of the cultural and political authority of the family within society. To refuse these sexual advances is to destroy the cultural institution of the family.

The women similarly misunderstand Albert, the husband's, needs. There is an implication that he does not need female sexual intimacy, which ends in violence, but rather the male intimacy of forged in war. Throughout the conversation between the two women, the bartender interjects: "HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME," as the bar closes (lns 141, 152, 165, 177, 178). However, like many of the references in *The Waste Land* this reference is also transformed, from the ordinary function of closing time to "perfunctory and brutal sexuality: it means that time is catching up with Lil, in the form of dentures and decay, and rushing her culture to apocalypse" (Ellmann 103).

Jewel Spears Brooker, in her work on Eliot and sexuality, proposes that these portrayals of violent female sexuality are derived, against the author's intentions, from what she calls "living material," or rather Eliot's own life experience. She attempts to link the violent female sexuality of "A Game of Chess" to Vivienne Eliot's medical disorder "which caused profuse vaginal bleeding," a condition that must have had a strong effect on Eliot's view of female sexuality (Brooker 137). She suggests that this disorder created, for Eliot, associations between female sexuality and "violence, with pollution and with contagion" (Brooker 138). Vivienne also suffered from "problems fairly or unfairly associated with female sexuality, problems such as 'nerves' and hysteria" (Brooker 137). This biographical information allows the reader to place Vivienne in the "burnished throne," and to place Eliot himself in the role of the narrator who seeks male intimacy and understanding.

Yet Eliot's own critical work developed the theory of "Impersonality" which asserted that good poetry was that which denied the personal identity of the poet,

submerging him within the cannon of tradition. The poem itself, according to this theory, should depersonalize "the poet rather than confirming his identity" (Ellmann 4). One of the purposes of this theory was to shield "the poet from the prying forms of criticism" like psychology that would peg the poet's person to his work (Ellmann 5). The two sides, biographical and the theory of the impersonal are in dialogue throughout the poem, forming the mixture of citations and personal experience that we see here. Louis Menand points to the coming together of these two parts in the author's self-classification "with the diseased characters of his own work," betraying fears that although the state of *The Waste Land*'s characters may be representative of a social reality, he suspects it "is only the symptom of a private disorder" (Menand 90). Menand links this fear to the reflection of degeneration that appears in the poem. As the poet takes on a hallucinatory tone to speak about the Waste Land he sees around him, he in fact reflects it back on the reader, making private fears a general reality once more (Menand 90).

Chapter Three:
Infertility and the Inability to Reproduce the World

An examination of the way that women and men appear so disconnected in the modern metropolis reveals further anxieties about reproduction in the modern world. If men and women cannot even have a conversation, as Eliot's descriptions show, how can they create a family? And, how can a morally responsible society be reproduced, the poets wonder, without the strong institution of the family? As Lorca and Eliot examine the metropolis as future of humankind, each wonders how society will be able to renew itself.

I. Infertility as a Moral Problem in the Metropolis

In a discussion of the women of *The Waste Land*, the question of the general inability, or refusal, to reproduce must be examined. *The Waste Land* represents fertility as impossible in the world that the narrator sees around him. Reproduction becomes problematic because, in the text, it seems that nothing positive can be produced there. In Eliot's view, the Waste Land of modernity forbids reproduction on moral grounds. To classify this issue as a moral imperative recalls the logic of nativist modernism. As a movement, it valued national identity as an inherited trait, accessible to those who were not American by heritage through marriage into the American family. The American family became, at least in the national imagination, an institution constantly threatened by invaders in search of access to American identity (Michaels 8). Michaels identifies several strategies employed by writers of this time to protect the family from these invaders, like homosexuality and incest.

However, "the unenforceability of the incestuous imperative makes the technology of biological reproduction simultaneously the technology of miscegenated contamination. Thus one alternative to incest…is sterility" (Michaels 12).

The question of reproduction was not only an issue of maintaining blood purity it also became a logistical issue in the face of the deaths of millions of young men in the Great War. Many men did not return from the war, yet those who did also faced the threat of impotence. Men returning from WWI faced the possibility of "sexual impotence—an often unspoken yet crucial element in the conception of war debility" (Cole 189). Many young men had died, more returned and faced impotency. To many it seemed that the Great War was a "breeding disaster for the white race…it had (like immigration) 'prevented millions more from being born or conceived'" (Stoddard qtd. in Michaels 29). This further threatened American identity, as it seemed to those who subscribed to the theories of nativist modernism that the Nordic races were committing "racial suicide," ceding control of the country and the future to other racial groups (Michaels 12).

The Waste Land is very concerned with the dead of the war. When reading the first section of the poem, the narrator's comment that "death had undone so many," reminds the reader of the war-dead who are mourned in the rest of the poem (ln 62). If death has undone so many, who is left to form families? The men who fell in the Great War lost their abilities to form families and to age. In "Death By Water," the narrator meditates on the lost youth of Phlebas, "He passed the stages of his age and youth / Entering the whirlpool" (lns 317-318). Phlebas ages without living, his opportunities to reproduce and participate in life have passed. And, to make the

question more tragic for the narrator, Phlebas died when he was young: "once handsome and tall as you" (ln 321). Phlebas' death is constructed as a threat against the reader, just as the body of the reader was threatened in the beginning of the poem. The speaker seems to suggest that the question of fertility should be an urgent one for the reader.

The Waste Land's assertion that productive procreation is impossible in the modern world occurs as procreation becomes loveless and dangerous. This is first recalled to the reader in the bar scene in "A Game of Chess." Sex, for Lil, becomes a chore, "he wants a good time," with the dangerous consequence of pregnancy (ln 148). Lil explains that she cannot afford to have children.

> It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said.
> (She's had five already, and nearly died of young George.)
> The chemist said it would be alright, but I've never been the same (lns 159-161).

Lil has no choice but to have sex with her husband, but another pregnancy seems to threaten her own life. Pregnancy is converted from a life-giving process to a life-taking one. Either Lil or her child may die as a consequence of sex, transforming it too into a tragic event. It seems, also, that any child she might bear would be tainted by the effect it had on its mother. There is no possibility of innocence, as there seems to be no safe choice presented to her. Lil's companion asks her: "What you get married for if you don't want children?" (ln 164). This question threatens the institution of the family itself: if the world is a place that necessitates sterility, the social constructions in place no longer function to adequately govern society.

Not only is human procreation made impossible in *The Waste Land*; the land itself is barren. The section "What the Thunder Said" defines the land as being

incapable of supporting life. "Here is no water but only rock / Rock and no water and the sandy road" (lns 331-332). The landscape is defined by the absence of water, a life giving substance. The land itself, dry, barren, is unable to support life. This, too, renders the existence of the metropolis unnatural. As the question of fertility is turned to the land it links the health of the land to the human condition that rests upon it: "If there were water we should stop and drink / Amongst the rock one cannot stop of think" (lns 334-335). It seems that the land itself is repulsed by humanity. A symbiotic relationship develops: the land refuses, or is unable, to support life, yet humanity seems unable to create those conditions either.

The narrator describes a storm approaching the dry land, yet it too is impotent, and brings a "dry sterile thunder without rain" (ln 342). And the narrator begins to imagine, as though hallucinatory, the coming of rain.

> If there were the sound of water only
> Not the cicada
> And dry grass singing
> But the sound of water over a rock
> Where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees
> Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop
> But there is no water (lns 353-358).

The narrator imagines a world, populated by trees and animals, in which reproduction was possible. It seems implied that the hallucinatory thoughts of water are tied to the same spiritual dryness, and are tied to a physical thirst for both.

The two, the fertility of the land and the fertility of humanity, physical and spiritual, seem to be linked. After the narrator imagines a land in which there is water, he seems to also imagine questions of human fertility.

