TRANSCENDING THE SELF IN ROBERT BROWNING AND T. S. ELIOT

by

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A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty in English
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy, The City University of New York

2005

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Abstract

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This dissertation examines the relationship between Robert Browning and T. S. Eliot as manifested in some of their poetic monologues, focusing on the opposing modes by which each poet suggests an individual may transcend the limits of his own psyche to apprehend a higher order which would give his life significance. Such an examination challenges Eliot's own representation of his relationship to Browning and redefines some of the boundaries between Victorian and modern literature.

The first chapter contrasts Childe Roland with Prufrock, arguing that Eliot is indebted to Browning for his melding of psychology and geography in a speaker's self-illuminating descriptions of landscape and architecture. In Prufrock's city, as in Roland's wasteland, one's self and one's surroundings are inextricably bound.

Having developed a monologue form that objectifies the inner workings of the psyche, each poet composes a long poem—*The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land*—in which a series of monologues are arranged contrapuntally. The density of each poem seems to have compelled the poets to create an authorial double within the text, Pope Innocent and Tiresias, whose vatic roles involve bringing order to the text's disparate representations of reality and thus of constructing a whole truth out of subjective fragments.

Comparing Eliot's "Journey of the Magi" with Browning's "An Epistle of Karshish" reveals both the degree to which the poets share an interest in dramatizing an individual speaker's imperfect comprehension of divinity and their contrasting beliefs of how a vision of the divine might transform a person's relationship with the temporal, quotidian world.

Despite the common condition from which so many of their characters suffer, Browning and Eliot differ in how they represent the relationship between the individual, the material world which he inhabits, and the transcendent order with which he would put himself in communication. The Browning protagonist constructs meaning and approaches God, beauty, or "the good" through striving and through an engagement with materiality, while the Eliot protagonist does so through renunciation and through a retreat from the material. Transcendent vision produces in Browning's characters a renewed interest in the world, but in Eliot's characters a dissatisfaction with the temporal world. The two poets therefore differ in the transformative capability each ascribes to the individual and, by extension, to the poetic act.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the members of my committee, Professor Anne Humpherys and Professor Norman Kelvin, for their support, insight, and encouragement throughout the writing of this dissertation. I am also grateful to Professors Donald Stone, Joseph Wittreich, Gordon Whatley, and Michael Sargent for their guidance at various stages of this process. Finally, I am greatly indebted to my advisor, Professor Edmund Epstein, for his generosity and wisdom.

For Julie, the still point of my turning world.

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Chapter One:

Introduction

I propose in this dissertation to examine the relationship between Robert Browning and T. S. Eliot as manifested in some of their poetic monologues, focusing on the opposing modes by which each poet suggests an individual may transcend the limits of his own psyche to apprehend a higher order which would give his individual life purpose and significance. Such an examination is part of a larger redefinition of the boundaries between Victorian and Modernist literature which has been underway for at least the past three decades. Both Browning and Eliot are concerned with the interaction of the perceiving, remembering consciousness with the external world that is transformed and particularized by the psychological processes of perception and memory. For each, the poetic monologue represents a liminal stage between psychology and phenomenology, a Rosetta Stone by which one may decipher the private language of the psyche. Browning and Eliot share an anxious fascination with a subjectivity that threatens to slip into solipsism and with the possibility of an objective, ordering principle, located in art or the divine, which would counter such radical subjectivity. Despite their interests in particularity and in the psychology of the individual, neither Browning nor Eliot is wholly satisfied with the world of appearances. Their protagonists seek a transcendent reality and meaning which lies beyond the phenomenal world. Yet one of the key differences between the prototypical speakers of Browning and Eliot is the means by which each seeks transcendence: the Browning protagonist constructs meaning and approaches God, beauty, or "the good" through striving and through an engagement with

materiality, while the Eliot protagonist does so through renunciation and through a retreat from the material. For the typical Browning quester, the "good moment" or epiphany leads to a renewed interest in the world. For Eliot's characters, on the other hand, the epiphany leads to dissatisfaction with the temporal world. A vision of the transcendent leaves the seer disconsolate and adrift.

Many critics have noted similarities between Browning's and Eliot's use of unreliable narrators, grotesque imagery, and intertextual references. In 1917 Ezra Pound, reviewing *Prufrock and Other Observations*, described Eliot's work as "an advance over Browning" (Grant 72). Indeed, throughout the 1920's and 1930's it was a critical commonplace to read Eliot as the inheritor of both Browning's dramatic monologue form and his penchant for obscure literary and historical allusions and sources. Such comparisons become far less frequent with the rise of New Criticism and the concomitant decline in Browning's critical reputation. In the past thirty years, however, discussions of the two poets have again become current. I will outline the history of criticism treating Eliot's relationship to Browning in a subsequent section of this chapter.

Despite passing references to the relationship between Browning and Eliot, there has been no book-length study of the two poets. Rather, several critics have suggested the value of such a book—but have stopped short of actually writing it themselves. Susan Hardy Aiken summed up the state of Browning-Eliot criticism in 1977, writing, "Several commentators have noted the similarity of *The Waste Land* to "Childe Roland"... but Eliot's probable debt to Browning's monologue has yet to be thoroughly explored" (35). Aiken's statement still applies today: Browning and Eliot's relationship has not yet been fully investigated.

In his criticism and in his poetry, T. S. Eliot openly acknowledges many of his literary influences. He dedicates *The Waste Land* to Ezra Pound, the friend and editor whom he terms "*il miglior fabbro.*" He maintains that Dante and Shakespeare "divide the world between them," praises the immediacy of the Metaphysical poets, and notes that he himself began writing poetry under the combined influence of the French Symbolists and the Jacobean playwrights (1928: viii). Most important, Eliot elects his predecessors through a poetics of allusion: his appropriation of phrases culled from far-flung poetic traditions serves both to construct meaning within a given poem and to locate Eliot within a poetic tradition of his own making.

Yet Eliot is largely dismissive of his more immediate predecessors in English letters: Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, and other Victorian poets. In his essay "The Metaphysical Poets," Eliot writes, "Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose" (*Selected Essays* 47). Elsewhere Eliot claims that both poets "ruminate," and that Browning exhibits "too little seriousness" (*Selected Essays* 288; 304) Harold Bloom (*The Anxiety of Influence*) or Richard Ellmann (*Eminent Domain*) might interpret Eliot's professed disregard for his poetic forerunners as a form of subterfuge by which he minimizes their importance to his own art. Carol T. Christ writes, "Eliot's criticism throws up a smokescreen... which at one and the same time produces a climate of appreciation for his own work and obscures the genuine continuities between him and his immediate predecessors" (1981: 157). In 1984, Christ goes a long way toward delineating these continuities. Yet I would argue that she oversimplifies Eliot's debt to the Victorians by proposing that his "monologues resemble Tennyson's rather than Browning's" and that Tennyson is "the profoundest

poetic influence of the Victorian period on Eliot" (162). According to Christ, Eliot defines himself in opposition to Tennyson as a poet and to Arnold (with whom he is "at war") as a critic—an argument which leaves Browning as a sort of neutral territory (153).

David Ned Tobin likewise posits Arnold and Tennyson as Eliot's chief influences, making no mention of Browning whatsoever. Elisabeth Howe notes Eliot and Pound's shared "use of spoken language in poetry, for which they have at least one common ancestor in Browning," but she ultimately concludes that Eliot's poetry "sounds more like Tennyson than either Browning or Laforgue" (75, 89). George Bornstein recognizes Browning's incipient modernism, but T. S. Eliot is conspicuously missing from his *Poetic Remaking: The Art of Browning, Yeats, and Pound* (1988).

I believe this tendency to associate Pound with Browning and Eliot with Tennyson arises not merely from stylistic commonalities within the poetry of each respective pair—the fractured syntax, exuberance, and obscure historical references of the former, the mellifluous, elegiac refinement of the latter—but from, paradoxically, accepting as sincere Pound's effusions over Browning and suspecting as insincere Eliot's excoriation of Tennyson. In this way, Eliot's criticism, through simple reverse psychology, continues to obscure his debt to Robert Browning. I feel, however, that Browning's dramatic monologue is Eliot's purloined letter, an appropriation so obvious as to have remained hidden in plain view.

My dissertation will examine the ways in which Eliot adopts and reworks formal and thematic elements of Browning's monologues. Such an approach is consistent with Eliot's own definition of influence. In his introduction to *The Selected Poems of Ezra Pound*, Eliot proposed that

> no one can be influenced by form or by content without being influenced by the other; and the tangle of influences is one which we can only partially resolve. Any particular influence of one poet on another is both of form and content. (xiii)

This is particularly true for two poets who are concerned with how the individual consciousness represents both itself and its situation. For Browning and Eliot alike, form and content are bound up in the exigencies of subjectivity and the threat of solipsism, in the processes by which the psyche constructs the phenomenal world of which it is a part and reaches for some transcendent reality beyond that world.

Tennyson, Browning, and Eliot all distance themselves from the sentiments of their own poems by ascribing their words to characters or personae. This distancing may be a means of negotiating Romantic subjectivity, the "inward turn" which threatens to lead to solipsism (Bornstein, 1976; Faas, Martin, Menand). The monologues of Browning and Eliot, however, share a number of distinctive features which derive from an interest in particularity and the quotidian and which set them off from Tennyson. Both poets attempt to represent in verse the cadences and particularities of an individual speaker's patterns of speech of modes of thought. Like Browning, Eliot is willing to be unlovely and "unpoetical" ("the evening is spread out against the sky, / like a patient etherized upon a table" or "What you get married for if you don't want children?") if by so doing he can craft the voice of a particular individual. Both poets are preoccupied with the grotesque—with grotesque characters such as Caliban and Sweeney, who show, to use Bagehot's definition, "what ought to be by what ought not to be," and with grotesque imagery that makes manifest the *frisson* between the individual perceiving

consciousness and the perceived phenomenal world. This *frisson* produces, among other effects, what I would term the "psychogeographies" of "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," "Prufrock," sections of *The Waste Land*, and "Marina." A psychogeography is the perceiving or remembering individual's construction of the phenomenal world, a description of a landscape or streetscape that contains encoded within it the preoccupations and predilections of the individual who describes it.

Browning and Eliot's joint enterprise is also concerned with what Bakhtin terms *heteroglossia* or double-voicedness. The monologues of Browning and Eliot contain an unresolved dissonance between an individual's representation of himself and an observer's perception of him ("Bishop Blougram's Apology," "Portrait of a Lady"), between a narrator's judgment and that of the implied author ("My Last Duchess," "The Love Song of St. Sebastian"), or between a narrator's and the implied reader's interpretation of the story he tells ("Karshish," "Cleon," "Journey of the Magi"). Finally, Browning and Eliot orchestrate and arrange disparate voices, producing meaning through juxtaposition and creating a whole out of parts. Thus both poets use the poetic monologue to externalize and make knowable the hidden processes of the individual consciousness; it is their means of tunneling under what Pater calls the "thick wall of personality."

None of this is to say that Eliot merely mimics Browning, nor that either poet's art is static. Perhaps one of the initial challenges in comparing the two poets lies in freeing their poetry from some of the critical baggage which it has accumulated. Logically, a discussion of Browning and Eliot must begin by delineating the forms and themes with which the former poet was preoccupied. This involves discarding the reductive term

"dramatic monologue" and arriving at a more dynamic and nuanced definition of the characteristics of Browning's poetry. I then intend to trace the route by which Eliot diverges from, and eventually returns to, these characteristics. Logically, too, I will tend to trace Eliot's career chronologically, beginning with the poems from *Inventions of the March Hare* and *Prufrock and Other Observations*, through *The Waste Land*, to the *Ariel Poems*. Browning, on the other hand, will be studied a-chronologically, for all of his work was available to Eliot.

While Browning may be known popularly as the poet of the dramatic monologue, the term is not one he himself used. In his 1863 *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning*, the author reorganized his poetry under generic categories of his own devising: "Dramatic Lyrics," "Dramatic Romances," and "Men and Women." 1864 saw the release of a collection of new poetry titled *Dramatis Personae*, which became its own category in his subsequent compilations. Browning retained these terms in subsequent editions of the *Poetical Works* and in the 1888-9 *Collected Works of Robert Browning*, the last collection published in his lifetime. These categories are not as formally limiting as the term "dramatic monologue," for they imply neither that a given poem represents the spoken word nor that it must be limited to the words of one character. Yet Browning criticism continues to be dogged by formal codifications such as that of Ina Beth Sessions, who proposed in 1947 that the dramatic monologue must contain "speaker, audience, occasion, revelation of character, interplay between speaker and audience, dramatic action, and action which takes place in the present" (508). Browning is too

polytropic to be contained by such a definition, and only four or five of his poems could safely lie in this Procrustean bed.

The traditional understanding of the dramatic monologue is largely rooted in the relationship between speaker and auditor. A Browning monologist typically reconstructs his lived experience and reflects on the nature of his own character through spoken words, words often directed to an audience that is less than wholly receptive (Lippo's night watch, Andrea del Sarto's cheating wife, Blougram's hostile reporter). There is, therefore, a strong element of plot to these monologues. Indeed, one could argue that this form of the Browning monologue contains three plots: one by which the monologist structures his story, another by which he plots against his audience, and a third, outside the framework of the monologue, which encompasses the interplay of both plots. This element of plot is also prevalent in poems which are not directed at a specific audience. In "Childe Roland" there are few clues as to where and under what circumstances Roland is retelling his story—yet his is inarguably a *story*, a lived experience recast in spoken words for an audience other than himself. Even in its most diffuse form and even when spoken by the most loquacious of characters, such as Blougram, there is a momentum to a Browning monologue which largely derives from this centrality of plot.

Eliot's poems tend to represent not a character's spoken words but rather his inner consciousness. Bergonzi coins the term "internal dramatic monologue" to refer to "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." Prufrock formulates his thoughts as an address to a listening aspect of his own psyche ("Let us go then, you and I"). In other words, the character Prufrock, rather than the poet Eliot, composes a Browningesque monologue. By the poem's conclusion, Prufrock's two halves have become one: "We have lingered in

the chambers of the sea." Much of Eliot's early poetry likewise seems to internalize or otherwise to transform the role of Browning's silent auditor. In "Portrait of a Lady," this auditor becomes an ironic narrator who reacts to the Lady's spoken monologue. The poem essentially consists of two monologues: one spoken by the lady, another thought by her guest.

Eliot's characters, like Browning's, are concerned with self-representation, but their "special pleading" takes place not in conversation with another character but in their own self-lacerating processes of thought. Mayer notes, "The early poetry is a series of enactments of self-consciousness... placing the self-aware mind at the center of a new form of monologue" (viii). "Enactments" is the right word, for Eliot's characters think dramatically, staging little scenes in the theater of the mind. Like so many of Browning's characters, Eliot's narrating personae are burdened with a post-Romantic self-consciousness that borders on the solipsistic. However, where Roland, Fra Lippo Lippi, and even Bishop Blougram experience epiphanic moments that bring order to a dangerously subjective world, Eliot's characters often remain subject to the subjective.

Yet to overemphasize the divide between spoken and "thought" monologues is to lose sight of the Victorians' own estimation of Browning as a writer of, to use George Eliot's term, "dramatic-psychological" poetry (Litzinger and Smalley 1970, 176). Ekbert Faas explores the poetic monologue's relationship to the movements that would eventually be called psychiatry and psychology: alienism, mesmerism, and mental science. Faas notes that just as the Victorians initiated the practice of reading Shakespeare's soliloquies as representations of a character's inner thoughts rather than as spoken words, so too did they interpret contemporary poetic monologues as, in the words

of one reviewer, sketches of "poetic mental psychology" (21-3). Browning, in particular, was singled out as "the poet of psychology" and as "a psychologist" (20).

Nevertheless, some of the key differences between Browning and Eliot stem from the inward turn of the latter's psychological monologue. Where most Browning monologists speak, the early Eliot monologists think or write. Plot diminishes in importance in Eliot's monologues precisely because processes of thought, even when the thinker deliberately tries to cast his thoughts "dramatically," are less containable and plottable than speech. This is not to say that Browning's characters are able to control the implications of their speech; many of the monologues are ironically self-revelatory. Rather, in representing processes of thought, Eliot's emphasis shifts from linear plot to diffuse characterization. The field of thought contains other texts and voices, the recalled snatches of poetry, song, and conversation that pass through the thinking mind—or perhaps through the scribbling pen—but do not pass into speech. For Prufrock, the monologist of "Portrait of a Lady," and the governing consciousness of *The Waste Land*, processes of thought are inherently intertextual.

If *Prufrock and Other Observations* restructures Browning's monologue form, *The Waste Land* seems to demolish it. By excising from his manuscripts the narratological cues, frameworks, and titles that are the hallmark of so many of Browning's monologues, Eliot decontextualizes and disembodies the voices of his speakers. Yet *The Waste Land* is greatly indebted to Browning's practice of putting voices (and hence poems) in dialogue with each other. Harrold argues that this use of complementary poems is Browning's paramount innovation, more central to his art and his influence than the dramatic monologue form (3). Browning, like Eliot, tended to link

poems that he originally conceived of as separate works: six years after composing "Porphyria's Lover" and "Johannes Agricola in Meditation," for example, Browning gathered the two poems under the heading "Madhouse Cells" in the 1842 *Dramatic Lyrics*. He also composed complementary poems which would, when read in conjunction with each other, produce a whole. The text of *The Waste Land* resembles the courtroom of *The Ring and the Book*, the work in which Browning deploys complementary monologues on the grandest scale: each is a place for constructing truth through the juxtaposition of voices, a place for shoring fragments against ruin.

In *Ariel Poems*, the series of short poems published by Faber and Faber between 1927 and 1930, Eliot returns to the Browningesque monologue from which he so radically departed in *The Waste Land*. The speakers in "A Song for Simeon" and "Journey of the Magi" echo Browning's Cleon and Karshish (as well as *The Waste Land*'s Madame Sosostris): each is a narrator who is unaware of his story's significance, a narrator who manages to tell a story despite himself. The implied author and the implied reader, both living in the Christian era, see a divine order at which the first-century Karshish, Cleon, Simeon, and the Magus can only guess. In *Ariel Poems*, as in the closing passages of *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men," religion serves as an ordering principle that gives meaning to otherwise arbitrary sense experience.

Yet an extended comparison of "An Epistle Concerning the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician" and "Journey of the Magi" reveals that despite their many similarities in form, setting, and plot, the two poems present radically different visions of the effect that witnessing the divine might have on a man's ability to live in the temporal world. Karshish's passion for empirical inquiry into the nature of all

things—what A. S. Byatt calls his "delight... in the finite" (14)—is oddly akin to the fascination with particularity which the resurrected Lazarus exhibits. For both men, transcendent knowledge of the infinite leads back into a love of the finite. Eliot's Magus, on the other hand, returns from his adoration of the Christ child, a literal Epiphany, dissatisfied with a world which once pleased him but not yet aware of a new dispensation in which he might find peace. The witnessing of divinity leads him not to a love of the finite, but to a renunciation of it. Christianity may offer an alternative to the paralyzing self-consciousness and *ennui*—what Eliot terms, in "Thoughts after Lambeth," the "illusion of being disillusioned"—that haunts Prufrock (*Selected Essays*). Yet Eliot's Christianity, like the Buddhism which he studied at Harvard and to which he once considered converting, also validates the abnegation of the self and the renunciation of the world which mark Prufrock's condition and that of so many other Eliot speakers.