> What is that sound high in the air
> Murmur of maternal lamentation.

> Who are those hooded hordes swarming
> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth (lns 366-369).

The hordes recall to the reader the hordes of the dead that marched over London Bridge. These hordes too are the hordes of the war-dead, and the maternal lamentation is the cries of their mothers' upon the deaths of a seemingly endless number of sons. The poem questions: in the face of the death of so many sons, how are *more* sons to be reproduced? The poem seems to answer itself only a few lines later:

> And bats with baby faces in the violet light
> Whistled, and beat their wings
> And drawled head downward toward a blackened wall
> And upside down in air were towers
> Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
> And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells (lns 379-385).

The poem identifies the next generation, seemingly born out of necessity post-War, as mutants, bats with baby faces. They are not the beautiful fallen soldiers, but mutant offspring who belong to a spiritually dry world. These new children cannot take the place of Western Europe's fallen sons who are still remembered in the "tolling reminiscent bells," and "voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells." Reproduction will not solve the issues of spiritual dryness, but only forge a race of monsters. The empty cisterns and wells also recall the sentiment that sterility and impotence were felt to be postwar exhaustion, as though humanity has been eaten up by the war, and cannot or sees no reason to reproduce itself (Michaels 95).

II. Loss of Interest in Reproduction and the Metropolis

Whereas in *The Waste Land*, Eliot and his narrators present a world which is not fit to support new life, Federico García Lorca views infertility and lack of interest in reproduction as part of the reason for the poor state of the world. Eliot's poem dissuades the inhabitants of the modern world from reproducing, asserting that the world is no place for children. Lorca, on the other hand, envisions reproduction and a return to a child-like state among all humans as the solution for the ills he sees around him.

For Lorca, the world's problems are a byproduct of the disruption of the natural lifecycle. As we saw in the previous chapter, Lorca brings Andalusian tradition and symbols to New York and uses them as heuristic to explain this foreign place. This includes the traditional danza de la muerte, to which the poem by the same name is dedicated. This tradition, the dance of death, represents an equalizing force in which peasant and king are rendered equal in their appearance before death. New York, however, thwarts this cycle and when death appears, it is not as an equalizing force.

> ¡Que no baile el Papa!
> ¡ Que no baile el Papa!
> Ni el Rey;
> ni el millonario de dientes azules
> ni las bailarinas secas de las catedrales ("Danza de la muerte" 141).
>
> But don't let the Pope dance!
> No,
> Don't let the Pope dance!
> Nor the King,
> nor the Millionaire with blue teeth
> nor the barren dancers of the cathedrals ("Dance of Death" 45).

The supposedly equal life cycle has been thwarted, protecting the wealthy and powerful from the equalizing force of death. They are protected by unnatural means,

and thereby loose access to the natural world. The "bailarinas secas," too interrupt the natural process of fertility. These young women are described as barren, and are linked to the church, implicating it in their inability to grow new life. They have been utterly torn from the cyclical pattern of life, and therefore are rendered unable to produce new life.

This same theme appears elsewhere throughout the book, emphasizing the way that capitalism and the metropolis have conspired to work against humanity.

> No, que no desemboca. Agua fija en un punto,
> respirando con todos sus violines sin cuerdas
> en la escala de las heridas y los edificios deshabitados.
> ¡Agua que no desemboca! ("Niña ahogada en un pozo (Granada y Newburgh)" 179).
>
> No, that never reaches the sea. Water fixed in one place,
> breathing with all its unstrung violins
> on the musical scale of wounds and deserted buildings
> Water that never reaches the sea! ("Little Girl Drowned in the Well (Granada and Newburgh)" 96).

These lines are populated with unnatural images: unstrung violins, breathing violins, a musical scale of wounds, and static water. It is in this setting that the little girl drowns in the well. The well, manmade to unnaturally keep water still, serves as her grave. Lorca links the water's inability to move with the child's inability to grow.

The placement of this poem in the collection is significant. It occurs in the section when the poet leaves the city to go to Vermont. Yet, as this poem shows us, he finds the same sorts of troubling corruption there as he did in New York. Even in Vermont, the supposed escape from the city, the child has still lost her life, she has still been disconnected from the life cycle, and she will never grow up and produce children.

Other than the girl's loss of life, the disconnection from nature has other consequences that affect fertility. Because they are disconnected from nature, capitalism and life in the modern metropolis serve to intervene in the process of reproduction. In "Rey de Harlem," "King of Harlem," the child comes to be replaced by materialism itself:

> Las muchachas americanas
> llevaban niños y monedas en el vientre
> y los muchachos de desmayaban en la cruz del desperezo (128).
>
> American girls
> were carrying babies and coins in their wombs,
> and the boys stretched their limbs and fainted on the cross (27).

The American women carry both children and money in their wombs, giving birth to financial success as often as to children. This also suggests that they care as much for the financial gain as they would for a child; money takes its place. It seems that Lorca navigates an interesting middle ground between blaming capitalism and blaming greed itself. He seems to see in capitalism, especially the capitalism he saw in America's growing industrialization, and the dehumanizing effect it has on its people.

To note that this poem appears in the book's section "Los Negros," recalls Lorca's feelings about race relations. He saw Harlem as a surviving pocket of humanity, oppressed as it was, among the dehumanized city. His commentaries on money, then, should be aligned with this discourse concerned with the ways in which greed and capitalism allow humans to turn each other into sub-humans. And, in these lines, attribute to their own children a monetary value. While women are criticized for valuing money and offspring equally, the men are also portrayed as failing in their

duties. He holds them to Christ's standards, and asks that they withstand their daily trails as Christ did on the cross. They fail to live up to his expectations.

The world that he saw around him was ignorant to the importance of fertility. It seems that there is no pressing need for Americans to reproduce and give birth to innocence. It disturbs Lorca that in this world:

> No importa que cada minuto
> un niño nuevo agite sus ramitos de venas ("Navidad en Hudson" 150).

> It doesn't matter that every minute
> a newborn child waves the little branches of its veins. ("Christmas on the Hudson" 61).

Something that to Lorca seems so important and miraculous has been forgotten completely in the world of New York. He finds the values of the city completely foreign, so much so that he cannot even begin to understand it. The miracle of life, and the positive power he attributes it, are completely lost on the modern world.

It is humanity's ability to forget these miraculous events that worries Lorca. He feels that the people of New York, the people he feels may represent humanity's future, are being negligent both to themselves and their offspring. He invokes Adam and Eve to give his worries roots in the past and to give his worries a biblical imperative.

> Dejarme pasar la puerta
> donde Eva come hormigas
> y Adán fecunda peces deslumbrados ("Poema doble del lago eden" 166).

> Let me pass trough the arch
> where Eve devours ants
> and Adam impregnates the dazzling fish ("Double Poem of Lake Eden" 77).

These lines question the myth of Adam and Eve as humanity's founders while also generalizing the question of fertility. The figures of Adam and Eve are criticized as

the forbearers of the 'future' that Lorca sees before him. Somehow they seem to have been irresponsible in the inheritance they left human kind. If Adam and Eve are the parents of humanity, and New York, is what humanity has grown into, Lorca wishes to hold them accountable for what he sees as bad inheritance. Eve has no maternal instincts and Adam wastes his sexual instincts on the beauty of fish.

The attention of human kind has been turned away from the creation of children, yet for Lorca it seems that children and their unique mindset are the only way to free human kind from the evils of the metropolis. Even though he proclaims that the age of childhood is over "Sí, tu niñez: ya fábula de fuentes," ("Tu infancia en Menton" 114)"Yes, your childhood: now a fable of fountains," ("Your Childhood in Menton" 15), it is in childhood that he sees redemption from the metropolis. The sense of nostalgia, created by poems in which he yearns for a time when he was innocent is not only nostalgia for Andalusia, but nostalgia for a childlike knowledge of the world.