The remainder of this introductory chapter is devoted to surveying two bodies of critical work. The first consists of Eliot's writings on Robert Browning, as well as biographical and bibliographical evidence of Eliot's familiarity with his forerunner. Eliot's own representation of his relationship to the Victorians, Robert Browning among them, must be evaluated and interrogated, rather than accepted at face value.

Having reconstructed Eliot's construction of Browning, I will turn to critical assessments of the relationship between the two poets. While Eliot's own representation of his relationship to Browning held sway for much of the 1950's and 1960's, the past three and a half decades have seen increasingly sophisticated redefinitions of this relationship. Bookending these two conspectuses is, of course, a statement of my own

critical intentions in writing this dissertation, a dissertation which grew out of the lacunae of both Eliot's and subsequent critics' assessment of his relationship to Browning.

"Not Known Because Not Looked For:" Eliot's Construction of Browning

Perhaps the most logical way to begin a discussion of Browning and Eliot is by taking stock of Eliot's own familiarity with and attitude toward the poetry of his forerunner. As a boy, Eliot studied Browning "as part of his school curriculum" (Ackroyd 26). In the summer of 1905, Eliot's mother, Charlotte C. Eliot, wrote a series of letters to the headmaster of Milton Academy, where she wished her son to spend a year in study before starting at Harvard. As a postscript to one of these letters, dated August 4, 1905, Eliot listed the courses which he had taken and the books he had read in each of his academic disciplines. Under "English," he writes,

> Hill's *Principles of Rhetoric*, Pancoast's *Introduction to English Literature*. Reading: *Othello*, *Golden Treasury*, *Macbeth*, Burke's Speech on Conciliation [with America, 1775], Milton's Minor Poems, Macaulay's "Milton" and "Addison". Themes. Elocution. (*Letters* 8)

The Golden Treasury made a practice of not including work by living poets, and Browning was therefore not represented in this anthology. In 1897, however, nine years after Browning's death and Eliot's birth, *The Golden Treasury*'s editor, Francis Palgrave, released a "Second Series" of the anthology, which included more than a dozen Browning poems. If Eliot were given a new copy of the *Golden Treasury* at any time from age nine to eighteen (the age at which he compiled his list), he would have been

exposed to these Browning monologues. Pointing out that two of the Elizabethan lyrics that would become central to *The Waste Land* (Ariel's song from *The Tempest* and Webster's "land dirge" from *The White Devil*) were printed on facing pages of *The Golden Treasury*, Murray Prosky has asserted, "Most of the allusions to English poetry in *The Waste Land* can be found in Palgrave" (3). Palgrave's volume may also mark Eliot's earliest exposure to Browning.

Moreover, Eliot's brief list does not include many of the works which he later admitted had greatly interested him as a boy. Thompson's *The City of Dreadful Night* and Fitzgerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam* are two of the more important of these excluded works (*Critic*, xviii; Ricks 398). Of course, Eliot is recreating the syllabus of an English course he has completed; one could argue that he is only including in his list assigned texts. Nevertheless, the list which Eliot submitted to Milton Academy is a brief metonymy for a practice that Eliot would carry on through his adulthood—that of selectively representing those books and authors who had been of importance to his own development.

When Eliot left America in 1914 as a Harvard University Sheldon Traveling Fellow, to study in Germany, and, after the outbreak of the war, at Oxford, he left behind at least seven volumes of Browning's work. In August of 1920, Eliot's mother compiled and sent him a "List of Books, the property of Thomas Stearns Eliot," asking him to mark those which he wished her to mail to England (*Letters* 398). The list includes "Robert Browning Six Volumes" and "Monologues, Browning." Eliot marked the former with a cross, indicating that he wished to have them sent to England. The 1888-9 edition of Browning's *Complete Poetry* ran to seventeen volumes; the six volumes which Eliot

owned could have been taken from this collection. As Eliot's mother gives no indication that the six volumes are part of an incomplete set, however, it is more likely that they are one of two American six-volume collections printed in 1887 by Houghton, Mifflin & Co. in Boston: *The Poetical and Dramatic Works of Robert Browning, in Six Volumes* or *The Poetical Works of Robert Browning, in Six Volumes. Riverside Edition, Including All the Corrections and Changes Recently Made by Mr. Browning, and the Pauline in Its Previous Form.* If I were to hazard a guess, I would presume that Eliot owned the latter of these two collections. In 1916, he would assign his students *Pauline*, Browning's first published poem, as the first work in their study on Browning. Yet it is of little importance which collection Eliot owned, for both contain the poems which I read as being of particular significance to Eliot's work: "Porphyria's Lover," "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church," "My Last Duchess," "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," "An Epistle... of Karshish," "A Toccata of Galuppi's," and selections from *The Ring and the Book.* It is the better-known Browning monologues—the poems which are selected for inclusion in most shorter collections—which were of enduring interest to Eliot.

A letter to Schofield Thayer, dated May 7, 1916, evinces both Eliot's familiarity with Browning and his readiness to satirize the poet and Victorian literary conventions in general. This letter is best understood in light of Eliot's previous two letters to Thayer, both of which were rather prickly. On August 9, 1915, Eliot wrote to declare that he had not been aware of Thayer's affection for Vivienne Haigh-Wood, to whom Thayer had first introduced Eliot. Eliot writes:

> I was surprised at the extent to which you were "nettled." You had never given me the impression that your interest in this woman was exclusive—or indeed in the slightest degree a pursuit: and as you did not give *her* this impression, I presumed that I had wounded your vanity rather than thwarted your passion (113).

The next month—September 4, to be exact—Eliot apologized for his comments: "I realize that my letter was a very shabby one... Do accept my regrets for a petty irritation which should have evaporated long before I wrote" (114).

The tone of the May 7 letter is, by comparison, exuberant. Eliot is writing to congratulate Thayer on his recent marriage and to invite him and his bride to visit the Eliots in London. Perhaps partly in an effort to dispel the humorless mood of his previous two letters, Eliot adopts an overblown, sentimental rhetoric that parodies Victorian prose:

> Yes! I recognize the Scofield of Magdalen, the connoisseur of puberty and lilies, in the Scofield of Washington Square, about to wed the Madonna of the mantelpiece, whose praises from your lips I have not forgotten... And the century of sonnets? And have I not St. Praxed's ear to pray horses for you, and brown Greek manuscripts?... to pray that domestic felicity may not extinguish the amateur, to pray that possession of beauty may not quench that ardour of curiosity and that passionate detachment which your friends admired and your admirers envied. (*Letters* 137, second set of ellipses Eliot's)

In Eliot's letters, as in his poetry, the context of a quotation largely determines its meaning. Here, lines from Browning's "One Word More" and "The Bishop Orders His Tomb at St. Praxed's Church" are associated with the sort of fustian, self-consciously ornate language that Eliot's aging Lady employs in "Portrait of a Lady." Where the Lady alludes to Matthew Arnold ("these April sunsets, that somehow recall / My buried life, and Paris in the Spring"), Eliot, wearing the mask of a Victorian Polonius, quotes Browning. Or, to put it another way, by quoting Browning, Eliot creates the mask of a pedagogue.

Eliot knew Browning's poetry well enough not only to quote it, but to teach it as an extension lecturer at The University of London from 1916-1919. Hired by the University's Joint Committee for the Promotion of Higher Education for Working People on October 19, 1916 to teach a "Tutorial Class in Modern English Literature," Eliot lectured "Monday evenings for twenty–four weeks during the autumn and winter of each year. Each class met for two hours, with the first hour devoted to lecture and the second to questions and discussion" (Schuchard 169). According to Eliot's syllabus, held by the University of London Library and reprinted by Ronald Schuchard in 1974, the course was to cover a good deal of Browning's work. I have formatted this section of the syllabus flush left in order to maintain Eliot's pagination:

II. BROWNING

Contrast with Tennyson. His personality. Influences upon him. Early Verse.

Read: *Pauline.*

Dramatic qualities of Browning. Characterisation. Range of emotion.

Mature technique: Read: *Dramatic Lyrics, Dramatic Romances, Dramatis*

Personae, Men and Women.

Browning's residence and study in Italy. His thought. Moral ideas. Examination of *Sordello* and *The Ring and the Book.* Read: *The Ring and the Book* (especially I, V, VI, VII, X).

The dramas. Survey of Browning's later work. Read: *Pippa Passes, A Blot in the 'Scutcheon.* (170)

Finding that many of his students could not keep up with the reading assignments, Eliot noted in his class report: "It seems to me on the whole desirable to devote more time to fewer authors, even if it is necessary to sacrifice altogether some of those named in the syllabus" (Schuchard 173). Browning, however, was not one of those authors sacrificed. In describing his "workingmen's class in English Literature" to his cousin Eleanor Hinkley, Eliot writes, "I have steered them through Browning (who arouses great enthusiasm)" (March 23, 1917; *Letters* 168).

Judging from his syllabus, Eliot devoted the most time to the psychological-dramatic poems, which demonstrate what he calls Browning's "mature technique," and to two long works: *Sordello* and *The Ring and the Book. Pauline*, Browning's first published poem, serves as introductory material, while the plays and the poetry of 1869-1888 are covered in one unit: "The dramas. Survey of Browning's later work." None of these choices are surprising: the lyrics and monologues of Browning's long middle period are certainly less formidable than the long blank verse poems which followed *The Ring and the Book.* To list these works is to catalogue obscurity: *Balaustion's Adventure, including a Transcript from Euripides* (1871), *Prince Hohenstiel-Schwangau, Saviour of Society* (1871), *Fifine at the Fair* (1872), *Red Cotton Night-Cap Country* (1873),

Pacchiarotto, and How He Worked in His Distemper (1876). Eliot tended to assign the more popular and accessible of Browning's poems. In fact, the poems and plays Eliot included in his syllabus would have been even more widely known in 1916 than they are today. *Pippa Passes*, for instance, which is a brief and readable play to begin with, had been filmed by *Birth of a Nation* director David Griffiths in 1912.

What is perhaps more noteworthy than Eliot's choice of poems is the source from which he has drawn them. "*Dramatic Lyrics, Dramatic Romances, Dramatis Personae, Men and Women*" are the categories according to which Browning reorganized his poems for his 1863 *Poetic Works* and which were retained in every subsequent collection. The volumes of Browning that Eliot requested from his mother would also have organized the poetry according to these genres. Eliot therefore knew Browning's work—and as an instructor, *worked* with Browning' work—through these compilations rather than through the individual collections of poems which preceded them. This is a profoundly important distinction given the extent to which Eliot is concerned with intertextuality and the extent to which the poetry he read as a child and as an adolescent remained abiding concerns throughout his adulthood. Fraistat uses the term "contextual poetics" to identify "the 'poem' that is the book itself" (3-4). The 1863 regrouping is the poetic context in which Eliot read Browning's work.

Eliot's early poetry bears traces of Browning and of other Victorian voices which Eliot would later silence. The publication of both *The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotations of Ezra Pound* (1971) and *Inventions of the March Hare: Poems 1909-1917* (1996), a transcript of the notebook into which Eliot transcribed his completed poems, reveals a decidedly more Victorian or

Edwardian T. S. Eliot than do the works published within the poet's lifetime. It is telling that Eliot's working title for his notebook—which he subsequently crossed out—alludes to Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), while his working title for *The Waste Land*, "He Do the Police in Different Voices," is taken from Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend* (1864).

In the poems collected in Eliot's 1962 volume *The Complete Poems and Plays*, 1909-1950, only a few traces of Browning's presence remain. The poems themselves contain only one explicit reference to Browning: lines from "A Toccata of Galuppi's" are worked into the pastiche of quotations that serve as an epigraph to "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleinstein with a Cigar." In a process that anticipates that of *The Waste Land*, Eliot uses a scrap of Browning's poem to help form an impressionistic, intertextual vision of Venice. Elsewhere Eliot alludes to Browning without directly quoting him. The "towers tolling reminiscent bells" in *The Waste Land* seem to look back to "Childe Roland." *Ariel Poems* is indebted to Browning's formal and narratological dynamics, but again these poems do not mimic his language. Finally, the eponymous *Confidential Clerk*, who throws over the life of a financier to become the organist of a parish church looks back, however obliquely, to the organist of "Master Hughes of Saxe-Gotha."

In *Inventions of the March Hare*, however, Christopher Ricks cites eleven instances of Eliot echoing or alluding to lines from Browning's poetry. Perhaps the most obvious and extensive of these allusions is to be found in "A Song for St. Sebastian," which, as a psychological monologue about an obsessive lover who thinks of strangling his beloved in order to possess her, is clearly a variation on "Porphyria's Lover." Richard Kaye notes of the two poems:

> In addition to echoing the rhymes of Browning's poem ("I would flog myself until I bled" would seem to mimic Browning's "The smiling rosy little head / So glad it has its utmost will, / That all it scorned at once is fled."), several sentences of Eliot's poem recast both the subjectively rendered morbidity of "Porphyria's Lover" and the theme of unspecified betrayal by a woman who has caused her lover to turn murderous. It is largely the spirit of Browning's work, in which a man's carnal obsession is all the more monstrous because of its quality of detached insouciance, that Eliot recapitulates in his poem (Kaye 111).

Had "The Love Song of St. Sebastian" been published before "Prufrock," it might have been readily understood—in a way "Prufrock" was not—by an audience long accustomed to Browning's dramatic monologue form and to decadent imitations thereof.

Reading "He Do the Police in Different Voices" alongside *The Waste Land* reveals the process by which Eliot and Pound replaced the poem's Victorian and Edwardian "intertexts" with Greek, Roman, Elizabethan, and Jacobean ones. Eliot's original epigram for *The Waste Land* was a line from *Heart of Darkness* (1901), and the initial title of "A Game of Chess" was "In the Cage," an allusion which points less to the predicament of the Cumaean Sybil than to the Henry James short story of the same name. In revising "He Do the Police in Different Voices," Eliot and Pound distanced it from the Victorian tradition out of which it grew.

Less a long poem than a collection of juxtaposed monologues, "He Do the Police in Different Voices" is, to use Henry James' term for a certain kind of multi-plot nineteenth century novel, "a loose and baggy monster." I would characterize two of the

Ur-Waste Land monologues as distinctly "Browningesque": the colloquial monologue with which "The Burial of the Dead" initially opened, and the sea yarn of a modern Ulysses which constituted the original "Death By Water." In the first of these, a variation on Joyce's "Nighttown" chapter, a colorful speaker uses colloquial English to give an oral history of a night's debauchery in Boston. In its rhythms and diction, Eliot either learned from Browning a way to represent the spoken word or developed, independent of Browning, a way of doing so at which his forerunner had already arrived. "Death by Water" recasts Dante's ill-fated Ulysses as a New England sailor. In "In Memoriam" (1936), Eliot would compare Tennyson's treatment of Ulysses unfavorably to Dante's, terming their treatments respectively as "a static poem, and a moving poem, on the same subject..." (*Selected Essays* 331). Interestingly enough, in writing a monologue in reaction to Tennyson, Eliot produces one that in its immediacy and vigor is reminiscent of Browning. However, in excising both the Boston monologue and the original "Death by Water," Pound and Eliot largely efface Browning's presence from *The Waste Land.*

In short, Browning, like several of his contemporaries, has a presence in Eliot's manuscript poems which he does not in their final versions. After identifying the Browningesque elements of the earliest poems, one begins to find these elements—albeit attenuated, muted, or encoded—in the poems which were printed in Eliot's lifetime. Browning is one of the voices in Eliot's poetry "not known, because not looked for / But heard, half-heard."

Eliot's position on Browning is most fully articulated not in letters, anecdotes, or poetry, but in his criticism. Before turning to the essays, however, it is worth identifying

a few of the pitfalls one hazards in criticizing this critic. I have referred to the initial tendency among Eliot's readers to accept his pronouncements at face value. There are several reasons why even the most decisive of Eliot's statements should be qualified. The first is a matter of influence: Eliot has a vested interest in minimizing or deflecting the importance of some of his poetic predecessors. Harold Bloom argues that poetic influence "always proceeds by a misreading of the prior poet, an act of creative correction that is actually and necessarily a misinterpretation" (1973: 32). Eliot's criticism is one of the modes by which he "misreads" his predecessors. For Eliot, as Joseph Wittreich puts it, "where there is influence, there is erasure" (personal communication). Or, as Eliot himself admits, decades later, in *To Criticize the Critic* (1961): "In my earlier criticism, both in my general affirmations about poetry and in writing about authors who had influenced me, I was implicitly defending the sort of poetry that I and my friends wrote" (16). Telling as this admission may be, it obfuscates the second respect in which Eliot's criticism takes a defensive stance toward influence: it is not just as a poet, but as a writer of critical prose, that Eliot must misread his influential forerunners. Carol Christ writes: "The spectre of Arnold haunts his early prose, and he wages a running battle with him for critical preeminence" (1984: 153). To avoid living in Arnold's shadow, Eliot must replace Arnold's literary canon with one of his own construction. The critical essays are a doubly reactive exercise in which Eliot defines himself both as poet and as critic. The interplay between the poets he discusses and the poems he composes cannot be underestimated: lines from a play or a poem which he quotes in an article will later be woven into the fabric of his poetry.

In the "Criticism" chapter of his seminal *The Invisible Poet*, Hugh Kenner proposes two further reasons for interrogating Eliot's critical assertions. He argues that in the essays, "the method Eliot discovered—how consciously there is no telling—was to capitalize on his anonymity and play a role" (96). In other words, one ought not to take Eliot at face value, for he often wears a mask. In suiting his style to the journal for which he is writing, Eliot quietly subverts that style. Kenner further argues that Eliot,

> was not devising a dangling interdependent system of abstractions, like Alexander Calder, but writing ad hoc... Each review is an occasion to think something out as he goes along, and while the last paragraph remembers the first, the first does not often foresee the last (102).

At the risk of stating the obvious, Eliot did not write *books*; his Harvard dissertation was the longest work he ever composed. To use Dr. Johnson's definition, Eliot as a critic is one who educates himself in public. There is therefore an element of opportunism in the essays: Eliot changes his position according to the context in which he is writing and the dictates of a particular train of thought or argument. Moreover, he sometimes writes tongue-in-cheek. As Tobin argues, "It is often difficult to decide exactly to what degree his declarations are qualified or even totally undermined by an ironic point of view" (92).

If over-credulity leads readers to the first pitfall in Eliot's criticism, a-historicism leads to the second. Eliot's critical positions are neither static nor consistent: he constantly refines, revises or reverses his earlier opinions. Therefore it is never enough simply to cite Eliot's assessment of a particular poet. One must also cite when, and in what context, Eliot made such an assessment—as well as how this particular assessment relates to other statements he may have made in regard to the same poet. Eliot's evolving

position on Milton demonstrates the dynamic nature of his criticism. In 1936, he wrote of "the serious charges to be made against [Milton], in respect of the deterioration—the peculiar kind of deterioration—to which he subjected the language... an influence against which we still have to struggle" (*On Poetry and Poets* 138). Eleven years later, he effectively recants, declaring, "it now seems to me that poets are sufficiently liberated from Milton's reputation, to approach the study of his work without danger, and with profit to their poetry and to the English language" (*On Poetry and Poets* 161). One might ask, which Eliot are we to believe? Was he more sincere in 1936 or in 1947? Yet perhaps such questions mischaracterize the nature of Eliot's critical inquiry. Eliot may not be fixed with a formulated phrase. He is not interested in the sort of critical consistency and sincerity that produces static, summative assessments of particular authors. In a 1915 letter to Ezra Pound, Eliot decries American universities as institutions that offer courses such as, "How to Appreciate the Hundred Best Paintings" (96). Eliot's own criticism should never be read as a study in "how to appreciate," for like Nietzsche's Zarathustra, he sets out to subvert not only received opinions but the very notion of receivable opinions. In his criticism, as in his poetry, he tries on and discards a series of masks.

It is with all of these provisos in mind that one should approach Eliot's critical assessment of Victorian poetry and of Robert Browning, in particular. "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921) is the *locus classicus* for Eliot's view of Browning and Tennyson alike. To illustrate his concept of the "dissociation of sensibility," Eliot engages in an outrageous piece of creative misreading (*Selected Essays* 286-7). He quotes Chapman's *The Revenge of Bussy d'Ambois*, and then suggests that "we compare

this with some modern passage." That unspecified modern passage is from Browning's "Bishop Blougram's Apology:"

> Now when the fight begins within himself,
> A man's worth something. God stoops o'er his head,
> Satan looks up between his feet—both tug—
> He's left, himself, I' the middle; the soul wakes
> And grows. Prolong that battle through life! (286)

Having juxtaposed but not analyzed these passages, as well as ones by Herbert of Cherbury and Tennyson, Eliot claims to have demonstrated

> something which happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson and Browning are poets, and they think, but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose. (287)

Eliot has quite deliberately flouted the distinction between poet and character. He ascribes Bishop Blougram's words to Browning himself, treating the passage as if there were no ironic distance between the implied author and the character's casuistic special pleading. By not identifying the passage, much less providing a context for it, Eliot circumvents the issues of authorial intention and double-voicedness inherent to dramatic poetry. The character Blougram, mounting a bit of postprandial self-defense as much for his own pleasure in talking as for the listening Mr. Gigadibs' benefit, may be "reflective"—but it does not follow that Browning is so.

Moreover, Eliot, who will later take great pains to distinguish between poetic drama and dramatic poetry, makes no such distinction here. The Elizabethan soliloquy bears only a surface resemblance to Browning's poetic monologues; indeed, I would argue that the two forms invert the relationship between a character's inner life and his spoken word. While the Elizabethan soliloquy is written to be spoken onstage by an actor, it is not meant to mimic spoken English. Rather, it is a vehicle by which a character articulates thoughts and emotions, a mode of discourse which occupies a liminal position between the spoken word and the unspoken thought or feeling. The soliloquy makes manifest in speech a speaker's inner life for the benefit of an "extradiegetical" audience rather than an "intradiegetical" character. The Elizabethan soliloquy is therefore a dropping of the mask. In *Othello*, for example, it is only in his soliloquies that Iago is completely honest: he reveals himself to the audience, to the reader, or to himself—but not to the other character around him.

The Browning monologue inverts this positioning of text, speech, and inner life. While a poem such as "Bishop Blougram" is a text written to be read rather than acted, it represents the spoken words of a character. Blougram is not confessing to an extradiegetical audience but justifying himself to a reporter seated at the far end of his dinner table. He runs the risk of censure and judgment in a way in which the Elizabethan soliloquist does not. Unlike Iago, therefore, the bishop never intentionally drops the mask. Thus Eliot may be right to note in Chapman "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling" which is absent from Browning (286). However, this is less a function of the two men's differing processes of thought than of their differing dramatic forms. Blougram is less direct than a Shakespearean character

because he is speaking to a critical audience—the Mr. Gigadibs who has challenged him in a newspaper article—rather than "thinking aloud." There is an element of critical sleight-of-hand in Eliot's juxtaposition of decontextualized passages: he would make Chapman and Browning's characters stand in not only for their authors, but for their authors' processes of composition. Menand writes, "The stylistic analysis—the analysis of the poetry "as poetry"—that would show how the operation of Chapman's brain is unlike the operation of Browning's but like the operation of Baudelaire's, is entirely missing" (149).

Eliot's claim is ironic on a second level: while Eliot may admire Donne and the other metaphysical poets, in his processes of thought and of composition he stands with the Victorians on the far side of Milton, Dryden, and the English Civil War. While Keats and Shelley "in one or two passages... struggle toward unification of sensibility," they were unable to achieve such reunification: "Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated" (288). Eliot's dissatisfaction with Browning and Tennyson can be read as a projected dissatisfaction with his own mode of poetic composition. In declaring "We have never recovered" from dissociation, Eliot's "we" seems to imply that he is identifying himself with the Victorians rather than with the Metaphysical poets. It is telling that *Ara Vos Prec* (1920), Eliot's most recent volume of poetry at the time that he published "The Metaphysical Poets," consists largely of satiric poetry. Not only is the essay tinged with satire, but the writing of poetic satires further aligns Eliot with post-Civil War figures—Rochester, Swift, Dryden, Johnson to name a few—rather than with the Metaphysical poets.

At first glance, there is a final irony in a poet who writes literary criticism castigating other poets for having "ruminated." However, here as elsewhere Eliot takes issue with what he describes as the Victorians' "chimerical attempts to effect imperfect syntheses" of poetry and various schools of thought (*Selected Essays* 443). In the 1930 "Arnold and Pater," he argues that the Victorians marshaled poetry to bolster a failing religion: "Religion became morals, religion became art, religion became science or philosophy... the religion of Carlyle or that of Ruskin or that of Arnold or that of Tennyson or that of Browning, is not enough" (443). Browning "ruminates" because he uses poetry as a substitute for religion or philosophy.

In the essay's final permutation, Eliot considers the French symbolists, in whom he sees "a method curiously similar to that of the 'metaphysical poets'" (128). Eliot analyzes and endorses Baudelaire, Laforgue, and Corbière in words strikingly apt for Eliot's own poetics:

> It appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*... The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into meaning. (128)

Eliot will surpass his Victorian predecessors by allying himself with the French tradition. The essay's conclusion finds Eliot formulating a poetics by which he may override the dissociation of sensibility which he reads as having crippled Browning and Browning's contemporaries.

In 1921, Eliot also published "Andrew Marvell," an essay which can be read as a complement to "The Metaphysical Poets" in that it treats the quality possessed by the Cavalier Poets but lost to their inheritors:

> wit, a tough reasonableness beneath the slight lyric grace. You cannot find it in Shelley or Keats or Wordsworth... still less in Tennyson or Browning; and among contemporaries Mr. Yeats is an Irishman and Mr. Hardy is a modern Englishman—that is to say, Mr. Hardy is without it and Mr. Yeats outside of the tradition altogether. (*Selected Prose* 102)

Eliot maintains that this wit "certainly exists" in LaFontaine, Gautier, and Baudelaire (102). Here then is a second mode of thinking and feeling lost to the "modern Englishman" but accessible to the Frenchman—and perhaps to an urbane American, who, like the Irish Yeats, is "outside of the tradition" (102). Because the poetry of the nineteenth century has "unconsciously been based" on Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats, the wit of Marvell has been neglected and lost. Compared to Marvell, "even Browning seems oddly immature, in some way" (111).

In 1947, Eliot described the dissociation of sensibility, as "one of the two or three phrases of my coinage—like 'objective correlative'—which have had a success in the world astonishing to their author" (*On Poetry and Poets* 152). A concept which Eliot seemed to be in the process of formulating, of thinking through, quickly became "a formulated phrase." To give too much weight to this concept oversimplifies Eliot's articulation of his relationship to Browning. Eliot is, on the whole, more even-handed in his assessment of Victorian poetic achievements than are many of his peers. He is wary of a wholesale condemnation of the Victorians. Tobin cites Eliot's response to Harriet

Monroe and Alice Corbin Henderson's anthology *The New Poetry* (1917) as indicative of his rather more nuanced critical position. Eliot writes that while Monroe's introduction, "makes many excellent points, it leads me to wonder whether a whole generation can arise together and insurrect... there is certainly a hit at the Victorian age *in toto*" (*Egoist* 4, Number 10).

"The Possibility of a Poetic Drama," published in the *Criterion* a year before "The Metaphysical Poets" and subsequently reprinted in *The Sacred Wood* (1920), presents Browning in a slightly more favorable light. Here Eliot writes:

> Two men, Wordsworth and Browning, hammered out forms for themselves—personal forms, *The Excursion, Sordello, The Ring and the Book, Dramatic Monologues*; but no man can invent a form, create a taste for it, and perfect it too... These poets were obliged to consume vast energy in this pursuit of form, which could never lead to a wholly satisfying result. (*Selected Prose* 62-63)

Eliot's reference to "*Dramatic Monologues*," italicized as if it were a published volume of Browning's poetry, is a telling slip. Browning never released a collection by this title, nor was the term one he applied to his work. Eliot may be thinking of the sort of anthology of Browning monologues which he owned as a boy. Eliot's erroneous reference therefore belies the degree to which he views Browning's work through the lens of the dramatic-monologue codification, a set of conventions drawn from a handful of Browning's poems but which by no means could be applied meaningfully to the bulk of Browning's work. I would argue that it is the works which are most paradigmatic of the dramatic-monologue form—poems such as "Porphyria's Lover," "My Last Duchess,"

"Fra Lippo Lippi," "Childe Roland," "An Epistle of Karshish," "Bishop Blougram's Apology"—that, along with *The Ring and the Book*, were most important to Eliot's conception of Browning.

As is typical of Eliot's depiction of Browning, praise and blame are inextricable in his discussion of *Sordello, The Ring and the Book,* and the dramatic monologues. Browning's accomplishment and failure both lie in creating a personal form rather than perfecting an inherited one, as Eliot claims Dante and Shakespeare did (*Selected Prose* 60).

Throughout Eliot's criticism, Dante and Shakespeare are the two influences about whom he feels no anxiety. Sufficiently great and sufficiently far removed in time and language from Eliot, they pose no threat to his own poetic composition. Wordsworth and Browning, on the other hand, are anxious subjects. Eliot applies to them what is, for him, an immensely loaded term: *personal*. For Eliot, the great error of Romanticism and its inheritors lies in equating the poetic with the personal. In a frequently quoted passage from "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot takes issue with Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "emotion recollected in tranquility," arguing,

> the bad poet is usually unconscious where he ought to be conscious and conscious where he ought to be unconscious. Both errors tend to make him 'personal'. Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. (21)

Read in light of "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot's characterization of Browning as a writer of "personal forms" becomes almost wholly pejorative. Browning's efforts, great as they may have been, were misguided.

However, while Eliot tends to use Browning as a foil in the early essays, he occasionally praises particular poems or passages. Davies argues that Eliot's praise of Browning is to be found in short reviews because, "nearly always Eliot was less guarded and defensive in short reviews than he was in the carefully deliberated and polished essays" (23). In the 1920 article "Modern Tendencies in Poetry," Eliot writes, "The one Victorian poet whom our contemporary can study with much profit is Browning. Otherwise, almost all of the interesting developments in poetry are due to Frenchmen" (Ricks 403). In another 1920 article, "The Poetic Drama," he argues that "the natural evolution, for us, would be to proceed in the direction indicated by Browning; to distil the dramatic essences, if we can, and infuse them into some other figure" (*Athenaeum*, 14 May 1920, p. 635).

If Arnold haunts Eliot as a critic, and Tennyson haunts him as a lyric or elegiac poet, then Browning haunts him as dramatic poet and poetic dramatist. A dramatic impulse runs through the work of both Browning and Eliot. Both wrote plays—Browning early in his career, Eliot late in his. While Browning's plays were staged and occasionally revived, his real contribution to English letters lies not in these poetic dramas but in his dramatic poems. In his complementary poetic monologues, he developed a dramatic form which provided an alternative to the stage play. Eliot, too, was concerned with what he terms the "Possibility of a Poetic Drama." The 1910's and 1920's witness Eliot's series of aborted efforts to write some form of closet drama: "An

Agony in the Garret," "Sweeney Agonistes," and "Coriolan" all point to the *impossibility* of a poetic drama. Like Browning, Eliot's achievement—at least as measured in 1920—lies not in drama but in "some other figure" into which he must channel his dramatic impulse.

Nevertheless, in the years following "The Metaphysical Poets," Eliot's estimation of Browning seems to rise. In a 1925 lecture on Dostoevsky, Eliot praises Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came," citing it as a work of "poetic drama" that evinces "a kind of doubleness in the action, as if it took place on two planes at once" (Bush 94). This last comment seems to ally "Childe Roland" with Eliot's own work, the action of which can be said to take place at once on the planes of the natural and of the allusive.

"The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism" (1933) finds Eliot discussing Browning in reference to a quality for which Eliot himself was sometimes criticized. He writes:

> Or difficulty may be due just to novelty: we know the ridicule accorded in turn to Wordsworth, Shelley and Keats, Tennyson and Browning—but must remark that Browning was the first to be *called* difficult; hostile critics of the earlier poets found them difficult, but called them silly. (*Selected Prose* 93)

Eliot's 1936 "In Memoriam" praises both Tennyson and Browning, the poets he had excoriated fifteen years earlier. He declares that "Tennyson is a great poet," gifted with "the finest ear since Milton," despite having "no gift at all" for narrative (*Selected Essays* 328, 331). As a point of comparison for Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Eliot cites

Sordello and *The Ring and the Book* as "the greatest [long poems] by the greatest of his contemporary poets" (330). Yet this praise is, again, double-edged: Browning is not inherently great, but only the greatest of Tennyson's contemporaries. Likewise Eliot does not clarify whether he considers *Sordello* and *The Ring and the Book* the greatest long poems of the period or merely the greatest long poems of Browning. The former is a much diminished title if one accepts that Tennyson has "no gift" for narrative; the latter is hardly a compliment at all. The final irony is that Eliot compares Tennyson, and through Tennyson, Browning, to Milton, whom Eliot had excoriated as "having done damage to the English language from which it has not wholly recovered" (145).

In "The Music of Poetry" (1942), Eliot acknowledges *en passant* one of Browning's great strengths: "There is much, and varied, fine blank verse in the nineteenth century: the nearest to colloquial speech is that of Browning—but significantly, in his monologues rather than in his plays" (*On Poetry and Poets* 35). This praise is further qualified the next year, when Eliot writes, "Browning was more of a hindrance than a help, for he had gone some way, but not far enough, in discovering a contemporary idiom" (Ricks 388).

Perhaps Eliot's fullest treatment of Browning comes with his 1953 lecture "The Three Voices of Poetry." Eliot uses Browning to define the third of his "three voices," that of "the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse; when he is saying, not what he would say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character addressing another" (*On Poetry and Poets* 89). He further refines this definition by differentiating "the voice of poetic drama" from "the voice of the poet in non-dramatic poetry which has a dramatic element in it—and

conspicuously the dramatic monologue" (94). Browning's artistic failure as a playwright and achievement as a poet suggests, according to Eliot, that "the two forms must be essentially different" and that there exists a "voice of the dramatic poet whose dramatic gifts are best exercised outside of the theatre" (94). While Browning's poetry "deserves to be characterized as dramatic," it is fundamentally opposed to the playwright's process of composition. Writing for many characters "compels" the playwright "to extract the poetry from the character, rather than impose his poetry upon it" (95). Only having to write for one character at a time, Browning always writes in his own voice. Eliot sums up the distinction this way:

> In *The Tempest*, it is Caliban who speaks; in "Caliban upon Setebos," it is Browning's voice we hear, Browning talking aloud through Caliban. It was Browning's greatest disciple, Mr. Ezra Pound, who adopted the term persona to indicate the several historical characters through whom he spoke: and the term is just. (95)

This leads Eliot to the conclusion, which he himself admits "may indeed be far too sweeping," that "dramatic monologue cannot create a character... The poet, speaking, as Browning does, in his own voice, cannot bring a character to life: he can only mimic a character otherwise known to us" (95).

Eliot is right on one point: his conclusion is indeed "far too sweeping," built on a series of creative misreadings that subtly undermine both the nature and the quality of Browning's monologues. While Eliot here makes the distinction between dramatic verse and verse drama which he had ignored in "The Metaphysical Poets," he uses such a distinction again to conflate the monologue's speaker with its implied author and with the

poet who creates both. Eliot refuses to read Browning's poetry as anything but "personal," in the Eliotic sense of the word. Perhaps his attempts to read Browning as a poet of personal confessions rather than one of dramatic masks springs from Eliot's anxiety over his own new-found role as a dramatist. By 1953, Eliot had written and seen produced *Choruses from The Rock, Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion, The Cocktail Party* and *The Confidential Clerk.* Like Browning, he was a dramatic poet and a poetic dramatist. Eliot's poetry, like Browning's, has generally been judged as more successful than his plays. "How many of us have read a play by Browning more than once?" Eliot asks (94). Thus Browning may haunt Eliot both for his influential presence in the monologue form and as an example of the dramatic poet who cannot compose sufficiently dramatic stage plays.

Eliot distances himself from Browning by characterizing Ezra Pound as "Browning's greatest disciple." However, in the very next sentence, the disciple's work swallows up the master's, for Pound's term "persona" is made to apply both to his own historical speakers and to those of Browning. Eliot's reading of the two poets erases key differences between their uses of *dramatis personae*, to borrow a term that both poets used as titles to volumes of their poetry. Quite simply, Pound's "persona" cannot be equated with Browning's "character." Indeed, Pound coined the term to differentiate it from the Browningesque character. Fra Lippo Lippi is a character—even if his voice is ultimately Browning's. Hugh Selywn Mauberly is a persona, a mask from behind which Pound speaks.

Moreover, Eliot throughout the essay seems to consider as representative of Browning only those "dramatic monologues" in which the speaker is a historical

personage. He asks "Who can forget Fra Lippo Lippi, or Andrea del Sarto, or Bishop Blougram, or the other bishop who ordered his tomb?" (94). He invokes historical speakers (if one stretches the point and considers the bishop of St. Praxed's Church as representative of a historical period) in order to conclude that the dramatic form may "only mimic a character otherwise known to us." He further argues, "When the dramatic monologue is not put into the mouth of some character already known to the reader—from history or fiction—we are likely to ask the question 'Who was the original?' (95). This may be true of Bishop Blougram, as Eliot notes, but what of the duke of "My Last Duchess," Childe Roland, the Spanish monk, Porphyria's lover, and a host of others?

The inability to create character that Eliot cites in Browning is more readily located in Pound and in Eliot himself. Hugh Kenner says of Prufrock: "J. Alfred Prufrock is a name plus a Voice. He isn't a 'character' cut out of the rest of the universe and equipped with a history and a little necessary context, like the speaker of a Browning monologue" (40). Kenner defines Prufrock less as a textual representation of a person than as a framework by which to orchestrate textual effects: Prufrock is "the center of a field of consciousness, rather yours than his: a focusing of the reader's attention, in a world made up not of cows and stones but of literary "effects" and memories prompted by words" (41). Denis Donoghue makes a similar assessment of the Eliotic speaker, arguing that "the 'I' has textual but no ontological presence" (xi). Eliot's anxious censuring and limiting of Browning for not developing his characters ultimately seems self-referential.

Long after coming to terms with Tennyson and Milton, after admitting to having been enamored as a boy with such poems as Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* and

Fitzgerald's *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam* (Ricks 398), Eliot continues to see in Robert Browning a source of contention. Both in his distancing and dismissing of the dramatic poet and in his relative silence, Eliot may indicate the centrality of Browning's enterprise to his own.