> Desván donde el polvo viejo congrega estatuas y musgos.
> Cajas que guardan silencio de cangrejos devorados.
> En el sitio donde el sueño tropezaba con su realidad.
> Allí mis pequeños ojos ("1910 (Intermedio)" 112).
>
> Attic where the ancient dust assembles statues and moss.
> Boxes that keep the silence of devoured crabs.
> In the place where the dream was colliding with its reality.
> My little eyes are there ("1910 (Intermezzo)" 7).

The eyes of a child are able to see the mystery in what seems ordinary to the adult world. Lorca implies that in this child-like vision, things reveal their true nature. Though an adult would never say that a box could keep silence, the child sees the ways in which the box may guard knowledge. The "sueño," which we have seen

before as a positive symbol of knowledge, encounters reality within the mind of the child. "Sueño," for them, is not subconscious, but the real way in which they see the world, a vision that Lorca highly admires.

The value of this vision is presented in Lorca's portrayal of his own poetic vision. He believes that he will have to return to childhood himself, as should the rest of humankind in order to regain these abilities:

> Pero yo me iré al primer paisaje
> de choques, líquidos y rumores
> que trasmina al niño recién nacido
> y donde toda superficie es evitada,
> para entender lo que busco tendrá su blanco de alegría
> cuando yo vuele mezclando con el amor y las arenas ("Cielo vivo" 168).
>
> But I'll go to the first landscape
> of shocks, fluids and murmurs
> that seep into a new born child,
> and where all surfaces are avoided,
> so I'll know that my search has a joyful target
> when I'm flying, jumbled with love and sandstorms ("Living Sky" 81).

He wishes to return to birth itself. It is there, he believes, that all of the superficial and unnecessary parts of life disappear and true understanding is possible. If human kind could maintain that newborn world-view, they could return to a state of purity. He seems to regard the biological aspects of birth as an integral part of this innocence. The "choques, liquidos y rumores" of the birth canal represent a kind of knowledge passed from the mother to the child. Lorca attributes power to this natural process, it is an intimate part of the life cycle he worries about preserving. He himself yearns for that natural knowledge, which acts as a guiding force throughout life. A recuperation of this knowledge, he suggests, would right the failings of the modern city. The birth metaphor comes to signify Lorca's own revelation, in which he seems to have

reconnected with the innocence that he so desires. It is this revelation that guides him through "el amor y las arenas," or rather, the difficult parts of life.

Lorca uses the metaphor of birth to explain his own return to insight, yet he also uses the figure of children as the redemptive figure for all of mankind. In "Oda a Walt Whitman," "Ode to Walt Whitman," it is the figure of the black child who stands over Whitman's grave and heralds a new age, one in which Whitman's dream can finally be fulfilled.

> y un niño negro anuncie a los blancos del oro
> la llegada del reino de la espiga (224).
>
> And a black child to inform the gold-craving whites
> that the kingdom of grain has arrived. (165).

The child serves, in "Cielo vivo," "Living Sky," to give an opportunity for insight and redemption. It is no wonder, then, that Lorca utilizes the child to represent humanity's salvation from the hell he sees in New York. Lorca opposes the black-child, representing humility and innocence, against the gold-craving whites of New York, who represent the corrupting influence of capitalism and the city. He transforms the gold, so valued by New York, into the gold of wheat, a life giving food source. And though these lines seem to bury Whitman beneath the soil by the banks of the Hudson, they keep alive his "visionary spirit, the desire for a future where gold is not a commodity but the radiant foundation for a new order" (Nandorfy 161). Lorca sees in this new order the possibility for humanity's rebirth, re-humanizing the population of the city and guiding them in an entirely different direction.

Chapter Four:
Christianity and the (Im)possibility of Redemption in the Modern Metropolis

Since the world depicted in *The Waste Land* and in *Poeta en Nueva York* was one that made human reproduction problematic, threatening the end of humanity, a reader of these texts must also examine the way that their authors saw religion as possible, or impossible, in the modern world. Both authors came from Christian backgrounds; Eliot from a Unitarian upbringing and Lorca from a Catholic family and the Catholic influence on Spanish culture, yet each strayed from his origins both in their work and in their biographies.

As a young man, Eliot defied any sort of religious formation and instead insisted the importance of aestheticism for aestheticisms' sake. This "apolitical aesthetic revolution" would separate art from other types of belief, including pulling art away from a religious message (Asher 160). These aesthetic beliefs were maintained in much of his early criticism. "Poetry and religion are in Eliot's opinion sovereign and autonomous in their different spheres; and they should be kept apart" (Smidt 51). Yet, in 1927 he converted to the Anglican Church, a conversion, revealed in 1928, that created questions about the role of religion in his work among Eliot scholars. For the purposes of this study too, Eliot's conversion is problematic. *The Waste Land* was published in 1922, situating it precariously between Eliot's period of aesthetic separation from belief and his conversion. Some have suggested that the work represents the final hours of darkness before his conversion.

Poeta en Nueva York presents equally interesting issues regarding the poet's personal beliefs and their expression in his work. From an early age Lorca was

concerned with religious issues, and explored how Catholicism interlocked with personal identity in his early work (Southworth 129). The relationship between the Church, the figures of Catholicism and the individual are important to understanding his discussions of identity and of society. Andalusia and the unique culture of that region are inescapable in Lorca's poetry, bringing to any interpretation of his work questions of the unique religious culture of the region. Though Lorca's work is certainly anticlerical and rejects many parts of Catholicism, he does not seem to abandon the hope of redemption entirely.

Despite the changing nature of each author's personal beliefs, in these works both authors describe what they see as the impossibility of belief in the modern metropolis. Their conceptions of the religious, deriving either from a Christian background or a Catholic one, and the spiritual, particularly Lorca's belief in a higher power often represented through nature, are different. Yet, both fill their work with religious references, predominantly Christian ones. Each structures the work based on fundamental Christian myths. *The Waste Land*'s structure is based on the Grail Myth. Lorca uses the figure of the prophet and bard, or el cantor, and uses the structure of Christ's Calvary to structure his exploration of a world he sees as spiritually deplete.

I. Grail Quest: The Christian Scaffolding of *The Waste Land*

Eliot chose the Grail legend as a structuring element for *The Waste Land*, and cites Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, which may help the reader to understand the significance of the structure of his work. In her book, Weston outlines the origins of the Grail legend, focusing on the relationship between the Christian

version of the myth and what she posits are its folklore roots. The folk roots, later transformed into the Christian Grail romances, are based on a series of themes, though Weston notes that a single recognizable 'prototype' for the Grail myth does not exist (3). The basic plot of the Grail myth involves the figure of the Quester, often a knight, who is sent to help the ailing Fisher King of a wasted and barren land. The Quest for the Grail has as its aim the goal of restoring the King, and therefore the land to health (Weston 21).

Weston's understanding of the myth's origins, and therefore perhaps Eliot's understanding as well, is that the Grail myth consists of a "fragmentary record of the secret ritual of a Fertility cult," preserved in medieval western literature (Weston 66). In taking on Weston's interpretation of the Grail myth, and assuming some of the important imagery and figures from that myth, Eliot assumes not only the significance gained by referencing the myth, but also the myth as a structuring element for his poem. "Myth, in Eliot's terms, becomes a 'way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is modern history'" (Eliot qtd. in Moorman 518). If we consider Weston's vision of the Grail myth as Eliot's way of giving shape to his opinion on the modern city and modern age, we may come to understand the poem as centered on re-vitalizing the fertility, and spiritual fertility, of the Waste Land.