A Conspectus of Criticism Treating the Relationship between Browning and Eliot

Having discussed Eliot's construction of Browning, it is now worth delineating reviewers and critics' constructions and occlusions of Eliot's relationship to Browning. What follows is essentially a conspectus of research and opinion on the two poets from the publication of Eliot's first work to the present. I would suggest picturing the history of Browning-Eliot studies as an inverted bell curve. For the first twenty years of Eliot's career, he is compared to Browning with relative frequency. To sympathetic readers, both are poets of the psychological monologue. To hostile ones, the work of both is marked by obscurity, morbidity, and nose-tweaking. As Eliot's critical writings and the New Critical movement to which they contributed exert a growing influence over both academia and the general reading public, however, such comparisons become less frequent. Finally, beginning in the late 1960's and continuing through today, Eliot's relationship to Browning again becomes a topic of some note. Such a parabolic arc is part and parcel of the decline and subsequent rise in the stature of Victorian poetry and poetics in general.

The parabola of the Victorian poets' reputations goes a long way toward explaining why relatively little work has been done on the topic of Eliot's relationship to

Browning. As Eliot came to occupy an ever more prominent position in the New Critical canon and methodology, Browning was increasingly ignored. In the 1950's and 1960's, Eliot reaches the zenith of his centrality to English letters just as Browning reaches the nadir of his own. Thus what was necessary to lay the groundwork for a discussion of the two poets was a critical re-evaluation not only of their own work but of the larger periods or movements of which each was a part.

Eliot's caginess in regard to Browning is all the more understandable when one reads contemporary reviews of Eliot's early poetry, for several reviewers located him in the tradition of Browning. Reviewing *Prufrock and Other Observations* in June of 1917, Ezra Pound writes: "Mr. Eliot has made an advance on Browning. He has also made his dramatis personae contemporary and convincing" (Grant 72). In August of the same year, Pound elaborates on this connection:

> The most interesting poems in Victorian English are Browning's "Men and Women," or, if that statement is too absolute, let me contend that the form of these poems is the most vital form of that period of English... Since Browning there have been very few good poems of this sort. Mr. Eliot has made two notable additions to the list ["Prufrock" and "Portrait of a Lady"]. And he has placed his people in contemporary settings, which is much more difficult than to render them with medieval romantic trappings. (76)

It is worth noting that "Men and Women" could refer either to Browning's 1855 volume of poetry or to the category established in the 1863 *Poetic Works* and reproduced in subsequent compilations of Browning's poetry. Bornstein argues for the latter

interpretation, citing Pound's subsequent list of poems as evidence that he refers to the "Men and Women grouping that Browning for the 1863 rearrangement of his poems, where it contains only dramatic monologues" (1988: 134). It is therefore on a formal level—and in accordance with Browning's own last word on the form he invented—that Pound compares him to Eliot. Note, too, that the books of Browning which Eliot owned as a boy or as a young man would also have followed these formal divisions: Eliot's mother offers to send him "Browning Six Volumes," which must perforce be subsequent to the 1863 regrouping, and a collection called "Monologues."

Of course, Browning is a touchstone for Pound (see *Canto II*: "Hang it all, Robert Browning, there can be but the one Sordello"). It is perhaps not surprising to find him linking Eliot, an admired contemporary, with Browning, an admired predecessor. Nevertheless, other critics linked Eliot's *Prufrock* monologues with those of Browning—and not always favorably. An unsigned review in *The Times Literary Supplement* of 12 June, 1919, claims,

> Mr. Eliot, like Mr. Browning, likes to display out-of the way learning, he likes to surprise you by every trick he can think of. He has forgotten his emotions, his values, his sense of beauty, even his common-sense, in that one desire to surprise... (98)

Here is a charge familiar to Browning and Eliot scholars alike: that of obscurity or obscurantism. Formidably well-read, both poets write with a density and allusiveness that some elements of Victorian and Modern audiences considered deliberately opaque. The *TLS* review sounds like a distant echo of the criticism that Browning's poetry met with during his first thirty years of publishing. *Men and Women* was termed "energy

wasted and power misspent," while the reviewer G. Brimley charged Browning with "making a fool of the public" out of "willfulness, caprice, and carelessness" (*Athenaeum*, 1856; *Fraser's Magazine,* January 1856). In the 1860's, *Dramatis Personae* and *The Ring and the Book* met with overwhelming praise, and critics refurbished the reputation of *Men and Women*. Yet after *The Ring and the Book*, Browning was again charged with obscurity. The novelist Mrs. Oliphant laments in 1875: "What bewildering spirit has carried him round the fatal circle and landed him once more in those wilds of confused wordiness which made *Sordello* the wonder and fear of readers?" (Litzinger and Smalley 400). She wishes he would return to the "noble interval between which he has peopled with the *Men and Women* of his most perfect poetical effort, and with the three great figures which, amid much indifferent matter, we find in *The Ring and the Book*" (400).

In 1921, Desmond MacCarthy made an extended comparison of the two poets in an article in *The New Statesman:*

> Reread "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" or "Portrait of a Lady"; it will be obvious that he not only owes much to the diction and rhythm of Browning, but that he is doing the same thing as Browning for a more queasy, uneasy, diffident, complex generation... Like Browning, too, Mr. Eliot's favourite form is a soliloquy of the spirit or monologue. Many of his poems thus fall between the lyrical and the dramatic form; they are little mental monodramas, broken now and then after the manner of Browning by a line or two of dialogue or by exclamations such as are common in Browning's poems... (Litzinger and Smalley114)

MacCarthy may overstate the case, glossing over differences between Browning's and Eliot's forms of the soliloquy. Nevertheless, it is telling that for a man of 1921, Browning is the "obvious" analogue for Eliot's "mental monodramas." MacCarthy's insight lies in locating Eliot's indebtedness to Browning on several levels. Formally, MacCarthy senses common elements in diction, rhythm, dramatic form, and syntax (or a willingness to break syntax). Moreover, he recognizes, as George Eliot did of Browning, that each poet is concerned with dramatic representation of the individual psyche.

In a 1923 article titled "Mr. Eliot's Slug-Horn," Elinor Wylie compares Eliot himself to Roland. She writes, "His 'Waste Land' is Childe Roland's evil ground... he has set the slug-horn to his lips and blown it" (156). Wylie uses Roland as a metaphor for the role of Eliot-as-poet in confronting a cultural wasteland, but never discusses the nature of the similarities between the two poets. F. O. Matthiessen traces Eliot's indebtedness through a formal rather than a thematic vein, arguing that "Eliot's development of the dramatic soliloquy cannot be divorced from the impetus furnished by 'Men and Women' to 'Personae'" (73).

The rise of New Criticism and the concomitant decline in stature of the Victorian poets—two trends to which Eliot directly contributed—served to occlude the relationship between Browning and Eliot. In 1969, Isobel Armstrong writes that her purpose in editing a volume of new criticism on Tennyson, Browning, and Arnold is to counter,

> the great redirection of energy in English criticism initiated in this century by Eliot, Richards, and Leavis... the renewal of interest in metaphysical and eighteenth century poetry and a corresponding ebb of enthusiasm for Romantic poetry and for Victorian poetry in particular. (1)

As a result of the "redirection of energy" to which Eliot contributed, there was little discussion of Eliot's relationship to Browning from the 1940's through the 1960's. One of the few articles to link the two poets is Curtis Dahl's "The Victorian Wasteland," in which the author argues that Eliot is indebted to Browning's "Childe Roland" for some of the imagery of *The Waste Land*. Because Dahl devotes only three pages of his essay to Browning, his treatment of the relationship between the two poets is necessarily cursory. Like Wylie, Dahl does little more than note that the situation of *The Waste Land* quester is vaguely reminiscent of that of Roland. In 1974, Fleissner's comments are at once broader in scope and briefer in treatment than Dahl's article. Only two pages in length, "The Browning of T. S. Eliot" does little more than compile a handful of Eliot's comments on Browning. Susan Hardy Aiken summed up the state of Browning-Eliot criticism in 1977, observing in a footnote, "Several commentators have noted the similarity of *The Waste Land* to "Childe Roland"... but Eliot's probable debt to Browning's monologue has yet to be thoroughly explored" (35).

In recent decades, critics have again begun to explore "Eliot's probable debt to Browning's monologue" and, more generally, the literary and historical construct which is sometimes called "Victorian Modernism." In April of 1982, the Browning Institute and the Victorian Committee of the City University of New York Doctoral Program in English sponsored a conference at the Graduate Center on the topic. Papers delivered at the Victorian Modernism Conference included Cory Bieman Davies "'Natural Evolution' in 'Dramatic Essences' from Robert Browning to T. S. Eliot" and Ashton Nichols's Browning's "Modernism: The Infinite Moment as Epiphany." There is much to be said

on each subject: Davies' article is a distillation of his dissertation, while Nichols would later include his article as a chapter in *The Poetics of Epiphany: Nineteenth Century Origins of the Modern Literary Moment* (1983).

Davies begins to explore Eliot's debt to Browning's monologue, arguing "the capacities shared by Browning and Eliot for approaching certain truths and deeper realities through dramatic perspectives reveal that Browning's dramatic poetic forms and themes touched Eliot's defiantly modern poetry most creatively" (36). His comparisons of "Prufrock" with "Andrea del Sarto" and of "My Last Duchess" with "Portrait of a Lady" are logical and insightful. Yet in the twelve pages of his article, Davies can only scratch the surface of the two poets' shared capacities. While he argues that "[t]he monologue form and more broadly the use of dramatic elements in verse allow Eliot and Browning to express the search for understanding and meaning in life in a dramatic way," Davies does not sufficiently explore the end results of this "search for understanding," nor does he identify the ways in which Browning's and Eliot's respective searchers differ (Davies 29). The distinction which he does make between the two poets seems a dubious one: "Browning's sanity separates him from his self-destructive and self-deluding characters in a way that Eliot's own psychological troubles could not separate him from his anxious, suffering, and fragmented speakers" (Davies 30). Moreover, I would argue that in emphasizing the dramatic aspects of the two poets' monologues, Davies's analysis rests too heavily on earlier codifications of the dramatic monologue form.

Nichols identifies in Browning's poetry an "epiphanic imagination" that he traces from Wordsworth's "spots of time" to the epiphanies of Joyce's fiction. However, in making Joyce his touchstone for Modernism, Nichols gives less attention to the proto-

Eliotic aspects of Browning's work. In *The Poetics of Epiphany*, Browning is only addressed in the one chapter that grew out of the conference paper.

Scholars of Modernism and of Eliot have likewise been doing work on Eliot's Victorian sources. In 1983, Tobin breaks critical ground by reading Eliot in light of Tennyson and Arnold. As I mentioned earlier, however, both Tobin (1983) and Christ (1981 and 1984) say little about the relationship between Browning and Eliot. In 1987, Robert Crawford writes of Eliot's work in relation to Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* and Davidson's "Thirty Bob a Week." One of Crawford's profoundest insights lies in recognizing that because Eliot only came to read Dante after reading Thomson, Thomson's long poem directed Eliot's reading of Dante. Menand's *Discovering Modernism: T. S. Eliot and His Context*, also published in 1987, traces the intellectual and aesthetic movements out of which Eliot's earliest poetry germinated. French Symbolism and fin-de-siècle English decadent poetry figure heavily in Menand's study.

Nearly three decades after Aiken's puzzled footnote, and a full two decades after the Victorian Modernism Conference, there still has been no book-length study of Browning and Eliot. While there are several good articles studying the two poets, each is necessarily limited in scope. Loucks, Vondersmith, and Wilkes each contrast a poem by Eliot with one by Browning, seeking to locate indebtedness or commonality. As much as each of these articles may illuminate a given pair of poems—such as "The Last Ride Together" and "Prufrock" (Wilkes) or "My Last Duchess" and "Prufrock" (Vondersmith)—neither fully articulates the relationship between the two poets who wrote those poems. Wilkes, for example, argues that the speaker of "The Last Ride Together" is, like Prufrock, "rendered inarticulate" by the feminine gaze (108). This is

an insightful reading, but its implications for the further study of Browning and Eliot are rather limited.

Nor has the larger issue of Victorian Modernism been satisfactorily delineated—despite the fine work of Christ, Bornstein, Nichols, and others. In 2003, Kreilkamp argued that Victorianists continue to operate within self-imposed limits. He demonstrates this trend by comparing English formulations of Modernism with French, German and American ones:

> To put the point baldly: why do we have no English Charles Baudelaire, no mid-nineteenth-century poet whose work participates, explicitly and consciously, in the early theorization of modernity occurring at the time in France and Germany and America? Is it possible that this lack is at least in part a byproduct of the questions we ask of Victorian poetry? (605)

Kreilkamp uses Browning as a test case for his theory, wondering "how we might reconfigure our understanding of Browning's work by re-situating it in a visual field defined not by painting, but by photography" (607). He cites the reference to "the calotypist's skill" in "Mesmerism," as well as an anecdote of a lost photograph of Browning at the age of forty-four, to challenge the positioning of Browning as a backward-looking medievalist rather than as a proto-Modern. He concludes:

> That Browning may not have seen his own work as grappling with a Baudelairian modern of rupture, transience, and discontinuity does not mean that we need limit ourselves with the boundaries of his own self-understanding. (608)

Kreilkamp raises more questions than he answers, but his article is certainly provocative in its challenging of the assumptions with which critics approach Victorian poetry and the constructedness of the Victorian / Modernist dichotomy.

Likewise Jessica Feldman, in 2001, writes,

> It is important to tell critical stories of both destruction *and* preservation, and one way to do so is to bring the mid-century high Victorian into relation with high modernism. As we do so, a Victorian modernist aesthetic of both rupture and continuity, of stark differences and relations across gaps, develops. (453)

There is something exhortatory about Feldman's statement, as if she were rallying a host of backsliding academics. What is perhaps more striking than the tone of Feldman's statement is the need for her to make it at all: Victorian Modernism has, as demonstrated above, been talked about for the past thirty years.

Feldman's 2002 book continues to explore the Victorian Modernist aesthetic. She throws a wide net, identifying in Ruskin, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Augusta Evans, and William James qualities that anticipate High Modernism. However, while her study is valuable for its reconsideration of literary periods, it is of tangential value to students of Browning and Eliot. In addition, Feldman limits herself by remaining within the confines of the Victorian period which she seeks to recharacterize. Her argument might be more compelling were she to consider not only Victorians, but writers, artists and philosophers who are considered Modernists and who worked after 1901.

Since there is no extended treatment of Browning and Eliot, the critical precedent on which my own work is founded consists of articles (Dahl, Davies, Fleissner, Flowers,

Harmon, Loucks, Menaghan, Plasa, Vondersmith, Wilkes), dissertations (Blanton, Daubs, Davies), and relevant selections of critical texts treating Browning, Eliot, or the dramatic and the interior monologue. Works of criticism devoted to Browning's poetry occasionally compare his work with Eliot, and vice versa; thus footnotes, digressions, and passing references make up a great deal of the critical groundwork for this project. Additionally, there is profit in comparing separate works that treat Browning and Eliot in relation to a common theme or influence, such as Martin's treatment of Browning and Romanticism (1985) and Bornstein's treatment of Yeats, Eliot, Stevens, and Romanticism (1976). Read together, the two books illuminate a shared aspect of Browning's and Eliot's poetic heritage: the extent to which each writes out of an anxious post-Romantic belatedness. I am wary, however, of putting too much emphasis on Romanticism as the precursor of a Victorian and modern interest in psychological poetry.

Likewise, there are countless articles positioned "one degree of separation" from a discussion of Browning and Eliot. For example, Shaw reads Browning in light of F. H. Bradley, the philosopher on whom Eliot would write his dissertation and to whom he would refer in *The Waste Land* notes (1987). Bornstein's 1985 chapter comparing Browning and Pound—only one of several studies of the two poets—is similarly helpful when brought to bear on Eliot.

The reader who would better understand the relationship between the poetry of Browning and Eliot must therefore be a magpie, weaving together bits and pieces of texts to create a whole. The scattershot nature of the criticism on Browning and Eliot is one of the most compelling arguments for undertaking a long study of the two. The issue is less that critics have overlooked commonalities between these poets—for from the very outset

Eliot has been compared to Browning—but that none has fully explored the nature and implications of these commonalities. As a result, existing assessments of the two poets tend to be either extremely particularized, like Loucks' "A Second Browning Allusion in Eliot's 'Burbank' Poem", or sweepingly general, like Howe's *The Dramatic Monologue*. I would argue that an extended comparison of these two poets would be of value both to Browning and to Eliot criticism.

Browning, Eliot, and the Transcendence of the Self

This study may have implications beyond the two poets and handful of poems it treats. Browning and Eliot share an anxious fascination with a subjectivity that threatens to slip into solipsism and with the possibility of an objective, ordering principle, located in art or in the divine, that would counter such radical subjectivity. For each, dramatic or psychological poetry serves both as the expression of radical subjectivity and the means for transcending the subjective. The monologues of each therefore represent the threshold between perceivable phenomena and unperceivable psychological processes. I would argue that this sort of psychophenomenal construction—the representation of reality as perceived, recalled or imagined by a single individual—is the hallmark of Modernism *per se*, central not only to the poetry of Eliot and Pound but to the novels of Ford, Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner, to name a few.

Because the monologues and long poems of Browning and Eliot are hybrid forms impelled by dramatic, lyric, and, at times, didactic impulses, my own line of inquiry draws both on studies of poetic form (Armstrong, Brooks, Christ, Howe, Langbaum,

Nichols, Sessions) and of narrative theory (Bakhtin, Bal, Barthes, Booth, Cohn, Iser, Kermode). In terms of poetics I am concerned with the tension between prosody and colloquial speech, with rhyme as a means of concentration for Browning and as an expression of conformity for Eliot, and with the varied effects of employing different rhythms and forms within the context of a long poem. On the narratological level, relationships between implied author, monologist, auditor, and implied reader—in other words, the processes of mediation inherent to storytelling—are central to any discussion of the monologue. Additionally, taking a narratological approach to these monologues opens up the different levels of the text on which Browning and Eliot produce irony and meaning. Questions of influence, appropriation, and allusion (Bloom, Ellmann, Kenner, Menand) will also be central to this argument.

In discussing the interplay of a perceiving or a recalling consciousness with the phenomenal world, this dissertation is an essay in non-Freudian psychology. Rather than analyze the poetry of Browning and Eliot according to Freud's terminology (or Jung's, or Lacan's, or that of any other psychoanalyst or psychoanalytic critic), I will try, when possible, to eschew codified terminology altogether as distorting the representation of individual consciousness manifest in the poetry of Browning and Eliot. My interest lies not with applying a psychological model to the poetry, but with assessing the relationship between the individual mind, the phenomenal world, and some transcendent ordering principle as represented in the poetry itself. This approach puts the psychological explorations of Browning and Eliot on equal footing with those of Freud and Jung, rather than subordinating poetry to the paradigms of psychoanalysis. In other words, I read poets and psychoanalysts alike as engaged in studies of subjectivity and selfhood that are

part of the *zeitgeist* of the second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth.

Faas's study of the interpenetration of psychiatry and psychological poetry is again of use here. Faas sees psychological poetry as evolving not out of the disciplines that would eventually become psychiatry, but alongside those disciplines as common products of an eighteenth century inward turn. Browning, despite his interest in psychological poetry, "paid little or no attention" to the science of psychology (57). Faas argues that,

> Browning's case, with its apparent lack of direct contact between mental science and the new dramatic-psychological poetry, suggests a common source from which this poetic genre as well as early psychiatry emerged in more or less separate streams. Broadly speaking, this shared source can be described as the "invention of the self" (to use the title of a recent study) preceding Romanticism. (57)

Such an argument renders reductive studies which would attribute Browning's or Eliot's interest in representing psychological processes either to a post-Romantic anxiety or to the rise of psychoanalysis and the science of the mind. Faas argues that after Montaigne and Francis Bacon, philosophers "turned from outer reality to man's inner world" (14). Browning and Eliot are heirs of this larger cultural shift, and to subordinate their psychological explorations to the long poems of the Romantics or to the codifications of psychologists and psychoanalysts is to miss the far-reaching implications of their shared interest in subjective consciousness.

In comparing these two poets, I do not wish to claim Eliot as Browning's disciple. Like Carol Christ and Richard Ellmann, I am wary of the oversimplifications inherent in Bloom's Freudian, family-plot-derived influence theory. Neither would I represent their relationship as merely analogical, as are the histories of any given pair of Greek and Roman leaders in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. Instead, I would borrow an analogy from the science of light to argue that these poets are both a "wave" of influence and independent "particles"—and whether they appear as one or the other depends upon the mode by which their relationship is measured. My own approach will construct the relationship between the two poets in both respects, taking stock of Browning as a figure against whom Eliot consciously and unconsciously reacted and as a poet who is preoccupied with some of the same questions of psychology, phenomenology, and poetry-as-prophesy that will later preoccupy Eliot. The shared preoccupations of the latter model do not constitute influence or indebtedness *per se*. Ultimately, I propose to encompass both the influential and the analogical model by the *tertium quid* of "confluence." In Browning and Eliot, any number of cultural and scientific developments, literary and intellectual influences, and personal concerns and experiences come to fruition in poetry that explores the boundaries between consciousness, objective reality, and a transcendent, meaning-making order. The psychological poems of Browning and Eliot are shaped by these common developments—but Browning's poetry is, in turn, one of the developments that shapes that of Eliot.

My interest lies in how each poet exploits a particular poetic form, and in how their respective poems share a matrix of formal and thematic commonalities. It is therefore particularly important to take a diachronic approach to the poems of both

writers: as Eliot's poems change dramatically in form and content between 1910 and 1930, so too does his relationship to Browning's work. Eliot's position in regard to Browning is a shifting one, and it is, in my reading, partly Eliot's own evolving sense of order and tradition which both brings him back to Browning's form of the psychological monologue and which causes him to abandon it for good.

Moreover, by studying common elements in Browning's and Eliot's poems, I hope to challenge the facile classification of the one poet as "Victorian" and the other as "Modern." Modernism, despite its name, refers less to a historical period than to a matrix of thematic and formal elements. Browning is a great transitional figure: many of his works can be read as Modernist despite their having been composed in the middle of the nineteenth-century. Likewise, some of the elements and preoccupations central to Eliot's poetry are exceedingly "Victorian," as evinced by both his manuscripts and his finished poems. Redefining the boundaries of these two literatures means establishing an alternative to Virginia Woolf's assertion that "on or about December 1910, human character changed." Browning and Eliot's shared enterprise is concerned with subjectivity, artifice, and the interplay between the perceiving consciousness and that which is perceived. Where Browning's monologues represent psychological processes through a mimicking of the spoken word, Eliot's abiding concern was with what I would term the "recalled scanned word;" Eliot's form of psychological monologue is intertextual in a way that Browning's is not. The shift in consciousness between the Browning speaker and the Eliot speaker has less to do with a movement from spoken to psychological monologue than with one from "intradiegetical" to "extradiegetical" constructions of meaning. Despite, or perhaps because of, their interest in the

individual's flawed conception of reality, each would posit an objective order by which the subjective may be judged. In the smithy of the poetic monologue, both poets fuse psychology and phenomenology, judgment and sympathy, subjectivity and objectivity, obscurity and revelation.

Yet while Browning and Eliot alike are preoccupied with the individual man's quest for transcendent vision and for a concomitant escape from the prison of the self, that quest for transcendence ultimately leads them in two opposite directions. For Browning, transcendence of the self and of the finite always leads to a renewed sense of self and a renewed engagement in temporality and materiality. For Eliot, the man who once transcends the confines of the finite and of his own ego can never again be wholly satisfied with the world beyond which he has briefly seen.

These opposing models of the relationship between materiality and spirituality may be attributable to more than the dissimilar temperaments of Browning and Eliot. I would identify in the dichotomy of engagement and renunciation an essential divide between Victorian and Modernist attitudes toward progress and toward man's ability to transform the world in which he lives through enlightened thought and well-intentioned action—particularly the thoughts and actions of the poet. Browning's characters are judged by their willingness to engage in a struggle rather than by the fruits of that struggle. The monologue of Childe Roland, for example, ends with the knight declaring himself ready to do battle with the thing in the Dark Tower. The outcome of the struggle is less important than the marshalling of will and purpose which leads him to declare himself. Pope Innocent of *The Ring and the Book* explicitly argues that men should be judged by the intention with which they act rather than by the outcome of their actions:

"For I am ware it is the seed of act, / God holds appraising in His hollow palm, / Not act grown great thence on the world below (10.272). Such a philosophy justifies the Pope in assigning guilt and innocence to the parties in the Roman murder case. If he judges wrongly, he will say, "God who set me to judge thee, meted out, / So much of judging faculty, no more: / Ask Him if I was slack in use thereof" (10.265). As a reader and a writer, Innocent therefore has license to construct a whole truth out of subjective fragments and to use that truth as an objective standard by which to decide the case before him. Karshish, finally, articulates a Christian cosmology through engagement with the particular and the finite. A proto-scientist, Karshish uses empirical mode of observation and reflection to approach both Lazarus' state of grace and the presence of the Christian God. While each of these three Browning characters is situated in a different historical or mythic setting, each is also a respectable Victorian gentleman. In his portrayals of characters who struggle to act with purpose, Browning articulates his own version of the Carlylian "gospel of work." Like Darwin's *Origin of Species*, Browning's poetry both reflects and contributes to Victorian notions of progress.

For Eliot, good intentions, a readiness to struggle, and a desire to transform the world through engagement are less wholly valedictory traits. While World War I may have been the ultimate and most dramatic refutation of the Victorian work ethic, Eliot's poetry from before the war, including "Prufrock," which was written in 1911, also evinces a distrust of Victorian notions of progress and human advancement. This distrust becomes all the more explicit in *The Waste Land*, a work which was greeted as the definitive statement on post-war Europe. Eliot's eventual conversion to Christianity did not reverse his distrust of struggle as the means to transcendence, but confirmed it. In

poems such as "Journey of the Magi," a religious experience leads one to withdraw from the world rather than engage with it. For Eliot, as for so many of the Modernists, history gives the lie to the inherent nobility of good intentions.

The study of Browning and Eliot involves questioning some of the traditional distinctions between Victorian and Modernist poetry and establishing new ones in their place. I would argue that many of Browning's and Eliot's characters suffer from a similar condition: burdened by a self-consciousness that threatens to trap them in a solipsistic prison of memory and of self-reflexive perception, each desires to apprehend a transcendent order which would give his life meaning. Taken to its extreme, Browning and Eliot's preoccupation with the subjective nature of the individual psyche turns grotesque, producing the diseased minds of Guido and Sweeney, the twisted landscapes of "Childe Roland" and "Prufrock," the quasi-autism of Browning's Lazarus, and the thanatic ennui of Eliot's Magus. Their interest in a transcendent order, on the other hand, manifests itself both in their characters' visions and epiphanies and in Browning's and Eliot's orchestration of individual monologues and voices into larger, architectonic wholes.

Despite the common condition from which so many of their characters suffer, Browning and Eliot differ in how they represent the relationship between the individual, the material world which he inhabits, and the transcendent order with which he seeks to put himself in communication. For Browning's characters, struggle and engagement are the means by which one reaches beyond the material and the self-iterative to the transcendent. By the same token, an apprehension of this transcendent order leads to a reengagement with the material and a renewed sense of self: Browning's poetry validates

the enlightened individual's struggle to transform his world according to the transcendent pattern which he has, however briefly, glimpsed.

Eliot's characters find transcendence not through a self-affirming struggle but through the renunciation of struggle and self alike. The profoundest shift between the poetry of Browning and Eliot is therefore a shift in the transformative capability each ascribes to the individual. In contrast to Browning, Eliot does not posit man as having the capacity to transform his world according to the mandates of a transcendent vision: the transcendent order and the world of appearances are two masters which one man cannot serve.

Chapter 2:

The *Viae Dolorosae* of Roland and Prufrock

In 1903, G. K. Chesterton wrote of Robert Browning's "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came":

> It is the hint of an entirely new and curious type of poetry, the poetry of the shabby and hungry aspect of the earth itself... This is a perfect realisation of that eerie sentiment which comes upon us, not so often among mountains and water-falls, as it does on some half starved common at twilight, or in walking down some grey mean street. It is the song of the beauty of refuse; and Browning was the first to sing it. (157-9)

Others had praised Browning for his depictions of the grotesque. Walter Bagehot, in the 1864 essay "Wordsworth, Tennyson, and Browning; or Pure, Ornate, and Grotesque Art in English Poetry," had identified Browning as "the prolific master" of the grotesque manner, one who "shows you what ought to be by what ought not to be... reminds you of the perfect image, by showing you the distorted and imperfect image" (Litzinger and Smalley 274). Chesterton's great insight lies not in identifying the "shabby and hungry aspect" of "Childe Roland," but in allying the poem's blighted wasteland with the gray streets of the modern, industrialized city. Chesterton's "half starved common at twilight" seems to prefigure the "certain half-deserted streets" that J. Alfred Prufrock wanders "When the evening in spread out against the sky" (2). Writing on the threshold between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Chesterton finds in the then half-century old

"Childe Roland" an element both distinctly modern ("the hint of an entirely new and curious type of poetry") and distinctly urban. What is this modern(ist) element in "Childe Roland" and how does it somehow come to fruition in T.S. Eliot's shabby, oppressive, "unreal city"? Answering this question involves redrawing the boundaries between Victorian and Modernist poetry—locating, to stretch the metaphor, the "gray plain" of "Childe Roland" and the "blackened streets" of *Prufrock and Other Observations* and *The Waste Land* on the same map.

Eliot is indebted to Browning not only for his depiction of what Chesterton terms the beauty of refuse, but for his melding of psychology and geography in a speaker's self-illuminating descriptions of landscape and architectural structures. In Eliot's city, as in Roland's wasteland, one's self and one's surroundings are inextricably bound. This exploration of what I would call a "psychogeography"—an amalgam of sensory impressions, memory, the conscious and unconscious operations of the perceiving psyche, and the transformative act of telling—is one of the common threads between "Childe Roland" and much of Eliot's early poetry. Not only "Prufrock," but "Portrait of a Lady," "Preludes," "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," and the city sequences from the notebook Eliot tentatively titled *Inventions of the March Hare* are concerned with this mingling of psychology and geography. Understanding the way in which the psychogeography of "Childe Roland" informs that of "Prufrock" lays the groundwork for a later discussion of *The Waste Land*, the work in which Roland's barren plain—obscured by streetlamps and tenement buildings in the *Prufrock* poems—reappears in its most recognizable form.

Other critics and reviewers have noted the similarities between Browning's and Eliot's uses of landscape, especially as manifested in "Childe Roland" and *The Waste Land*. In "Mr. Eliot's Slug–Horn" (1923), Wylie, as I have mentioned before, uses "Childe Roland" as a metaphor to describe Eliot's role as a poet, claiming "His 'Waste Land' is Childe Roland's evil ground... he has set the slug-horn to his lips and blown it" (156). Wylie's review could best be described as intuitive; she never actually analyzes the relationship between the two poems or the implications of comparing a character of Browning's to Eliot himself. Childe Roland and his wasteland are allusive and therefore elusive in Wylie's analysis: she does not explicitly compare the landscapes or protagonists of Browning's and Eliot's poems.

Curtis Dahl claims that "[t]he wasteland, often thought to be a modern discovery, had been thoroughly explored by the Victorians before the twentieth century was born" (347). Dahl cites "Childe Roland" as one of a handful of Victorian poems that prefigure "The Waste Land" (others include Tennyson's *The Holy Grail*, Arnold's "Rugby Chapel," a number of Swinburne's lyrics, and Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night*). In a very short treatment of "Childe Roland," he associates the fallen character of Roland's grey plain with that of Eliot's landscapes: "...like the broken pillar in Eliot's *The Hollow Men*, everything here speaks of what has been and is now no longer. This land has not always been desert" (343). Yet Dahl's reading of "Childe Roland" is deeply flawed, in that it takes Roland's account of the wasteland at face value. Dahl believes that the landscape through which Roland travels is objectively grotesque: Roland "senses its evilness" (343). He does not question whether Roland may be projecting his own morbid vision onto the landscape. Rather, he posits Browning's poem as an ultimately

hopeful vision of a wasteland "that can be conquered by man's unaided courage... a field of victory" (343).

W. David Shaw makes a better assessment of Roland's gray plain (1968):

> The setting is not scrupulously externalized but becomes a kind of interior landscape, like the 'Unreal City' of T. S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land.' The nightmare quality is evident in the way in which events merge without apparent logic or transition. (129)

While Shaw does not elaborate on this point, his characterization of the landscape as nightmarish allies Roland's descriptions of terrain with the processes of the subconscious.

Ronald Bush says of *The Waste Land*:

> Lines 344 and 345 ("red sullen faces sneer and snarl from doors of mudcracked houses") tell us we are as much in the world of Browning's Childe Roland'—a poem Eliot greatly admired—as in the world of Jessie Weston. (74)

Bush cites Eliot's coupling of "Childe Roland" with the novels of Dostoevsky in his 1925 lecture on doubleness as the mark of admiration. Neither Dahl, Shaw, nor Bush fully explore what is perhaps the most vital link between Roland's blighted landscape and the blighted streetscape of "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land*: the interplay between the perceiving, recalling consciousness and that which is perceived and recalled.

Aiken, on the other hand, is aware of the role the individual plays in constructing his environment. She identifies in the landscapes of "Childe Roland" and *The Waste Land* a comparable degree of subjectivity:

> Browning's treatment of topographical imagery takes to the negative extreme Wordsworth's dictum that we "half-create" what we perceive: the landscape, like that of Tennyson's "Mariana" or Eliot's *The Waste Land*, is both external and internal, the two dimensions being superimposed so that ultimately they become indistinguishable. (25)

"Mariana," incidentally, will be one of the touchstones of Carol Christ's *The Finer Optic*, a study which likewise reads particularity and minuteness of detail as indicative of the fevered psychological state of the perceiver.

Gregory Jay, too, recognizes that landscape is more than a stage setting for Browning and Eliot. His analysis of the relationship between place and persona in Browning and Eliot is worth quoting at length:

> What Browning hands on to Eliot and Pound is the use of these domains as the place to seek the lessons of the genius loci, which in Browning (as in the Jacobeans) becomes difficult to distinguish from the mental daemons who inspire murder and adultery or block the way of the artistic genius. In Eliot as well as in Browning, the use of historical allusions may denote a timeless truth behind the events of time and so serve the same logocentric function as nature once had... The poetic language of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," however, largely succeeds in becoming the genius loci of intertextuality, its voice a nonidentity of differing elements drawn from the poetic landscape. (96-7)

Prufrock is haunted by great artists and their creations (Michelangelo, Hamlet, Nerval's *sirene*) just as Roland is haunted by the examples of his fallen peers. Roland's quest can

be read allegorically as a stand-in for poetic composition: Bloom, for one, bases each of his several analyses of the poem on this reading. Yet such a reading involves imposing a meaning on the poem which is not explicitly located within it; nothing in the work itself indicates that Roland is meant to represent a poet. Prufrock's quest, on the other hand, is more explicitly concerned with poetry, for remembered poetry makes up part of the psychogeographic terrain through which his quest takes him. Or, to put it another way, while Prufrock moves through a landscape which lacks the poetic materials from which his forerunners drew inspiration, his mind as it reflects on that landscape—or his reflections as constructed by the Eliotic consciousness—echoes Shakespeare and Nerval.

Criticism treating "Childe Roland" and *The Waste Land* generally focuses on the products of the individual's mode of perception and memory—Roland's plain or Prufrock's city as each man describes it—to the exclusion of the processes by which one constructs the landscape which he sees and remembers. Those critics who do recognize that place represents, for Browning and Eliot, the externalization of psychology, tend to mention this process only in passing. Moreover, Roland's grey plain has generally been linked to the explicitly symbolic landscape of *The Waste Land* rather than to the streetscape of Prufrock. I would argue that "Prufrock" is an equally or more compelling analogue for "Childe Roland" than is *The Waste Land*, in that both poems are concerned with the nascent poet or prophet's quest through a hostile landscape that is half of his own making and through which he must pass in order to be released from the prison of a solipsistic, paralyzing self-consciousness. Roland and Prufrock both undertake psychological pilgrimages, journeys through landscapes which reflect their own

psychological states, in search of some means for transcending the exigencies and limits of their own psyches.

Yet the routes by which Roland and Prufrock would seek release from suffering and from the self, and the ultimate forms their release takes, are fundamentally different and point to a profound division between Browning's and Eliot's concept of self-consciousness. Roland and Prufrock resemble each other for much of their respective journey: enervated and disillusioned, each wishes to escape from an existence which seems devoid of purpose. Yet the confrontation at the Dark Tower reveals that Roland's suffering and despair have been the means of preparing him for the epiphany at the Dark Tower. In announcing himself at the tower, he regains his purpose and rises from despair. Blowing on the slughorn represents both an affirmation of selfhood and the entry into an order which transcends that self. Roland's triumph will be measured not by his success or failure in his engagement with the tower's inhabitant, but rather by his very willingness to engage. This validation of well-intentioned struggle is central to Browning's portrayal of heroism. Indeed, his great heroes, artists, and villains are all marked by an indomitable sense of self and by a readiness to struggle with the world in order to transform its materials according to one's own concept of the good.

Prufrock may share much of Roland's enervation and disillusionment, but his psychological pilgrimage leads in a very different direction from that of Browning's knight. Where Roland's moment of greatness involves a validation of his individual identity and of engagement as the route to transcendence, Prufrock will find release from paralyzing self-consciousness and ennui not in selfhood and engagement, but in self-abnegation and renunciation. The well-intentioned struggle that is so central to

Browning's work simply does not produce results for Prufrock; it can be invalidated by a woman shifting a pillow and saying "That is not what I meant at all." Prufrock cannot escape the smoky streets and the stifling parlors by struggling to transform them, but only by renouncing them and passing into the womb-like chambers of the sea. Prufrock's vision of lingering with the mermaids is incompatible with his diurnal rounds in the grey and Godless city. Throughout Eliot's work, individuals must become "disillusioned with their disillusionment" not by struggling to transform the world and to assert their selfhood, but by retreating from the world and the self. Like the climber of the purgatorial stair in "Ash Wednesday," the Eliotic protagonist must leave below the manifestation of himself that is "struggling with the devil of the stair who wears / The deceitful face of hope and of despair" (3.5-6). Roland's struggle, in its most despairing and most hopeful phases alike, is not a viable route to transcendence for Eliot's characters. For Prufrock, as for the quester of *The Waste Land*, the Magus, and so many other Eliotic figures, purpose and order is found in a renunciation of, rather than an engagement with, the world as one finds it.