To assume this specific myth as the structure for his poem, however, reveals Eliot's perspective on the role of religion in modernity. Eliot felt that modernity needed a structure to be comprehensible. If he felt, as Ortega y Gasset does that "the masses by definition, neither can nor should direct their own existence, let alone that

of society as a whole, this new development [of the masses] means that we are now undergoing the most profound social crisis which can afflict peoples, nations, or cultures," the need for a structuring element was dire (Ortega y Gasset 3). As *The Waste Land* shows, Eliot proposes religion as that element. As the Grail Quest seeks to restore the Waste Land to fertility, so *The Waste Land* implies that the modern world of the poem is in need of spiritual fertility. What Eliot proposes throughout *The Waste Land* is that the 'futility and anarchy' of modern history need to be combated with ordering principals of Christianity.

In his work, Eliot assumes both the basic structure of the Grail myth and its principal figures. The Grail legend consists of a journey, made by the Quester, a pattern emulated by Eliot in his adoption of the first person narrator and second person addressee. The effect is that the Quester of the Grail narrative becomes the narrator of Eliot's poem. The infamously shifting identity of the first person narrator serves to compliment this function. As the issues faced by the Quester become universalized to all the inhabitants of the Waste Land. The presence of a generalized addressee is reinforced by the reference in line 20, "Son of Man," on which I have commented previously.

Weston directly refers to the infertile land of the Grail myth as a "Waste Land," making Eliot's title an emulation of her work, associating the modern world he saw around him with the wasted land of grail legend. He also ties the poem's structure to the "Tradition" he wishes to create, one related to the Grail romances. The entire poem, then, assumes the role of an account of the quest itself. Weston writes that in one version of the Grail myth, enquiry about the nature of the Grail

"would have resulted in the restoration to fruitfulness of a Waste Land" (12). In light of Eliot's familiarity with this work, *The Waste Land* can be interpreted as that enquiry into the nature of the Grail, albeit in poetic form.

Other references throughout the poem reinforce the constant presence of the Grail myth as an underlying influence on the poem. Weston notes that some of the important symbols of the old Grail myths reappear in the "four suits of the Tarot" (77). This is mirrored back in Eliot's poem through the figure of Madame Sosostris, "with a wicked pack of cards" (ln 46). She, and her cards, are given special significance as she "Is known to be the wisest woman in Europe" (ln 45). Her cards, vestiges of ancient folk knowledge, supply her with power, derived from their relationship with the Grail myth.

Another important figure of the Grail myth appears at the end of the poem. The narrator is transformed into a figure resembling the Fisher King:

> I sat upon the shore
> Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
> Shall I at least set my lands in order? (lns 423-425)

The narrator, who takes on so many identities throughout the poem, here becomes both the Quester and the Fisher King who the Quester must restore to health. Weston notes that the "Fish is a Life symbol of immemorial antiquity, and that the title of Fisher has, from the earliest ages, been associated with Deities who were held to be specially connected with the origin and preservation of life" (125). The King takes on similar meaning, as the restoration of his health is intricately tied to the health of the land itself. The fishing figure of Eliot's poem also wishes to "set his lands in order," signifying the power he exercises over them. In Eliot's hands, however, Weston's

Fisher King also takes on messianic significance, invoking Jesus and the possibility of spiritual rebirth.

The poem itself mirrors the narrative of the Grail Quest toward the end of the poem, which portrays the restoration of the Waste Land, both spiritually and physically. In many versions of the Grail myth, the hero "meets with a strange and terrifying adventure in a mysterious Chapel…fraught with extreme peril," that comes towards the end of the quest (Weston 175). In the last section of Eliot's *Waste Land*, there seems to be a reference to this same adventure:

> There is the empty chapel, only the wind's home.
> It has no winds, and the door swings,
> Dry bones can harm no one.
> Only a cock stood on the rooftree
> Co co rico co co rico
> In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust
> Bringing rain (lns 388-394).

The narrator, playing the role of the Quester, has passed through the adventure involving the chapel. In doing so, he brings rain and restores the Waste Land. These lines, however, also function to compliment Eliot's own commentary on religion in the Waste Land. The chapel is empty, it has lost all vestiges of religious power. The land of his poem, embodied in the metropolis, is devoid of all supreme powers. While Eliot calls for religion to provide order to the modern human experience, he also recognizes that religion is not powerful in the Waste Land, though perhaps it should be.

Eliot re-appropriates the Grail Quest's chapel to discuss his own Waste Land, but suggests a solution to this by returning to the Grail Quest story. The actions of the

Quester/narrator function to quench the spiritual drought as, with the rain, comes a voice from the sky:

> Then spoke the thunder
> DA
> *Datta*: what have we given? (lns 399-401).

By completing the Grail quest, the narrator has opened the doors of spiritual communication once again to humanity. The poem ends with words from the Upanishad, "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. / Shantih shantih shantih," invoking the presence of an unknown spiritual force (lns 432-433). The narrator disappears; the poem ends, suggesting that the spiritual dryness of the Waste Land has been overcome thanks to the adequate performance of the Grail ritual.

II. Christianity and "Tradition" in *The Waste Land*

Eliot's personal conversion from aesthetic agnosticism to the Anglican Church causes problems for Eliot scholars because his personal religious views seem to divide his work in two. Some scholars have decided to consider these two periods of Eliot's work separately. Others, like Kenneth Asher, see Eliot's works as a part of his personal transformation (60). This attempt to directly connect Eliot's personal life with the events depicted in his work seems to be constructed out of a need to make Eliot's body of work a continuous project. *The Waste Land* was published in 1922, and Eliot did not convert until 1927. The two events seem too far apart to be considered "the last dark night" that Asher wishes they would be. However, beginning in 1921 Eliot began to "relate his aesthetic opinions to his main beliefs and

attitudes in other fields" (Smidt 50). That is to say he began to loosen his theory concerning the separation of poetry and belief, suggesting his future conversion.

The 1927 conversion should not be the only landmark by which a reader can judge the influence of Christianity on Eliot's work. Though it may have been during that time that Eliot began to feel spiritually connected to Christianity, it is a careless reading that ignores the roots of Christian thought in his early work. As early as 1919 in his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot defines good poetry as submerged within the literary traditions of the past. His interest in past tradition and the duty of the poet to be submerged within that tradition is also visible in his citation practice as seen in *The Waste Land*. The notes at the back of the book not only attribute references to sources from western Christian tradition, like the Bible and Dante's inferno, but also make reference that the poem's structure is based on the Grail Quest. Though Eliot may not have been a practicing Anglican when he wrote *The Waste Land*, his vested interest in Western Christian literary tradition and use of those references in his work certainly prove that the Christian themes of the book cannot be ignored and that the spiritual search that the book pursues is certainly informed by Christianity.

The Christian nature of the poem's subject is visible from early on, the first citation referenced in the "Notes" section is "Son of Man" (ln 20). This refers to Ezekiel II,i, a reference made without an in-text citation. The lack of citation is significant in that it assumes the reader's familiarity with the original text, the Old Testament. Eliot also assumes an added layer of significance for this line. The "you" addressee, the reader realizes, is the "Son of Man." In the formation of the addressee,

Eliot elevates his discourse to the level of the Bible. He not only gains his place among the canonical writers of western literature, as his theory of "Impersonality" dictates, but he emphasizes the urgency of his anxieties. The scene depicts the narrator showing the Biblical 'Son of Man' the apocalyptical modern world. It seems that humanity has fallen so far from religious belief that their saviors can no longer comprehend the state of modernity.

The same urgency appears in the lines that portray the dead hordes pouring over London Bridge.