Let me indulge briefly in what Cleanth Brooks terms "the heresy of paraphrase" in order to review the plot of "Childe Roland." Roland is a questing knight-in-training, one who has wandered so long that he no longer wishes to succeed, but only to fail righteously:

> Thus, I had so long suffered in this quest,
> Heard failure prophesied so oft, been writ
> So many times among "The Band"—to wit,

> The knights who to the Dark Tower's search addressed
> Their steps—that just to fail as they, seemed best,
> And all the doubt was now—should I be fit? (37-42)

Following the advice of a "hateful cripple," he turns onto the plain which is said to lead to the Dark Tower. He crosses on foot a land which is, by his account, grotesque and wasted. And yet the flora and fauna which evoke his hatred and disgust seem pedestrian enough: a horse, an unseen water rat, a stand of willows, grass. Roland's revulsion reveals as much about himself as it does of the land through which he walks. Tucker's observation concerning Browning's "A Toccata of Galuppi's" helps to illuminate the relationship between the reader of "Childe Roland" and the plain across which Roland rides: like Galuppi's music, the landscape "enters the poem only as subject to the speaker's lyric sovereignty over interpretation" (190-1). The reader has no access to the terrain through which Roland walks other than through Roland's representation of it.

Roland's morbidity of vision expresses itself in his grotesque metaphors. For metaphor-making is a form of translation; indeed, the words "metaphor" and "translation," Greek and Latin respectively, are literally equivalent in meaning: to carry across. Roland's metaphors thus serve as a Rosetta Stone, enabling one to read Roland's psychological "translation" of any given external phenomenon. The metaphor fuses the psychological and the phenomenological. The setting sun, for Roland, "shot one grim / Red leer to see the plain catch its estray" (47-8). The reader can take it on faith that the sun did indeed set as Roland walked across the plain. That the sun was maliciously pleased to see the plain "catch" the straying Roland is less readily believable. To what extent is Roland's positing of malign agency on the sunset a "bad translation"? More

important, is it reasonable to treat Roland's description of this sunset with more suspicion (as less reliable a depiction of the natural world) than one would, say, Housman's (or his Shropshire Lad's) description of a cherry tree in bloom as "wearing white for Easter-tide"? All metaphors say something about their creators: the issue is not merely whether Roland's descriptions of his surroundings are reliable, but what they reveal about his own inner life. His metaphors evince a morbidity and fatalism that translate his surroundings into images of the grotesque.

In the simile—arguably a more consciously constructed figure of speech than the metaphor in that it explicitly invokes a term of comparison—Roland likewise conjures images of death and decay. He says, "As for the grass, it grew as scant as hair / In leprosy; thin dry blades pricked the mud / Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood" (73-75). The scant grass serves as a kind of Rorschach test for Roland. It stimulates him to impose meaning upon itself. Roland's monologue is rife with examples of this associative process that couples the landscape which he observes with images of the grotesque:

> A sudden little river crossed my path
> As unexpected as a serpent comes. (109-10)

> Drenched willows flung them headlong in a fit
> Of mute despair, a suicidal throng: (119-20)

> ...some palsied oak, a cleft in him
> Like a distorted mouth that splits its rim

Gaping at death, and dies while it recoils. (154-6)

Even flora takes on sentience and animation in Roland's fatalistic thought processes. The river is menacing, the willows suicidal, the oak dismayed and dying.

The psyche constructs the phenomenal world not merely on the basis of sight but on the impressions offered by all five senses. What Roland hears—and, presumably, feels, smells, and tastes—is as subjected to morbid interpretation and association as what he sees. Thus when he thrusts his spear into the river he says "—It may have been a water-rat I speared, / But, ugh! it sounded like a baby's shriek" (125-6). There is no possibility of an "objective" description of the phenomenal world of the grey plain, for Roland's account is thrice removed from the phenomena he describes: first, by the interpretive process whereby the psyche and the five senses gather impressions and make associations; next, by the passage of time and the distorting operation of memory; and finally, by the recasting of memories into the language of a narrative. Roland's description of the plain across which his quest took him is more accurately a description of his memory of his impressions of the plain.

Nor is Roland wholly blind to the subjective nature of his own perceptions and memories. Tucker's observations concerning the speaker in "A Toccata for Galuppi" can again be applied with validity to "Childe Roland:"

> the readerly balancing of sympathy and judgment, which figures so prominently in recent critical appraisal of the dramatic monologue as a literary genre, is here anticipated and deeply internalized within the speaker. To read the poem is to follow a prior balancing act, in the course of which Browning's complex speaker unsteadily commiserates or

> condemns the various intentions that make him up. This speaker is quite capable of constructing a partial critique of his own convulsive rigidities. (191)

Tucker quite deftly reworks Langbaum's thesis from *The Poetry of Experience*, making the Browning character more aware of the dynamics of self-representation. Whatever else Roland may be, he is not monomaniacal: like the reader, he is caught up in a process of both sympathizing with and judging his own experience. In his description of what might have been a water rat, for example, Roland proffers two options: "it may have been... But... it sounded like..." (125-6). Such a construction indicates Roland's awareness that what he perceives is not synonymous with what actually *is*. Roland involves his auditor in the processes of reconstructing his perceptions and inferring from those perceptions the actual phenomena which he perceived. This process of self-examination is one of the structuring principles by which Roland renders an account of his journey.

Remembering Cuthbert, Roland again distinguishes between actuality and the intensity of his imagination:

> I *fancied* Cuthbert's reddening face
> Beneath its garniture of curly gold,
> Dear fellow, till I *almost* felt him fold
> An arm in mine to fix me to the place (91-4; italics mine)

Roland knows the difference between "fancy" and vision. Cuthbert's face is "reddening" rather than "red"—dynamic and animated rather than static and pictorial—yet still Roland is aware that Cuthbert exists only in his mind. Likewise the modifier "almost"

distinguishes memory from hallucination. Such a weighing of impressions and emotions against hard reality renders Roland's final vision, which is more than memory or hallucination, all the more powerful. Roland believes his vision of the fallen peers ringing the hillside to be actual rather than fancied, and his earlier distinctions between perception and reality establish his reliability as a seer of true visions.

Like Roland, J. Alfred Prufrock is on a quest which he seems to anticipate will end in failure. The streets through which Prufrock wanders, an urban rather than a rural wasteland, lead him to an "an overwhelming question." John Mayer writes,

> To quest is to search after, to pursue some special object or destiny, to seek out truth with special fervor. "Quest" is related etymologically to "question," which may imply either an asking after knowledge or a testing of it. The need to ask a question is central to 'Prufrock,' the Grail legend, and the waste land myth; it is an Eliot compulsion. (15)

Prufrock's city is, as Mayer describes it, the *via dolorosa* which the quester must travel in order to find enlightenment (67). Although Prufrock never asks his own question, some version of the Eliotic quester may hear an answer in the last section of *The Waste Land*, "What the Thunder Said." *The Waste Land* will make explicit the wasted character of Prufrock's city by coupling it with the desert of Ezekiel, the desert ringing Dante's hell, and the deserted chapel that once held the Holy Grail.

Graham Greene writes, in *The Heart of the Matter*, "No one can speak a monologue for long alone—another voice will always make itself heard; every monologue sooner or later becomes a discussion" (230). Prufrock has spoken, or

thought, for long enough that his own monologue has become such a discussion. The familiar, conversational tone of the first line, "Let us go then, you and I," reveals how comfortable Prufrock has become in this dialogic relationship with his own consciousness. The "you" and the "I," as many critics have noted, are both aspects of Prufrock himself. The "you" of the drawing room, the coffee spoons, and the stair is being called by the "I" of the buried life. This "I" has an authorial power that Prufrock, in his daily life, lacks. Prufrock's pilgrimage is therefore bent on bringing his two selves together. At the poem's conclusion, Prufrock's two halves are, however briefly, one: "We have lingered in the chambers of the sea."

Prufrock shares Roland's morbidity of vision. The sunset is as ominous for him as it is for Roland: "the evening is spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table" (4). In "Prufrock's Pervigilium," one of the three poems in Eliot's manuscript drafts that eventually became "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Prufrock endows night itself with a menacing agency:

> And when the midnight turned and writhed in fever
> I tossed the blankets back, to watch the darkness
> Crawling among the papers on the table
> It leapt to the floor and made a sudden hiss
> And darted stealthily across the wall
> Flattened itself upon the ceiling overhead
> Stretched out its tentacles, prepared to leap... (18-24)

This is a child's fear of the dark, a vision of the night itself as bestial and predatory. While Eliot's final version of the poem does not retain these lines, it does keep the less

threatening but no less bestial description of the feline "yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window panes / The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window panes" (14-15).

It is when darkness and fog shroud the streets that the city tortures Prufrock. Harold Bloom calls Roland's ordeal a "trial by landscape," and much the same term could be applied to Prufrock's compulsive wanderings through "Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent" (8-9). Again, the manuscript of "Pervigilium" contains a more explicitly menacing vision of urban architecture than does the final poem. The ur-Prufrock says:

> Then I have gone at night through narrow streets,
> Where evil houses leaning all together
> Pointed a ribald finger at me in the darkness
> Whispering all together, chuckled at me in the darkness (14-17)

This is a "trial by streetscape," in which the very bricks and mortar of the city conspire to defeat Prufrock.

In each poem, landscape and architectural structures are inherently menacing. Prufrock's description of "evil houses" calls to mind both the "ugly heights" that ring the Dark Tower and the Tower itself. Roland infuses these hills with malice: "The hills, like giants at a hunting, lay, / Chin upon hand, to see the game at bay,— / Now stab and end the creature—to the heft!" (189-91). Roland, of course, is the hunted, soon-to-be-stabbed creature in his simile. The Dark Tower is similarly menacing. Roland describes it as: "The round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart, / Built of brown stone, without a counterpart / In the whole world" (182-4). Aiken, Roberts, and others read "blind as the

fool's heart" as referring to Psalm 14:1: "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." Thus the very architecture of the windowless tower allies it with atheism or agnosticism, creeds that would render Roland and his quest meaningless. Such an interpretation is all the more compelling when one considers Bloom's and McComb's arguments that the tower is not the original goal of Roland and his peers' quest, but a temptation that has diverted them from their true purpose (McComb 463). According to this interpretation, the plain is wasted because it is Godless.

Prufrock's search for meaning may also be a search for God. He has become dissatisfied with appearance and form—which partly explains his dissatisfaction with polite society and his fantasy of speaking in prophetic cadences ("I am Lazarus, come back from the dead"). Eliot's comments on this subject are characteristically ambivalent:

> I am surprised to think that any indications of Christian tradition were present in Prufrock. I was certainly quite ignorant and unconscious of them myself, and at the time, or at least before the poem was finished, was entirely a Bergsonian; but as I always say, an author's knowledge of certain facts has value, whereas his interpretation or understanding of his own poem, and especially many years after writing it, may be no more authoritative and may for special reasons be less reliable than that of anyone else. (Letter to Eudo C. Mason. 19 April 1945; Humanities Research Center, Austin)

Eliot's position is essentially a New Critical one: he argues that meaning is located in the poem itself rather than in the author's stated intentions or interpretations. While his eventual baptism into the Anglican Church and his subsequent, explicitly

religious poetry may color one's reading of the earlier poetry, "Prufrock" is undeniably concerned with Christianity. Prufrock is haunted both by artists and by prophets. He sees himself as the beheaded John the Baptist and as one who, like a butterfly or Christ, is "pinned" and "formulated."

In "Childe Roland" and "Prufrock" alike, the poetic and the prophetic bleed into each other. Assuming either aspect of the role of the *vates*, or poet-prophet, would put the quester into communication with a reality which transcends the personal and the phenomenal. Poetic composition and divine revelation alike would constitute an escape from the radical subjectivity and meaninglessness of Roland's and Prufrock's existence. Read either as an act of poetic engagement or as a defiance of atheism, Roland's stand at the Tower is significant because it gathers him into an order beyond himself.

In the muscular Christianity of "Child Roland," striving is the route to salvation. Roland is at his lowest point when he wishes for the self-abnegation that "some end," a quiet death on the grey plain, would bring him. His confrontation at the tower promises a different kind of death: that of a man locked in combat with evil, a man who will be judged by the fervor with which he struggles. Roland's last fight will be an intensely personal confrontation. The appearance of his fallen peers reinforces this notion of the individual identity, for each fallen knight has struggled individually with the tower and its inhabitant. Death has gathered them into a party without stripping them of their individuality.

In "Prufrock," transcendence is found not in the individual's struggle with evil, but rather in the renunciation of both struggle and individuality. The "chambers of the sea" represent for Prufrock a fleeting vision of dissolution and forgetfulness. The poem's

last lines intimate a salvation reached not through striving, but through the renunciation which releases one from strife. Like the waters below which Phlebas suffers his seachange, the sea would leach away Prufrock's vicissitudes, his memories, and "the stages of his age and youth" (317). Submersion would free him from his diurnal rounds and from the mandates of self-consciousness. The chambers of the sea offer a release from personality similar to that which Eliot ascribes to literature in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." Poetry, like the caves of the mermaids, represents "not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality (*Selected Essays* 21)."

Roland's and Prufrock's quests or pilgrimages therefore follow different trajectories, starting from the same point, moving in the same direction, and yet ultimately veering off from each other. For most of his journey across the plain, Roland, like Prufrock, seeks release from memory, identity, and strife. His revelation at the tower, however, lies in embracing individual struggle as the route to salvation. Blowing on his slug-horn is at once a call to arms and a declaration of selfhood. In announcing himself as a combatant, he rejects the self-abnegation and desire for "some end" that plagued his journey. His last stand at the Tower is a self-defining, personal act through which he achieves transcendence.

Prufrock, on the other hand, begins by considering a series of actions. He asks "Do I dare..?," "Shall I say...?," "Would it have been worth it..?," and "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?" (38, 70, 90, 122). Yet all of these actions are bound up in the very egoism from which Prufrock longs to escape. They are a series of choice-less choices, each powerless to effect his release from the prison of self-consciousness. The declaration of purpose by which Roland transcends the despair of the

grey plain holds no such promise of release for Prufrock. While Roland's declaration is witnessed by a gathering of his fallen fellow knights, Prufrock's own declarations, he imagines, would be heard by an audience at once more critical and banal. Victory is implicit in Roland's declaration. For Prufrock, such a declaration—be it of love, religious belief, or a poetic vocation—could just as easily confirm his prison of self-consciousness as release him from it:

> If one settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
> And turning toward the window, should say
> "That is not it at all,
> That is not what I meant at all." (107-10)

At the conclusion of Roland's monologue, his fallen peers stand ready to witness his struggle and to gather him into their ranks; Prufrock has no such guarantee that his own declaration of purpose would meet with either understanding or sympathy. It is not through action and self-actualization, but through the surrender and self-abnegation represented by the vision of the mermaids, that Prufrock briefly transcends the grey plain of his daily existence.

The plain and the street are places not only of trial, however, but of enlightenment. At twilight and at dawn—those windows of epiphany in which light shifts and the familiar suffers a sea change—one may come to a new understanding of one's surroundings and hence of oneself. Roland's epiphany, his realization that he has finally reached the tower, is likewise linked to fire and sunlight: "Burningly it came on me all at once, / This was the place!" (175-6). One moment, Roland is both literally and

figuratively in darkness. The next moment, sunlight and enlightenment come upon him at once: "Not see? because of night perhaps?—Why, day / Came back again for that! before it left, / The dying sunset kindled through a cleft…" (187-9). This is quite literally an epiphany, or presentation, of the Dark Tower. Psychology, memory, and geography become one in the visionary moment. Roland sees his fallen comrades "in a sheet of flame," illuminated by the light of the setting sun and by Roland's own enlightened perception (201).

Many of the words associated with a heightened state of awareness and consciousness represent this state in terms of the visual: enlightenment, illumination, epiphany, revelation, vision. But vision is not the only sense by which the phenomenal world is perceived. The vision with which "Childe Roland" ends is more properly a vision and a *hearing*—indeed, one must resort to the paradoxical term "auditory vision" to fully articulate the nature of Roland's epiphanic moment. The plain, which had offered Roland for much of his journey "no sound, no sight" is, at the conclusion of the poem, suddenly replete with both:

> Not hear? when noise was everywhere! it tolled
> Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears,
> Of all the lost adventurers my peers,—
> How such a one was strong, and such was bold,
> And such was fortunate, yet each of old
> Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years. (193-8)

And his own act of epiphany—of presenting himself—is an audible one: he blows on his horn. Roland's encounter at the Dark Tower is perhaps as much a vocation as it is a

vision: he is called (not by his own name, but by the names of the peers who should stand as examples for him) and announces himself in return. For Roland, vocation and annunciation constitute an affirming of self: he is nowhere more Roland than when he, as an individual, announces his readiness to do battle.

Prufrock's vision of the mermaids is also an auditory one. He sees them "calling, each to each," (perhaps Prufrock hears, like Roland, a catalogue of names) but fears they "will not sing to me." While the voices which Roland hears implicitly seek to include his name in the catalogue of fallen peers, Prufrock fears the mermaids' song is not meant for him. Roland's vision is one of inclusion and attainability, Prufrock's of exclusion and inattainabilty. The vision of lingering in the womb-like chambers of the sea is not realized, but destroyed, by human voices. If the answer to Prufrock's overwhelming question is found in *The Waste Land*, however, then it too is an audible one, associated with bells, thunder and the most primal units of language.

"Prufrock" is only one of many early poems in which Eliot explores the revelatory potentialities of a cityscape glimpsed at sunrise or sunset. The addressee of "Preludes," for example, who has been wracked by visions during the night, has a moment of clarity at dawn: "When the light crept up between the shutters... / You had such a vision of the street / As the street hardly understands" (31-4).

"First Caprice in North Cambridge," dated November 1909, describes "The yellow evening flung against the panes" and a landscape of "Bottles and broken glass, / Trampled mud and grass; / And a heap of broken barrows" (*Inventions* 13, lines 5-7). The next poem in the series, "Second Caprice in North Cambridge," begins "This charm of vacant lots!", and likewise describes a field of "ashes and tins in piles / Shattered

bricks and tiles / and the debris of a city" (15, lines 6-8). Gazing at this debris-strewn city lot, the speaker describes a moment of "sensation" akin to that of Chesterton:

> Let us pause
> With these fields that hold and rack the brain
> (What: again?)
> With an unexpected charm
> And an unexplained repose
> On an evening in December
> Under a sunset yellow and rose. (*Inventions* 15, lines 11-17)

This little wasteland exerts a hold over the speaker, offering or producing a "charm" and "repose" which one might expect the poet to find either in nature or in art. The vacant lot is neither natural, like Shelley's Mont Blanc, nor fashioned, like Keats' Grecian urn or the London of Wordsworth's "Lines Composed Upon Westminster Bridge" (Ricks 113), but entropic, a zone of the unintentional and the castoff. The self-interrogating iterative "(What: again?)" indicates both that the speaker has had comparable responses to other such vacant lots and that he continues to be surprised by the charm which vacancy and refuse hold for him.

For a moment at sunset, a particular observer finds in a particular lot a transitory charm and repose. The *flaneur* of "Preludes" and the "Caprices" is, as Kenner describes Prufrock, less a character than the "center of a field of consciousness" (41). This field of consciousness seeks out, in the heart of the city, the desert. His mind and his eye dwell on the vacant, the deserted, and the cast away. Eliot's the Rock will say in 1930, "The desert is not remote in southern tropics, / The desert is not only around the corner, / The

desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you." Seeking out this desert, the Eliotic observer finds that all cities are one; he imposes his vision on each new city he visits. Eliot said of his own experiences as an urbanite:

> For nine months of the year my scenery was almost exclusively urban, and a good deal of it seedily, drably urban at that. My urban imagery was that of St. Louis, upon which that of Paris and London have been superimposed. ("The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet"; *Daedalus,* lxxxix, 1960; Ricks 107)

Eliot's willingness to change or erase the names of the cities in which his various caprices and preludes are set indicates the degree to which their imagery is generic rather than place-specific. "Fourth Caprice in Montparnasse" was originally titled "Fourth Caprice in North Cambridge" (Ricks 111). Eliot can "superimpose" the imagery of Paris onto the "landscape grey with rain" which was originally located in Massachusetts. Christopher Ricks summarizes the changes of location in "Preludes:" "*Preludes I* was *Prelude in Roxbury (Houses)*, amended from *Dorchester*; *Preludes II* and *III* were each *Prelude in Roxbury*" (111). This renaming and unnaming seems to imply that all places are one—and that all places are unreal. Tennyson's Ulysses claims, "I am a part of all that I have met." The Eliotic field of consciousness would reverse this statement: all that he meets is a part of him.

After all his journeying, Roland never tells his auditor what or who inhabits the Dark Tower. The poem ends with him announcing his arrival, presumably as a challenge to that inhabitant. In other words, Roland does not reveal the true significance of his

epiphany. What does finding the Dark Tower mean for Roland and what is the outcome of his struggle there?

Bloom reads the struggle as a belated Romantic poet's entry into the sphere of poetic creation (1975: 111). The tower is the site of poetic creation; the fallen peers who ring the hillsides are the poetic forerunners against whom Roland must define himself. At the poem's conclusion, Roland announces himself to be a poet. I am wary of Bloom's overly reductive reading. My concern is not merely that he reads the poem allegorically, for I think "Childe Roland" invites allegorical interpretation, but that he reads it as an allegory of his own *idée fixé*: the poet's negotiation with his influential forerunners. Bloom ignores the nuances and ambiguities of "Childe Roland" in order to make it support his theory of influence.

Nevertheless, I agree with the core of Bloom's argument: Roland's final struggle inarguably partakes of the textual, aligning Roland's call to arms with the process of poetic composition. By announcing the title of his poem, "Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came," Roland returns to the beginning of his journey and to the beginning of his monologue. Browning further allies the poem's last line with its title by putting it in quotation marks (in both the 1855 *Men and Women* and in subsequent compilations). It is only after reaching the Dark Tower that Roland may tell the story of his journey. The outcome of Roland's struggle at the Tower is therefore less important than the shift in consciousness that precipitates the struggle. In the revelatory moment, the wasteland that Roland has ridden through becomes the stuff of his poem. To return to Chesterton's formulation, Roland transmutes its refuse into beauty.

Most scholars have dismissed Roland's "slug-horn" as an instance of faulty scholarship adopted from Chatterton. Daniel Karlin writes, "A battle trumpet is meant. Browning follows an error in Chatterton, who misunderstood the word slogan" (248). Adam Roberts disagrees with this assessment, offering one that is more consonant with the poem's images of blighted nature:

> in fact a 'slug-horn' is a sort of horn. If a cow's horn grows stunted or deformed it is called a 'slug' or 'slug horn' (cf. OED slug, sb(2), 5), and the idea of making a trumpet out of a deformed piece of nature has a clear resonance for the poem as a whole. (757)

This is a compelling argument, in that wasted nature becomes not only the subject of Roland's poetry, but the means through which he makes such poetry.

Just as Roland never reveals the outcome of his quest for the Dark Tower, so Prufrock does not answer the "overwhelming question" to which the streets insidiously lead him. Indeed, Prufrock does not even reveal the question itself. Perhaps that question is, as Gregory Jay proposes, a form of Hamlet's "to be or not to be... a soliloquy on procrastination" (98). On the other hand, perhaps Prufrock is considering not an act of self-annihilation, but one of poetic self-actualization. His release from personality may be found not in death, but in art. Interpreted by these lights, his choice is "to create, or not to create."

Such an argument assumes that Prufrock is, in fact, rather closely identified with Eliot the poet. C.S. Lewis, among others, would question Prufrock's gift for poetry—and by extension question that of Eliot. Lewis writes in his poem "A Confession:"

> For twenty years I've stared my level best
>
> To see if evening, any evening, would suggest
>
> A patient etherized upon a table;
>
> In vain. I simply wasn't able. (1-4)

Lewis's parody demonstrates that to criticize Prufrock's language is concomitantly to criticize Eliot's. Prufrock, unlike Sweeney, speaks like Eliot: Prufrock's grotesque and unlovely metaphors, his broken syntax, his subjunctive and conditional clauses mark not only his anxious state of mind but his concern with language *qua* language.

Perhaps the closest Prufrock comes to articulating his overwhelming question is in asking "Do I dare to disturb the universe?" The poetic act, for Eliot, is one which does disturb the universe. Eliot writes in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," published the same year as *Prufrock and Other Observations*, of what a new poem does to the poetic tradition:

> [w]hat happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. (*Selected Essays* 5)

These existing monuments might make up the universe that Prufrock is not yet ready to disturb.

Like that other Modernist wanderer Stephen Dedalus, Prufrock is an artist paralyzed by self-consciousness. The Romantic poet found inspiration in nature; his walks to Mont Blanc or Tintern Abbey were pilgrimages of the soul. Prufrock's

perambulations and observations do not offer him the materials of poetry. He asks: "Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets / And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes / Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows?" (70-2). The answer, of course, is yes. Prufrock's monologue is poetry, even if he himself cannot recognize it as such. While he is capable of brilliant lyricism ("Combing the white hair of the waves blown back / When the wind blows the water white and black") he is not Nerval: the mermaids may not, in fact, sing to him. His subject matter should perhaps be the narrow streets and the lonely men in shirt-sleeves: the refuse he transforms into beauty, the slug-horn he makes his trumpet. Like the Yeats of "The Circus Animals' Desertion" (1939), he must find his source of inspiration in the gutters:

> Those masterful images because complete
> Grew in pure mind, but out of what began?
> A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
> Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
> Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
> Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder's gone,
> I must lie down where all the ladders start,
> In the foul rag-and-bone shop of the heart. (33-40)

The poet Eliot has articulated the poetry of refuse; the character Prufrock is not able to do so.

The wasteland and the city are therefore places both of trial and of inspiration. Roland's journey through a trying landscape ends with a moment of inspiration: by assailing the Dark Tower, he announces himself as a creator of meaning, poetry, or

narrative. Awoken by human voices, Prufrock does not reach the point of creation. Nevertheless his lyric moments—the vision of the mermaids as well as the vision of the street—intimate the birth of a poet. As in Roland's case, the trying, wasted landscape provides the stuff of poetry. The mound of refuse or the sweepings of the street suffer a sea change, what Eliot terms "a concentration... of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all" in the consciousness of the poet (*Selected Essays* 8).

Although Roland only encounters one person on his journey, the wasteland through which he travels has been made and marred by men. Coming upon a ruined piece of ground, "once a forest," he asks: "Who were the strugglers, what war did they wage, / Whose savage trample thus could pad the dank / Soil to a plash?" (129-131). The word "trample" is twice used to describe the city of "Preludes:" the street is "sawdust-trampled," while the protagonist's soul, like the sidewalk, is "trampled by insistent feet / At four and five and six o'clock" (16, 41-2). The "trampled mud and grass; / And a heap of broken barrows," of "First Caprice" seems to look back to "Childe Roland" and forward to *The Waste Land*'s "heap of broken images." Where the soil of Roland's wasteland is "plash"-ed, the streets of the city are "blackened" ("Preludes" 46). Roland finds artifacts of human enterprise, but all seem designed to break man rather than aid him. He wonders, "What bad use was that engine for, that wheel, / Or brake, not wheel—that harrow fit to reel / Men's bodies out like silk?" (139-41). Roland's plain, like the Eliotic city, is a man-made construction, a corruption of the natural order in which the Romantic poet found inspiration.

Land and people are inextricably bound for Roland and Prufrock. Just as men have molded the wasteland and the city, so the wasteland and the city have molded men. The only person Roland actually meets is the "hoary cripple" who directs him onto the grey plain with "malicious eye" and "mouth scarce able to afford / Suppression of the glee, that pursed and scored / Its edge, at one more victim gained thereby" (2, 4-6). Roland believes that the cripple—a man as physically and spiritually trampled as the land itself—is in collusion with the wasteland to defeat him. Roland "guessed what skull-like laugh / Would break" from the cripple as he watched Roland set out across the plain. The nature of the dramatic monologue is such that the reader has no way of verifying whether the speaker's impressions are correct. Roland begins his monologue immediately after the cripple has concluded speaking. Thus the reader knows Roland's response to the cripple—"My first thought was, he lied in every word"—but not the cripple's actual words. Again, the people and landscapes Roland encounters are filtered through his own morbidity of vision and self-conscious fatalism.

The people of Prufrock's city are likewise crippled and grotesque. In "Preludes" they are rendered by synecdoche a collection of "muddy feet," "short square fingers," "yellow soles of feet," and "soiled hands." (17, 43, 37-8). These people have been as marked by their industrial city as the cripple has been by his barren wasteland. In "Morning at the Window," city architecture and the human spirit are grotesquely merged: the morning walker is "aware of the damp souls of housemaids / Sprouting despondently at area gates." The industrial city of *Prufrock and Other Observations* has the power to make men in its own image as so many feet, hands, and damp souls.

Prufrock, like Roland, imagines that people are secretly hostile, ridiculing him behind his back:

(They will say: "How his hair is growing thin!")... (41)

(They will say: "But how his arms and legs are thin!")... (44)

And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker... (85)

He senses that he appears "At times, indeed, almost ridiculous-- / Almost, at times, the Fool" (118-9). Roland uses the same word to describe himself in the 1855 version of "Childe Roland" (Browning replaced "fool" with "dotard" in his 1888 revision of the poem). It is telling that the Prufrock of "Prufrock's Pervigilium" imagines the "evil houses" to be "Whispering all together." Like the footman or Roland's cripple, they "chuckle[d]" at Prufrock. This fear of being mocked or dismissed keeps Prufrock from engaging in poetic composition, amorous declarations, or any other decisive action which would disrupt his mundane rounds. The poetic and the erotic are commingled in Prufrock's fear of being dismissed or found lacking by a woman. His sexual and poetic efforts alike would be undone by a woman responding: "That is not what I meant at all; / That is not it, at all" (97-8). Not just the words and laughter of another, but the gaze is enough to paralyze Prufrock. Like Roland's cripple, who keeps his "malicious eye askance / to watch the working of his lie" on Roland's eye, the inhabitants of Prufrock's city pin him with a critical gaze (2-3). Prufrock has "known the eyes already, known them all-- / The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase" (55-6). Having been pinned and labeled like a butterfly, Prufrock asks, "Then how should I begin / To spit out all the butt-ends of my days and ways? / And how should I presume?" (59-61).

The presuming, basilisk-like gaze, the censuring word, and the dismissive chuckle all make true communication impossible. For speech in "Prufrock" is almost always banal: the highbrow prattle of society women ("Talking of Michelangelo"), the faltering conversations ("the voices dying with a dying fall"), the obligatory small-talk ("some talk of you and me"), the gossip ("How his hair is growing thin!"), and the weary dismissals ("That is not what I meant at all"). This banality is often reinforced by simple rhyme. In "Prufrock," rhyme, particularly rhymed couplets, is associated with monotony and conformity. Thus the childish sing-song of "In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo," belies the banality of the women's conversations: the couplet does not provide enough textual space to say anything worthwhile about Michelangelo. Even when Prufrock imagines himself speaking in prophetic cadences "I am Lazarus, come from the dead," he fails to express himself adequately. In contrast to speech is the song of the mermaids, whom Prufrock suspects will not sing to him. Prufrock can only conclude that "It is impossible to say just what I mean" (104).

This tension between the individual and his society manifests itself in Eliot's prosody. While the voice of the many is expressed through rhyme, Prufrock's most independent thoughts are starkly unrhymed, such as "And in short, I was afraid." Thus independence of thought and action is associated with independence from rhyme. Likewise, the lines which I have read as Prufrock's anxiety over the validity of the material which he would transform into poetry is expressed in unrhymed lines:

> And should I then presume?
>
> And how should I begin?
>
> Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets

And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes

Of lonely men in shirt-sleeves, leaning out of windows. (68-72)

In this equating of rhyme and conformity, Eliot ultimately owes a debt to Milton. In *Samson Agonistes* (a work that engaged Eliot enough for him to appropriate its title for his own "Sweeney Agonistes"), Samson speaks in blank verse, while the chorus that counsels him to propitiate the Philistines speaks in rhyme. Milton, who had called rhyme, in his note on the verse of *Paradise Lost*, "the invention of a barbarous age," uses this invention to represent the placating, querulous voice of the Israelites. Like the chorus of Canterbury women in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Milton's Israelites want nothing to happen. Heroic action, associated with blank verse rather than rhyme, is a threat to the status quo.

Yet Eliot would also have found a precedent for coupling rhyme with conformity in the monologues of Browning. Perhaps the most famous example of a character who subverts rhyme in order to exert his will is the speaker of "My Last Duchess." Herbert Tucker writes, "Throughout the Duke's monologue the contrast between his rhymed couplets and a syntax that enjambs more lines than it stops bears witness to a conflict between conventional form and informing spirit" (177). The Duke overrides prosody just as he overrides his Duchess, the envoy, and anyone who would threaten his indomitable sense of self. "My Last Duchess" is an example not only of Browning's ability to create the illusion of colloquial, spontaneous speech within the bounds of meter and rhyme, but of his readiness to exploit the tension between "conventional form and informing spirit" as a mode of psychological exploration.

"Childe Roland" likewise explores the dynamic range and effects of end stopped and enjambed lines, but within the framework of a rhyming sestet rather than of couplets. Oscar Wilde once quipped, "[George] Meredith is a prose-Browning, and so is Browning. He used poetry as a medium for writing in prose" (Litzinger and Smalley 526). There is indeed a colloquial quality to Browning's dramatic monologues: they mimic the spontaneity and rhythmic variety of extemporaneous spoken English. Yet only a great poet could create this illusion of immediacy within the confines of metrical, rhymed verse. In the hands of a lesser stylist, the rhyme scheme of "Childe Roland"'s sestets (which could be represented as "A-B-B-A-A-B") would be stilted and monotonous. Browning, however, uses enjambment to deemphasize rhyme. Consider the poem's final stanza:

> There they stood, ranged along the hill-sides, met
> To view the last of me, a living frame
> For one more picture! in a sheet of flame
> I saw them and I knew them all. And yet
> Dauntless the slug-horn to my lips I set,
> And blew. "*Childe Roland to the Dark Tower came.*" (199-204)

The phrases and sentences of this stanza tend to spill across two lines, ending with and giving weight to unrhymed medial words rather than to the rhymed ones with which the lines end. "Picture," "all," "blew," and "came" are emphasized, while rhymes such as "met" and "yet" and "set" are effectively muffled.

When it suits the poem's purposes, however, Browning exploits his stanza's two medial couplets by writing end-stopped phrases. The rhyming syllables of these lines

reverberate with an intensity that can suggest either Roland's mania—"thin dry blades pricked the mud / Which underneath looked kneaded up with blood"—or his sudden resolve and concentration:

> As a man calls for wine before he fights,
> I asked one draught of earlier, happier sights,
> Ere fitly I could hope to play my part.
> Think first, fight afterwards—the soldier's art… (86-89)

In "Childe Roland," rhyme represents not the external voices of the many which would have the Duke or Prufrock conform, but an internal concentration or compulsion.

"Prufrock" is not the only poem in Eliot's 1917 *Prufrock and other Observations* to engage with and redefine the themes and conventions of the Browningesque poetic monologue. "Portrait of a Lady" is of particular interest both for the degree to which it is interwoven with the Prufrockian "field of consciousness" and for its deft manipulation of Browning's poetic monologue form.

Prufrock, or a young man very much like him, manifests in "Portrait of a Lady" the hostile gaze and suppressed chuckles of which he fears to be the object in his own eponymous poem. The Prufrockian field of consciousness expands to incorporate—and ridicule—the speeches of a host who is, as Prufrock knows himself to be, "At times, indeed, almost ridiculous— / Almost, at times, the Fool." Of the poem's 124 lines, fifty are spoken by the lady. Thus "Portrait of a Lady" could be described as an interior monologue which frames a dramatic monologue. Davies, in comparing Eliot's poem

with "My Last Duchess," writes, "The real theater in 'Portrait' is the theatre of the young man's mind. The lady's words exist only for and through his thoughts" (32).

In her repetitions, ellipses, interjections, and fractured syntax, the lady's speaking role is decidedly Browningesque:

> You do not know how much they mean to me my friends,
> And how, how rare and strange it is, to find
> In a life composed so much, so much of odds and ends,
> [For indeed I do not love it... you knew? You are not blind!
> How keen you are!]
> To find a friend who has these qualities,
> Who has, and gives
> Those qualities upon which friendship lives.
> How much it means that I say this to you—
> Without these friendships—life, what *cauchemar*! (19-28)

The lady's young guest, like a Browning auditor, remains silent. It is a profitable exercise to read the fifty "spoken lines" of the "Portrait" independently of the young man's interior monologue which frames them. The lady's discourse, even without the silent commentary of the young man, is double-voiced. There is a disconnect between her self-portrayal and her portrayal by the implied author (or the guest: there may be no real distinction between the two, since the guest composes the entire poem).

In critiquing Browning in his 1953 lecture "The Three Voices of Poetry," Eliot claimed that "when the dramatic monologue is not put into the mouth of some character already known to the reader—from history or from fiction—we are likely to ask the

question 'Who was the original?" (95). According to Eliot, readers ask about Bishop Blougram, "How far was this intended to be a portrait of Cardinal Manning?" (95). Eliot concludes, "Does not the point of mimicry lie in the recognition of the person mimicked, and in the incompleteness of the illusion?" (95). It is therefore worth comparing the lady of Eliot's poem with her "original:" Adelaine Moffatt, the Bostonian hostess who invited Eliot and other Harvard undergraduates to tea. Eliot wrote to Pound in February 1915 that he had received a "Christmas card from the lady, bearing the 'ringing greeting of friend to friend at this season of high festival.' It seems like old times" (*Letters* 86). The language of the greeting card is as clinging and maudlin as any sentiments Eliot's lady voices; Miss Moffatt makes herself an easy target for mimicry. Therefore one has to ask a rather absurd question to underscore the incompleteness of Eliot's illusion: does Adelaine Moffatt habitually speak in rhyme? If not, then rhyme is an intervention on the part of the Prufrockian narrator: it is the fundamental way in which he turns her monologue back upon her. As many critics have noted, simplistic, end-stopped rhymes help render the lady's speech trite and rehearsed: "We must leave it now to fate. / You will write, at any rate. / Perhaps it is not too late" (105-107). Elizabeth Howe says of this triplet: "Her shameless persistence is mocked by the insistent rhyme and by the abruptness of the short sentences" (85). However, rhyme does more than make the lady an object of ridicule: it makes her a threat. She would end her young caller's independence, and so here, as in "Prufrock," rhyme—sounds which are dependent upon each other for effect—is equated with conformity.