> Unreal City,
> Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
> A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
> I had not thought death had undone so many.
> Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
> And each man fixed his eyes before his feet (lns 60-65).

These reference Dante's dead hordes that filled Limbo. These lines describe "the modern megalopolis dwarfing the individual," and yet also re-describe the city "as a realm of death in life by being linked with Dante's Limbo" (Matthiessen 22). To re-inscribe the city as Dante's Limbo is to identify it as a place that has lost all connection to Christianity and all hope of redemption. For Dante limbo was a terrifying afterlife, punishable by this life's sins of ignorance against God. Limbo was for those who were entirely ignorant of Christianity. For Eliot Limbo has risen above ground: it is the state of religious ignorance that all mankind is born into.

Dante's dead appear again throughout the poem and function as a consistent condemnation of mankind to misery. In "What the Thunder Said," they appear out on a barren landscape:

> Who are those hooded hordes swarming

> Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
> Ringed by the flat horizon only
> What is that city over the mountains (lns 367-371)

The hordes of the living dead appear earlier in the poem, but here they take on new significance. As they swarmed over London Bridge they seem unfeeling. But as Asher notes, if Eliot is alluding to Dante's lines: "even Hell would not receive them, / For fear the damned might glory over them," the Waste Land's living dead should be understood as in a state of eternal anguish (Asher 42). In Eliot's hands, this state of anguish has risen above the ground to haunt all of humanity. The living dead have no chance at redemption.

Eliot's assumption that his audience comes primarily from a western Christian background, and his apparent concern about the spiritual drought that he saw in *The Waste Land* seem similar to other anxieties he develops throughout the work to address post-war concerns. As Smidt notes, Eliot was concerned with "the nature of belief, which he finds to have 'been in constant mutation' throughout history." Eliot finds evidence of this both in aesthetic history and the history of Christianity (61). To Eliot, this constant mutation seems to be both healthy and dangerous. He notes later, in *After Strange Gods,* that it is dangerous to describe tradition as "something hostile to all change," but rather that tradition actively participates with the formation of culture over time (18-19). Yet tradition also faces the threat of degradation, of decline in the face of the modern world. As Eliot's "tradition is conceived of as a series of interlocking rituals designed to contain the manifestations of Original Sin," the importance of upholding tradition sets the stakes high for modernity (Asher 42). Those rituals that compose tradition are subjects for potential decay. With this in

mind, the author's concerns about spirituality in *The Waste Land* come from a concern, not so much about Christian belief in itself, but with the decay of the rituals that form his understanding of "Tradition" (Asher 43).

As the discussion is turned from Eliot's personal religious beliefs to his interest in western Christian tradition, the images of spiritual drought are connected with his concerns about the collapse of nineteenth-century cultural values. Just as we have seen him reexamine issues of national identity and masculinity in response to the post-war climate, *The Waste Land* insists on the need for spiritual rebirth. The world that Eliot portrays is one in which sources of comfort or spiritual protection have failed mankind. The forces that are supposed to nourish humanity have literally dried up: "Here is no water but only rock / Rock and no water and the sandy road" (lns 331-332). These lines recall the poem's anxieties about those soldiers lost in WWI, they link the spiritual dryness that plagues the Waste Land with the war itself. The land is unable to provide the soldiers with what they need. Nature itself seems to have rebelled against the very rules that govern it. "But dry sterile thunder without rain" (ln 343). Humanity has lost touch with the "rituals" that help to make sense of the world.

III. Lorca and the Voice of the Calvary Experience

Like Eliot's reliance on the Grail Myth, Lorca's work takes advantage of a Catholic myth to describe his experience in New York. Throughout the book, through the conflation of poet and narrator and the continual presence of the poet as a witness to the atrocities of the world around him, Lorca attempts to use the biblical

experience of Calvary to portray his New York experience. Calvary, as an experience of overwhelming suffering, appeals to Lorca through the personal connection that he felt to Jesus Christ. Though he felt alienated by the God of the Old Testament, who he saw as unforgiving, Lorca felt personally tied to the human figure of Jesus Christ. For him, it was Jesus's experience before the resurrection, his qualities of forgiveness and love, that made Jesus worth emulation and study (Southworth 130). As Lorca's poetic voice assumes this experience to relate his vision of New York, he assumes the same stance of witness and assumes the physical suffering of a prophet: "the speaking role he adopts in this volume as a poet-seer whose visionary gift—like that of Jeremiah… is grounded in suffering" (Harvard 439).

The voice of Christ's human suffering is the one that Lorca assumes to write about New York. The voice itself is also intimately linked with that of *el cantor* or the bard of the people, in the tradition of Virgil, and both function to give a testimonial form to *Poeta en Nueva York*. As in the biblical Calvary, it is on the poet himself that the acts of suffering occur. For example, from the first poem in the collection "Vuelta de paseo," "After a Walk," it is the poet who experiences the violence of the modern metropolis.

> Tropezando con mi rostro distinto de cada día.
> ¡Asesinado por el cielo! (111).
>
> Bumping into my own face, different each day.
> Cut down by the sky! (5).

The city has a transformative power over the poet. From exposure to it, he no longer recognizes himself. The city is responsible for the death of its' citizens, reducing

them to a dehumanized form. The poet himself is subject to this violence, his face, his identity, has been taken by the city.

The use of the testimonial form creates a fascinating relationship between the poet/narrator's interior emotional life and the pain of the world that he sees around him. It seems that "New York serves as an extended metaphor of he poet's tormented self" (Harvard 443).He projects the negativity of his own pain while simultaneously identifying with the injustice that he sees around him, decrying both in the same phrase (Millán 83).

> Yo denuncio a toda la gente
> que ignora la otra mitad,
> la mitad irredimible
> que levanta sus montes de cemento
> donde laten los corazones ("Nueva York (Oficina y Denuncia)" 204)
>
> I denounce everyone
> who ignores the other half,
> the half that can't be redeemed,
> who life their mountains of cement
> where the hearts beat ("New York (Office and Denunciation)" 135)

The poet/narrator cries out against the mechanisms of industrialization, blaming them for crushing what he sees as the disenfranchised half of humanity. Yet, it is also visible here that the poet involves himself with this 'other half,' not only as the cantor of their ills, but also as one of them himself. This voice is reminiscent of the voice used by William Blake, a voice in which "poet and prophet" become "virtually indistinguishable" (Harvard 439).

The poet/narrator takes on the roles of both knowing prophet, sacrificing himself for humanity, and of horrified witness. In "Poema doble del lago eden," "Double Poem of Lake Eden," he introduces himself as a Christ-like figure.

¡Ay voz antigua de mi amor!
¡Ay voz de mi verdad!
¡Ay voz de mi abierto costado, (165).

Ay, my love's voice from before
ay, voice of my truth
ay, voice of my open side, (77).

Lorca assumes the imagery of the Bible of Christ's wounded side, but inserts himself into this archetypal scene. He, the poet/narrator, is suffering for humanity, sacrificing in the same way that Jesus Christ did. In these lines he describes himself as the prophet, the "voz" of human suffering. "Ultimately this pure and tangible quality of suffering is the catalyst that elevates the poet to the status of one who is able to serve as a guide to humanity," the poet himself comes to embody the possibility of redemption (Harvard 442).

Lorca envisions his suffering as el cantor as offering redemptive value, similarly as did Christ's. "Estás aquí bebiendo mi sangre" ("Poema doble del lago eden 165). "Here you are drinking my blood" (Double Poem of Lake Eden" 77). Lorca references the Eucharist, placing the poet/narrator in the same role as Christ himself. The reference, however, does not seem entirely positive. It seems that he feels unable to give the redemption and love offered by Christ, and the recreation of the Eucharist fails in its redemptive powers. The Eucharist appears again in "Aurora," in which it fails as a redemptive ritual because people have lost hope for redemption.

Despite the active role as el cantor that the poet/narrator gains in some poems, in others he remains paralyzed by the sights he witnesses to in New York. Poems like "Amantes asesinados por una perdiz," "Two Lovers Murdered by a Partridge) and "Asesinato (Dos voces de madrugada en Riverside Drive)," "Murder (Two Early

Morning Voices on Riverside Drive," portray the direct experiencing of 'witnessing,' as the poet quotes those around him. These poems, both about murder, place the reader in an uncomfortable position: witnessing the violence of the city, unable to interfere with the text on the page. The poet/narrator expresses his own experience, describing himself as helpless: "yo, poeta sin brazos," ("Paisaje de un multitud que vomita (Anochecer de Coney Island)" 144) "I, poet without arms." ("Landscape of a Vomiting Multitude (Dusk at Coney Island)" 51) To be without arms is to be helpless. He feels unable to assert agency over the world surrounding him.

> Lo sé. Pero yo no he venido a ver el cielo.
> He venido para ver la turbia sangre ("Nueva York (Oficina y Denuncia)" 303).
>
> But I didn't come to see the sky.
> I'm here to see the clouded blood ("New York (Office and Denunciation) 135).

The city offers a violent vision of the world. A vision that the poet/narrator seems to feel he must watch, though it makes him suffer. The dual role of the poet, as both helpless witness and martyr figure of the Calvary, helps to emphasize the importance of Christ's human role for Lorca. He was uninterested in the figure of Christ as a God, but rather in his human example, portrayed in *Poeta en Nueva York* through the helplessness of the 'prophet' figure. Through the poet's suffering in New York, he is able to explore humanity's pain; he is exposed a dead world through what he sees in the new world (Millán, 86).

The end of the book does, however, offer relief as the poet escapes from the terrifying metropolis to Havana, Cuba. The last three poems are based off of musical forms, two on the waltz, and one on the Son. These poems, freeing the poet from the

confines of the city, represent a process of repairing of the natural order of things, so inverted when in the city. It seems that the failed redemptive rituals Lorca invokes in the city are replaced by another hope of redemption, one focused on nature and brought to life through music. The poet seems to direct his listeners, transformed through his assumption of the voice of the prophet into followers, "to keep faith with nature" (Harvard 447).

In these poems, both love and a positive future seem possible. The poet cries: "Te quiero, te quiero, te quiero," ("Pequeño vals vienés" 227), "I love you, I love you, I love you" ("Little Viennese Waltz" 169). Considering the struggle the poet has faced with love, especially visible in "Oda a Walt Whitman," this open declaration reveals the liberation he sees as possible in Havana. The last poem of the collection restores to the poet the agency that he lacks in previous poems.

> Cuando llegue la luna llena iré a Santiago de Cuba,
> iré a Santiago ("Son de negros en Cuba" 235).
>
> As soon as the full moon rises, I'm going to Santiago, Cuba,
> I'm going to Santiago ("Blacks Dancing to Cuban Rhythms" 179).

For the first time in the collection, the poet seems to be able to see a positive future for himself and humanity. He does, after all, gain redemption but it is through a rejection of Catholic rituals and by embracing nature that he does so.

IV. Failure of the Church: Lorca's Cry for "Calor Humano"

Whereas an examination of Eliot's use of religious themes reveals that for him Christianity is tightly bound to a western tradition, Lorca's use of religious themes in *Poeta en Nueva York* reveals the influence that the visual and sensual traditions of Catholicism had over his view of the world. Lorca's family was Catholic and attended

Mass faithfully. It was there that he grew to appreciate not only the religious message of the church itself but also the importance of ritual. His mother taught Lorca and his siblings to "regard the Church as a thing of beauty, independent of its theological function" (Stainton 25). The combination of Lorca's deeply pious upbringing and his mother's insistence on the aesthetic functions of the Church helped develop a complex relationship between Lorca and Catholicism. As the poet came into adolescence, he began to question the Church's doctrines, especially those "closely linked to [his] anxieties about matters of personal identity" (Southworth 129). These questions lead the poet to lose "what he called 'the serene intuition' of his childhood faith" (Stainton 39). Despite his lessened faith, Lorca still identified with the aesthetic and ritual aspects of the Church, continuing to appear in his poetry and plays. As with Eliot's use of Christianity for it's traditional function, Lorca's relationship with the Catholic Church became defined more by his aesthetic relationship to it, rather than through his piety.

Though in his youth in Spain Lorca appreciated the ritual aspect of Catholicism, and connected the figure of Jesus Christ, a figure that he poeticized throughout his career, with hope for humanity. On arriving in New York, however, Lorca's relationship with Catholicism was again challenged. The aspects of Catholicism offered by Christ's figure, redemption and love, did not appear possible in the modern metropolis. Around him, Lorca saw poverty, industrialization, and the mistreatment of the blacks, with whom he empathized: it appeared as though Christ had abandoned humanity entirely. Through Lorca's eyes,

> The modern capitalist city is in thrall not only to physical death but to spiritual death as well: a modern world of rootlessness, hopelessness, without creative

> restlessness, playfulness or imaginativeness. Love and religion have been corrupted; there is worship only of money, where value is reduced to financial terms and the individual no longer counts. There is cruelty and indifference towards all living things (Southworth 138).

The daunting cruelties practiced in the modern city made the image of Christ as a forgiving figure seem impossible, even naive. Faced with the figure of the modern metropolis, Lorca's already troubled conception of the role of Catholicism in the world crumbled. It is this attitude that appears in his New York poems. If, Lorca suggests, the metropolis is the future of mankind, then surely God and Jesus have abandoned humanity.

The anti-religious nature of the city, as it is regarded as inherently unspiritual, is depicted through the corruption of religious acts within the metropolis. The poem "Iglesia Abandonada (Balada de la gran guerra)," "Abandoned Church (Ballad of the Great War)," presents such a reaction to the modern age. In it, he creates opposing images of the son as altar boy and as dead soldier, and employs the voice of the grieving mother to protest against the humanity of the war and the loss of life.

> Yo tenía un hijo.
> Se perdió por los arcos un viernes de todos los muertos (133).
>
> Once I had a Son.
> He was lost in the arches, one Friday, Day of the Dead (35).

The mother's grief forms an effective vessel for Lorca to transmit his horror at the acts committed in modernity. This poem closes the collection's second section, 'Los Negros,' "perhaps because the 1917 US Expeditionary Forces to France could not have failed to include black soldiers" (Southworth 139). Lorca felt deep sympathy for the blacks of Harlem, for the close association he felt between them and the Gypsies of Andalusia. For Lorca, the idea of sending the disenfranchised off to war have

seemed unjust. He channels this sense of injustice towards both the violence of WWI and the social oppression of the blacks. He uses the voice of the dead boy's mother to recall "him as an altar server when a boy, and thus, the imagery of the mass is used to focus her grief and protest" (Southworth 139). Lorca was horrified by war from an early age, and for him World War I was a prime example of the way that modernity permitted cruelty. "The carnage of World War I moved Lorca to denounce patriotism as 'one of humanity's greatest crimes'" (Stainton 4). His invocation of Christianity in a poem protesting the deaths of WWI implies his conviction that a just God would not have permitted these acts. The *Iglesia,* church, has been abandoned, both by the faithful and by God.

The separation of the ecclesiastical, as an earthly construct, and the spiritual, a heavenly one, is a theme that signifies for Lorca the mutual abandonment of humanity and supreme forces. He continues to develop this trope in "Nacimiento de Cristo," "The Birth of Christ." The poem itself is full of images of corrupt and sad daily acts, and the title seems to reinforce that view, suggesting that even Christ's birth would not be spectacular in the Modern world. It would be spiritually empty.

> La nieve de Manhattan empuja los anuncios
> Y lleva gracia pura por las falsas ojivas.
> Sacerdotes idiotas y querubes de pluma
> Van detrás de Lutero por las altas esquinas (161).
>
> The snow of Manhattan blows against billboards
> and carries pure grace through the fake Gothic arches.
> Idiot clergymen and cherubim in feathers
> follow Luther in a line around the high corners (71).

The same forces that blow advertisements bring "pure grace" to the city. That which receives the grace, however, is fake, empty of significance. The priests and cherubs,

figures supposedly connected to spiritual truths do not inspire religious hope. Instead, they follow the figure of the historical Protestant reformer blindly. For Lorca the reference to Luther is especially significant. He felt that Protestantism was overly rational, catering to materialism. "It lacked the ceremonial beauty of the Spanish Church, and he could not, he said, 'get it into my head—my Latin head' why anyone would prefer it to Catholicism" (Stainton 216).

Further evidence that contact with spirituality has been lost in the modern metropolis appears through references to Catholic ceremony, perverted in Lorquian style to expose the spiritual problems he saw around him. The references to Catholicism demonstrate that the basic framework through which Lorca understood religion was still deeply based in Catholic ritual, embodied in the figure of Christ. The perversions of these rituals are evidence of the ways that he feels religion itself has become perverted, the dysfunction of the ritual reflecting back on the dysfunction of the whole. The poem "La Aurora," "Dawn" employs this technique regarding the ceremony of Holy Communion.

> La Aurora llega y nadie la recibe en su boca
> porque allí no hay mañana ni esperanza posible, (161)
>
> Dawn arrives and no one receives it in his mouth
> because tomorrow and hope are impossible there (73).

Dawn, the new day, takes the place of the Eucharist, yet despite its more secular incarnation, it still fails to function as a ritual for redemption. The people will not receive the host because there is no hope, and the Eucharist is unable to change that. The possibilities of a new day have been extinguished: "La luz es sepultadad por cadenas y ruidos," ("La Aurora" 161), "The light is buried under chains and noises"

("Dawn" 73). The disappearance of "La luz," or a spiritual presence, is linked with physical suffering as well, reminding the reader of the martyr-like role that the narrator takes on throughout the collection.

The industrialization and "progress" of modern times come to represent the corruption of what Lorca sees as spiritually significant. The important tenets of religion, hope, mystery, and redemption, have either been disproved or disregarded. In the poem titled "Crucifixión," "Crucifixion" intended to recall the painful biblical imagery of Christ's suffering to the reader, Lorca writes:

> Se supo el momento preciso de la salvación de nuestra vida
> porque la luna lavó con agua
> las quemaduras de los caballos (210)
>
> Someone found out precisely when our lives would be saved
> because the moon washed the burns
> of the horses with water (147).

The Church has also been stripped of their power over the uncontrollable. If humanity is certain when they will die, the mystery, and beauty, of death fall away. The end is no longer a threat, and humanity casts aside spirituality. It seems that the dangers of the unknown have been replaced by the dangers of what humans can do to each other.

The poem portrays the violence of the crucifixion transferred upon spirituality itself. And, though the suffering remains present, but has been rendered useless and meaningless.

> Pero la sangre mojó los pies y los espíritus inmundos
> estrellaban ampollas de laguna sobre las paredes del templo (210).
>
> But blood drenched their feet and unclean spirits
> splattered drops of blistered ponds on the temple walls (147)

Though Christ's crucifixion had redeemed humanity, these acts have been rendered senseless violence. The temple, a place of biblical significance, has become tainted. The violence of the modern world has erased the violence done to Christ, his suffering no longer functions as redemptive for humanity. Christ's suffering has been in vain, and Lorca, having assumed the role of martyr, feels that he too suffers in vain.

Though he felt that the Church's rituals were victims of the violence of modernity, Lorca did not believe that the Church was blameless in this. He felt that the church itself was an active participant in the violence that corrupted the modern world. The poem "Grito Hacia Roma" directed at the Catholic Church, directly responds to the signing of the Lateran Treaty in February 1929. This treaty affirmed the Church's support for Italian fascism, and created the Vatican state. To Lorca it seemed as though the Church had entirely abandoned its constituents by condoning the acts of the regime. "Grito Hacia Roma (Desde la torre del Chrysler Building)," "Cry to Rome (From the Tower of the Chrysler Building)" decries this behavior and "attacks escapist otherworldliness, the promise of rewards or compensations in some future state" (Southworth 141). In this poem he again uses the traditional rituals of Catholicism to describe the perversions of the world's spiritual state.

> mundos enemigos y amores cubiertos de gusanos,
> caerán sobre ti. Caerán sobre la gran cúpula
> que unta de aceite las lenguas militares (215).

> enemy worlds and loves covered with worms
> will fall on you. Will fall on the great dome
> that anoints the military tongues with oil (151).

In this passage, Lorca summons both the ritual of anointing and apocalyptic imagery to make his point about the Church's role in permitting Italian fascism. Lorca accuses the church of permitting the state's actions. To anoint the military is to give them spiritual sanction, and absolve any wrongdoing. The worms that fall from the sky, an inversion of the 'correct' natural order, symbolize the wrongness of this event. The 'dome' referenced here refers to the Vatican that has anointed, giving holy agency, to the military, involving the Church itself in the violence.

Lorca contrasts the vision of Church as complicit in violence with the role he assumes the Church should fulfill. He envisions a Church with social responsibility to the people, something neglected by their participation in capitalism and the politics of warfare. He protests:

> Porque ya no hay quien reparta el pan y el vino,
> ni quien cultive hierbas en la boca del muerto,
> ni quien abra los linos del reposo ("Grito hacia Roma (Desde el torre del Chrysler Building) 215).
>
> Because there is no one to bestow the bread or the wine,
> or make grass grow in the mouths of the dead,
> or spread the linens of rest and peace ("Cry to Rome (From the Tower of the Chrysler Building) 151).

He juxtaposes the social functions of the Church with the rituals of the Church, declaring ritual useless if it does not fulfill a higher purpose. The social responsibilities of the Church, to give to the poor, care for the disenfranchised, have been abdicated, he says. The world that Lorca sees around him has no one to give communion to the faithful, nor is there anyone to lay the dead to rest.

With the Catholic Church's support for Italian Fascism, Lorca feels that the last protector of humanity, however faulty it may have been, has failed. Humanity may as well accept death and misery, for there is no one to protect them.

> No hay más que un millón de herreros
> forjando cadenas para los niños que han de venir.
> No hay más que un millón de carpinteros
> que hacen ataúdes sin cruz.
> No hay más que un gentío de lamentos
> que se abren las ropas en espera de la bala. (216)
>
> There are only a million blacksmiths
> who forge chains for tomorrow's children.
> Only a million carpenters
> who make coffins with no cross.
> Only a crowd of laments
> unbuttoning their clothes, waiting for the bullets (151).

For Lorca, as the child is such an important figure of innocence and imagination, the opposite of what he sees in the modern metropolis, the image of the child in chains is a death sentence for imagination, hope and the future. The Church has become a negative force. The reference to carpenters making coffins without crosses, also reminds the reader of Jesus Christ himself. Even he, the figure in whom Lorca put the most faith, has been perverted by modernity. Christ no longer protects the children, or perhaps it is that he cannot protect them from the Church, so he follows blindly in the acts of violence, committed in his name. Eric Southworth describes that during his stay in New York Lorca felt that "Hell is a moral outrage. Jesus was a failure too. He did not bring redemption." Lorca's faith resided in "a Jesus who is man, not God, was crucified, but never rose from the dead," and is therefore powerless against these atrocities (130). His faith resides in the power of Christ's story, his human suffering.

"Although he wanted to believe in the immortality of the soul, he was afflicted by doubt," and his convictions were stretched further by his experience in New York (Stainton 202). He said that what American Catholicism lacked was "calor humano," human warmth (Southworth 137). Modifying the Lord's Prayer, Lorca responds to the Church's tendency to promise paradise in the afterlife in exchange for sacrifice and blind loyalty in this life. The poem ends:

> Porque queremos el pan nuestro de cada día,
> flor de aliso y perenne ternura desgranada
> porque queremos que se cumpla la voluntad de la Tierra
> que da sus frutos para todos (217).
>
> Because we demand our daily bread,
> alder in bloom and perennially harvested tenderness,
> because we demand that Earth's will be done,
> that its fruits offered to everyone (155).

The Church is not fulfilling the Earth's will. The Earth, Lorca suggests, wishes to provide for its inhabitants, protect the meek, and offer redemption. The Church, however, has gone in search of its own material gain. It has traded its role as a spiritual guide for material status. He sees the Church as in "league with other reactionary forces in society: a Church that aggravates human beings' alienated consciousness" (Southworth 130).

Conclusion:
National Identity, Masculinity, and Christianity in the Modern Metropolis

Through these three points of comparison—national identity, masculinity, and religion—both *The Waste Land* and *Poeta en Nueva York* reveal concerns about the changing world in the 1920s. Eliot wrote from a very specific perspective, focused on the literary and cultural traditions of Western Europe. The political changes in Europe and America pose a threat to the "Tradition" that Eliot is so invested in. And though Eliot's poem is certainly political as it reflects his feelings on the consequences of the Great War, it does not participate in political debates of the era. It instead focuses on the maintenance of "Tradition," supporting its survival at whatever cost. He utilizes these three issues to discuss his concern about the decline of what he saw as a worthy tradition in European history, from the Bible through the era in which he wrote. His use of citation, historical and literary references embed his own work into the very tradition that he is trying to defend.

Lorca, on the other hand, utilizes a very personal voice for his poems, making *Poeta en Nueva York* a personal cry rather than a group one. He uses the regional identity of Andalusia, Spain developed in his earlier works, like *Romancero Gitano*, to describe life in New York. He plays the two off of each other, objecting to what he sees in New York from an Andalusian perspective. "The poetic voice he discovered in New York was radically different from the Andalusian persona he had wished to escape, but perhaps even closer to the poetry's roots" (Harvard 462). His politics focus on his concerns about social justice in the city, which in his poetry comes to represent humanity's ominous future. In the same way that Lorca constructed a binary

between the Guardia Civil and the Gitanos in Andalusia, he constructs one between the blacks of Harlem and Wall Street. He defines the Guardia Civil and Wall Street using the same terms of heartlessness, persecution, and focus on money. The Gitanos and the Harlem blacks are both linked with imagination, dreaming, and nature. If, Lorca suggests, New York is the future, then these positive qualities will be dissolved, leaving mankind rootless in a cruel world.

As a part of his concerns about the Great War, Eliot mourns the dead in *The Waste Land*. He uses the strategy of universalizing these deaths to make their impact felt with his audience. The poem transforms the reader into a soldier, threatening his life, and enforcing Eliot's perspective on the war. This group remembrance also serves to support Eliot's feelings on tradition; he seems to summon back the Lost Generation and with them, revitalize 'Tradition.' The way that he treats the war dead, however, also functions to eroticize them. The care, centered often on their masculine and soldierly qualities, given to the bodies of the fallen in the narrative helps to reemphasize the importance of the bodies themselves. The death of a soldier in *The Waste Land* is important as the death of a masculine figure, a figure that represents the threat of all masculinity's death.

Whereas Eliot laments the possible death of a certain mode of masculinity through the death of the young soldier, *Poeta en Nueva York* tries to revive an old model of masculinity. Lorca values male-male relationships and idealizes a masculine male homosexuality. He does this through the figure of Walt Whitman, attempting to restore Whitman's vision of homosexuality. Lorca recalls the Victorian image of honorable male friendship, a friendship that was considered more important any

relationship between man and woman. He wishes to tie his image of homosexuality in with the Victorian male friendship, to have them be viewed through the same lens. His project is more explicitly homosexual than Eliot's, though he attacks some parts of the homosexual sub-culture he sees in New York and other cities. He uses this subculture to create a binary between what he saw in New York and what is, in his opinion, homosexuality untainted by the metropolis.

As the men and male bodies of *The Waste Land* become more important and erotic, the women of the poem are also transformed. Women come to be seen as neurotic, unable to understand man after he was transformed by the Great War. The poem depicts men and women disconnected. They are torn apart by women's inability to understand war's important, but singularly male, experiences, a division that makes reproduction impossible. The world, as it appears in *The Waste Land*, both forbids reproduction, through the transformation of the innocent into the grotesque, and needs it desperately.

Lorca presents a world in which humanity has lost its focus on reproduction, and focuses instead on the accumulation of wealth. Money has taken the place of the child. The world needs innocence, children to be born, but the possibility of innocence is destroyed by humanity's greed. Unlike *The Waste Land*, Lorca does not demonize women in themselves. In his New York poems he sees women as loosing their natural reproductive, life-giving powers and as being taken over by the negative powers he sees within the city. The past cannot be reproduced without perversion, and the city is no place for new, innocent life.

Sexual sterility is linked to the issue of spiritual sterility. Eliot does this structurally in his poem by using the Grail Myth as a structure for *The Waste Land*. The poem itself is transformed into a Grail quest: the constantly shifting narrator takes on the role of the Grail Quester, the city depicted by the poem becomes the Waste Land of Grail legend, and poem's goal becomes the restoration of God to humanity. The poem seems to be a call for spiritual rebirth, identifying the city as a spiritually sterile place. The end of the poem brings both rain, to satisfy the Grail myth metaphor, and the presence of a higher power through the words of the Upanishad.

Lorca's vision of New York also represents the city as a place in which humanity is unprotected by God. For Lorca, however, the spiritual void of the city is intimately related to the failure of Catholicism. If the city represents humanity's future, the corrupt nature of the city has defeated the pure, redeeming values brought to humanity by Christ. The Church, through acts like the Lateran Treaty of 1929, has not only forgotten humanity's salvation, but also participated in acts of violence. *Poeta en Nueva York* does not find spiritual rejuvenation for humanity as *The Waste Land* does. Instead, the end of Lorca's book seems to abandon Catholic structure entirely and redefines hope for humanity through other means. By leaving the city at the end of the book, Lorca rejects it as the representation of humanity's future. He instead suggests social revolution, through the figure of the black boy at the end of "Oda a Walt Whitman," urging humanity to return to nature. The last three poems of the collection are written as songs, embracing the natural world, love in its many

forms, and the poet's own agency in the world. These poems seem to guide the reader towards what Lorca sees as hope for humanity's future.

The city itself becomes the figure through which these anxieties are described. It becomes the place most threatening to already unstable notions of national identity; through the threat of the living-dead masses for Eliot and through the dehumanization he saw in Harlem for Lorca. In its representation of industrialization, too, the city threatens masculinity, exchanging the male beauty embodied by soldiers with the corruption of dead bodies and what Lorca perceived as immoral effeminacy. Both authors reject it as a place abandoned by God. While Eliot summons new spiritual forces, Lorca abandons the city all together. Yet it is through this figure that each poet seemed to create poetry, in Lorca's words, that may "fight hand to hand against a complacent mass." Poetry in which "the word can body forth and carry blood to the speaker's lips and sky to the listeners brow" ("A Poet in New York" 185).

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