Rhyme is only one of the modes by which the narrator renders the lady both ridiculous and threatening. He scrupulously represents the lady's repeated phrases ("But

what have I, but what have I, my friend"), phrases which perhaps would seem less affected in spoken English than they do transcribed. Her gratutuitous "*cauchemar*," which rhymes insipidly with "you are," is a further indicator of pretension and affectation. It is the allusion to Arnold's "The Buried Life" that identifies the real source of the fascination which the lady holds for the younger man:

> Yet with these April sunsets, that somehow recall
> My buried life, and Paris in the Spring,
> I feel immeasurably at peace, and find the world
> To be wonderful and youthful, after all. (52-55)

Like the Eliotic narrator of "Second Caprice" and "Preludes," the lady finds peace in the sunset. However, she attributes a facile moral implication to this peace which the Eliotic narrator is unwilling or unable to do. She claims to have an epiphany which reveals, to quote Browning's Pippa, that "God's in his heaven, all's right with the world." Thus she is not entirely wrong when she says "I am always sure that you understand / My feelings" (58-9). Eliot's narrator understands her feelings only too well: they are the *reductio ad absurdum* of his own inherited poetic tradition. Like the "mechanical and tired" street piano he hears in the park, the lady "reiterates some worn-out common song" (79-80). This is why the narrator is both fascinated and revolted by the lady, why he returns to her despite himself: she is an embodiment of Victorian sensibilities and poetics that he must flee from in order not to be subsumed by.

"Portrait of a Lady" can therefore be read as Eliot's negotiations with and containment of a Victorian sensibility and poetic. The internal monologue of the Eliotic narrator satirizes and reacts to the "spoken" dramatic monologue of the fustian Victorian

lady. By implication, Eliot's internal monologue is an advance over Browning's dramatic monologue, since Eliot's form is able to incorporate Browning's. Where the lady claims to find meaning in the light of April sunsets, the narrator's own element is one of obscuring vapors. He moves through "the smoke and fog of a December afternoon," takes the air in "a tobacco trance," writes "pen in hand / With the smoke coming down above the housetops" on an "afternoon grey and smoky." He likens his own psychological processes to a guttering—and hence smoke-producing—candle: "My self-possession flares up for a second... My self-possession gutters; we are really in the dark" (94, 101). While the lady's candles burn steadily, casting "four rings of light on the ceiling overheard," the narrator's imagined candle leaves him in smoke and darkness (5). As in "Prufrock," the narrator moves through a psychogeography of fog and smoke, an ether through which he perceives all of the objects and people that make up his phenomenal world.

The conclusion of "Portrait of a Lady" finds the narrator speculating "What if she should die some afternoon... Would she not have the advantage, after all?" (114, 121). The poem's two references to smiles may look forward to *The Waste Land*'s equating of the smile and the skull: "But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear" (185-6). When the narrator says "I feel like one who smiles and turning shall remark / Suddenly, his expression in a glass," he may, like Eliot's Webster, have seen "the skull beneath the skin; / and breastless creature under ground / Leaned backward with a lipless grin" (99-100; "Whispers of Immortality," 2-4). Encoded then in his consideration of the lady's eventual death is a consideration of his own death. In the poem's final lines, dying and the smile are coupled: "This music is

successful with a 'dying fall' / Now that we talk of dying-- / And should I have the right to smile?" (122-4).

Roland and Prufrock share the "Portrait" narrator's morbidity of vision, a morbidity which manifests itself most dramatically in their characterization of themselves as dying or dead men. Roland describes his hope as a "ghost not fit to cope" (21). Then, in a grotesque allusion to and expansion on Donne's 1633 "A Valediction Forbidding Mourning," he compares himself to a dying man. In Donne's poem, the dying man's friends debate over whether he has indeed expired:

> As virtuous men pass mildly away,
> And whisper to their souls to go,
> Whilst some of their sad friends do say,
> "The breath goes now," and some say "No" (1-4)

In Roland's grotesque version of the valediction, the friends deem the sick man dead before he has actually died. The dying man hears one say "All is o'er," while others argue where the grave is to be dug (29). He stays quiet, preferring to die than to disappoint. Hanging over Roland's dark simile is the possibility of a premature burial. Roland's simile is thus a sort of figurative suicide. While Roland seems incapable of actually taking his own life (due perhaps to his code of honor or to the Christianity to which one can assume he subscribes), he imagines himself dying and buried. He turns toward The Dark Tower with "gladness that some end might be," hoping that he will meet with destruction at a hand other than his own (18).

Prufrock likewise characterizes himself as a dead man. He compares himself both to Lazarus, who died and was buried, and to John the Baptist: "I have seen my head / (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter" (82). He also obliquely identifies himself with Polonius, "an attendant lord" who dies ignominiously and grotesquely. Prufrock is "not Prince Hamlet," whose death is noble and meaningful, to whose rest flights of angels sing. Polonius' death is meaningless and the subsequent representation and treatment of his corpse is grotesque. Where Hamlet's death is sublime and spiritual, Polonius' is tawdry and bestial. Prufrock's last image of himself is that of a drowning man. Like Roland, Prufrock may not actively be considering suicide. Nevertheless he is driven by what Freud terms the *thanatos*, or death drive, and his fascination with his own destruction manifests itself in his figurative language.

I have made much of the process by which Roland and Prufrock project onto their surroundings, be they grey plain or blackened streets, the oppressive and grotesque elements of their own psyches. It is worth noting not only the role of perception in this process, but that of memory. Roland tries to remember happier times as a respite from the wasteland, declaring "One taste of the old time sets all to rights" (90). Yet he is stymied in this attempt; the good memories he deliberately conjures up give way, suddenly and without deliberation, to bad. He remembers Giles: "What honest men should dare (he said) he durst. / Good—but the scene shifts—faugh! what hangman hands / Pin to his breast a parchment?" (99-101). The mind can offer no shelter from the wasteland because the mind and the wasteland are inextricable, acting on each other.

Believing he can choose not to remember, Roland resolves to live in the present:

Better this present than a past like that;

Back therefore to my darkening path again!

No sound, no sight as far as eye could strain.

Will the night send a howlet or a bat? (103-6)

Without sensory input or a past, Roland's self is momentarily effaced. It is impossible to say how long he walked in such stasis, for there are neither internal nor external stimuli by which to measure the passage of time. Roland's momentary stasis, his freedom from both the senses and the memory, is interrupted when a river "[c]ame to arrest my thoughts and change their train" (108). Roland finds the river "spiteful," a response which again seems out of proportion (115). As he fords the stream, Roland thrusts his spear into the water ahead of him—ostensibly looking for "hollows" but fearing all the while to tangle it in a dead man's beard. Roland's fear of what lies beneath the surface of the river is a manifestation of his fear of what lies beneath the surface of his own consciousness, for dead men—his fallen peers—are submerged in both. The river is "spiteful" precisely because it represents Roland's subconscious and its suppressed fears and memories. The remembered images which Roland sought to cast out of his psyche reappear in the phenomenonal world around him. The dead man he images to be under the stream is a projection of the dead men under his stream of consciousness.

James King McComb argues that memory is central to "Childe Roland." He sees Roland's vision of his brother knights ringing the hills around the Dark Tower as another unconscious return of memory: Roland is "suddenly, unexpectedly surrounded by memories... The more Roland has tried to put an end to his past, the more strongly and spontaneously that past has come back upon him" (464). For McComb, Roland's

retelling of his poem becomes the final return of memory. In his monologue, "Roland is still recounting the events from which he sought release" (469). Ultimately, this is why the landscape provokes such disgust in Roland: it is his personal, solipsistic hell, and like one of Dante's damned, his lot is to recount the story of his life's journey.

Roland is only one of many Browning characters imprisoned by his own ego. The "Madhouse Cells" which Johannes Agricola and Porphyria's lover occupy in the 1842 *Dramatic Lyrics* are external manifestations of internal realities: each is locked inside a psychic cell of self-representation. Browning's duke, whose monologue begins with "My" and ends with "me!", is likewise contained by his own ego—a containment which the text of his monologue makes literal. In telling and retelling a story of himself ("not the first / are you to turn and ask thus"), he only further immures himself.

The prison of the self is a profoundly Eliotic concern. It appears as one of the images in "What the Thunder Said": "We think of the key, each in his prison, / thinking of the key, each confirms a prison." In a note to this line, Eliot quotes Bradley's *Reality and Appearance*: "My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings. In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside... the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul." Menand notes that Bradley posited this as only one of several possible relationships between consciousness and the external world, but that this formulation is "the one that appealed to Eliot." Mayer's description of Prufrock's quest could be applied with equal validity to that of Roland: "The spirit that shadows his quest is Narcissus, who threatens to narrow his self-consciousness into a prison from which escape is impossible and to

transform the preoccupation with self into psychic hell" (Mayer 17). Carol Christ sees the threat of solipsism as a link between Browning and Eliot:

> Like Tennyson and Browning, Eliot uses the dramatic monologue to explore man's imprisonment within his own consciousness. Phenomena in the early poems exist only as the reflex of the perceiving self. (46)

Roland and Prufrock's desire for self-abnegation therefore grows from the inescapability of selfhood and of the uncontrollable, mutinous nature of memory. Neither on the plain nor in the city can one outwalk oneself.

Of the poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations*, "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" most directly articulates the relationship between time, space, and memory. Night and the city conspire to act upon the memory:

> Every street lamp that I pass
> Beats like a fatalistic drum,
> And through the spaces of the dark
> Midnight shakes the memory
> As a madman shakes a dead geranium. (8-12)

Having lost its "clear relations, / Its divisions and precisions," the memory instead "throws up high and dry / A crowd of twisted things" (24-5). Seeing a cat eating "a morsel of rancid butter" from the gutter triggers for the narrator a series of memories: he thinks first of a child who pockets a toy "running along the quay," then of the child's eyes, then of eyes "in the street / Trying to peer through lighted shutters," and finally of "An old crab" which "Gripped the end of a stick which I held him" (36-46). The memory

follows its own subconscious logic, linking incidents from disparate times and places in a process of association.

This same associative process is at work in "Prufrock" (and note that Prufrock, too, thinks of a crab in connection with his own perambulations). Prufrock's memory throws up its own crowd of twisted things; he asks "After the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets, / After the novels, after the teacups, after the skirts that trail along the floor-- / And this, and so much more?—" (101-3). Such a list could be deliberately crafted rather than spontaneously remembered. However, Prufrock's earlier question, in connection to his memories of women's arms, argues for the latter interpretation: "Is it perfume from a dress / That makes me so digress?" (65-6). Prufrock himself is not always clear on what has sent his memory down a particular alley. In this way, the city and the plain work not only on the active, perceiving mind but on the mind's time-ordering function: the memory. Space and time, like one's psyche and one's surroundings, act upon each other in Roland's and Prufrock's monologues.

For Browning and Eliot alike, the poetic monologue allows for the conflation of psychology and phenomena, character and setting, time present and time past. Roland's and Prufrock's monologues constitute both consciously narrated stories and unconsciously or obliquely narrated self-portrayals. The landscape of the grey plain and the streetscape of what will become the unreal city are at once representations of an external reality and indices of a psychological state. Roland's and Prufrock's ruminative walks are pilgrimages both through a hostile land which tests them and through the terrain of their own memories, preoccupations, and self-doubts.

Yet despite these common themes, Browning's and Eliot's monologues posit radically different paths of escape from the prison of self-consciousness. Roland's transcendence of despair and of self-doubt is located in his willingness to struggle against the thing which inhabits the Dark Tower. The fallen knights who ring the hillside to see his moment of engagement both confirm Roland's identity as an individual man of purpose and gather him into a transcendent order greater than himself. As for so many of Browning's characters, victory is located in the well-intentioned action rather than in the results of that action. Roland's monologue is therefore not a fragment, but rather a complete story which ends precisely where it should, with Roland's self-annunciation and declaration of purpose. The knight's success will not be measured according to the outcome of his struggle with the thing which he fears most, but in his willingness to confront that fear.

Prufrock, on the other hand, cannot find release through action. The issue is not merely that Roland inhabits a heroic past and Prufrock a pedestrian present, but that good intentions and whole-hearted effort simply do not count for as much in Prufrock's, and by extension Eliot's, vision of the world as they do in Roland's. Prufrock can neither reach nor recreate the chambers of the sea by engaging with the world as he finds it. His vision of the mermaids constitutes a retreat from the world which he knows.

None of the above commentary has been meant to claim Browning as—to use Stephen Romer's term from a recent *Times Literary Supplement* review of Eliot criticism—"(yet another) trophy for source-hunters" (7). Nor is it meant to establish a hidden Harold Bloom relationship of influence between the two. Rather, in positing that

Roland and Prufrock share a self-consciousness and morbidity of vision which render the world around them a grotesque wasteland, I am questioning the facile classification of the one poem as "Victorian" and the other as "Modern." Modernism, despite its name, refers less to a historical time period than to a matrix of thematic and formal elements. Many poems were written in Europe and America in 1911, but only a few could be considered "Modern." Something about the form and theme of "Prufrock" marks it as "new" in Pound's sense of the word. Yet it is very much on a continuum with Browning's poem, a part of the tradition that Eliot himself considered every "really new" poem to engage. To think of J. Alfred Prufrock as suffering from a distinctly "modern condition" is to locate that condition as early as 1855 in the person of Browning's questing knight. In "Childe Roland" and "Prufrock," Browning and Eliot offer different solutions to this common condition.

Chapter Three:

Browning's Multivalent Presence in *The Waste Land.*

Eliot wrote that "any particular influence of one poet on another is both of form and content" (1928: xiii) I would argue that Browning is present both in the theme and form of *The Waste Land*—with the caveat that in poetry, form and theme are never wholly extricable. *The Waste Land*, in what Eliot described as "scrawling" draft form and in the final version published in the *Criterion* of 1922, contains colloquial narratives, "stage-setting" titles, complementary passages, and particularized speakers and settings that are distinctly Browningesque. While Pound's "caesarian Operation" eliminates some of the narrative frames and linkages that Eliot initially seemed to think *The Waste Land* would require—and hence distances the poem from Browning's collections of linked monologues—the final product nevertheless evinces Browning as a formal and thematic influence.

The first section of this chapter will explore the formal continuities between some of Browning's best-known monologues and the monologues Eliot and Pound excised from "He Do the Police in Different Voices." This Ur-*Waste Land*, a stitched-together series of episodes and accounts, resembles Browning's collections of monologues in a way which the finished poem does not. The sequences which originally opened "The Burial of the Dead" and the "Death by Water" are particularly indebted to Browning's syntax, diction, and narrative structuring.

In the next section, I will treat the way in which Eliot incorporates into the fabric of *The Waste Land* elements of Roland's pilgrimage through a psychogeographic

wasteland. The blighted streetscapes of *Inventions of the March Hare* and *Prufrock and Other Observations* and the barren plain of Browning's "Childe Roland" meet in *The Waste Land*'s overlapping terrains. The consciousness that constructs *The Waste Land* superimposes one landscape on the other in much the same way that Roland and Prufrock impose their own inner realities on their outer surrounding. *The Waste Land* therefore represents a continued exploration of psychological constructions of the phenomenal world and of language as the mediation between inner consciousness and outer reality. Yet the poem outdoes even "Prufrock" in its positioning of literature as one of the phenomena out of which one constructs a private reality. At the risk of belaboring the point, in *The Waste Land*, other poets' representations of reality become the building blocks of one's own construction of reality. As Eliot writes far more gracefully, "These fragments have I shored against my ruin." Browning's Dark Tower is one of the fragments which Eliot shores.

As a work explicitly concerned with ordering subjective narratives and giving new form to received literature, *The Waste Land* bears a resemblance to a long poem that is referred to nowhere in its many allusions or notes: Browning's *The Ring and the Book.* In the final, and longest, section of this chapter, I will discuss the structure of each long poem in relation to some of the monologues which preceded it, and will compare the modes by which Browning and Eliot use an overarching structure to orchestrate voices contrapuntally. *The Ring and the Book* and Eliot's *The Waste Land* are the long poems towards which, in retrospect, each poet's earlier monologues seem inevitably to lead. Both poems are, to use Howe's term for *The Waste Land*, "collages of monologues." Having developed a monologue form that objectifies the inner workings of the psyche,

each poet composes a long poem in which a series of monologues are arranged so as to comment upon each other.

These disparate voices point at once toward the subjective nature of any individual's perceptions and beyond, to an objective truth which may be constructed, or reconstructed, out of these subjective fragments. The whole of each poem is therefore greater than the sum of its parts. For Browning, "One and one breed the inevitable three," while one of Eliot's speakers, bound for perhaps Emmaus or the South Pole, must ask "Who is the third who walks always beside you? / When I count there are only you and I together" (360-1). I would argue that any two accounts produce a third account, an ordering principle which encompasses both. Both the *Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land* are concerned with the possibility of such an ordering principle, and in both works it is ultimately the *vates*, or poet-prophet, who can enact such a principle.

There are two vatic figures in *The Ring and the Book*. In the first and last books, "The Ring and the Book" and "The Book and the Ring," it is "Browning the poet" who must bring order and the breath of life to the conflicting, forgotten texts of what he calls "The Old Yellow Book." "Intradiegetically," Browning's Pope must likewise order fragmented narratives, creating a true whole out of the seemingly incompatible testimonies of Caponsacchi, Guido, Pompilia, and the others. His mind becomes the "convex glass" in which all of the representations of all the other monologists are reflected.

In *The Waste Land*, a governing consciousness, almost synonymous with the poet Eliot himself, likewise arranges the disparate monologues and quotations which make up his own mental terrain. In his notes to *The Waste Land*, Eliot would elect Tiresias to a

role comparable to that of Browning's Pope as the witness, reader, and judge of the text. Transcending their own psyches, the vatic figures of both *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land* are charged with bringing order to the chaos of individual perception, recollection, and representation.

Yet order is located in very different spheres for Browning and Eliot. The Pope's role as reader and writer is an eminently practical, transformative one. By judging and synthesizing the accounts of the murder trial participants, the Pope seeks to reconstruct a particular historical moment; his creative act leads back into the temporal world in an attempt to transform it for the better. *The Waste Land*, however, does not validate man's engagement with the temporal world as the means to transformation and as the foundation of knowledge. Rather, a renunciation of struggle leads one to apprehend the divine order which the Pope would "painfully evolve" through his processes of reason. Browning's and Eliot's long poems underscore their essentially opposing constructions of the mode by which an individual may transcend the limits of his own perceptions and apprehend the divine and poetic orders of which he is a part.

"He Do the Police in Different Voices:" Eliot's Men and Women

The manuscript for a long poem called "He Do the Police in Different Voices" which Eliot deposited with Ezra Pound in 1921 constitutes a very different poem from *The Waste Land* which saw publication in the *Criterion* the next year. For my own purposes, it is relatively unimportant to what degree Pound, Eliot, or Vivien Eliot should each be given credit for the changes to Eliot's manuscripts which resulted in the

published version of *The Waste Land*. Certainly Vivien added to "A Game of Chess" a pair of indelible lines: "If you don't like it you can get on with it" and "What you get married for if you don't want children?" (153, 164).

Pound, too, changed words and lines, but his greater contribution was to the poem's overall structure. In a poem he included in returning Eliot his manuscript, Pound describes himself as midwife to Eliot' poem: "Know diligent Reader / That on each Occasion / Ezra performed the caesarian Operation." Much of Pound's operation, as his poem implied, involved cutting. He wrote "Echt" ("true") next to those passages which he insisted should stay in the poem, such as the passage beginning "A rat crept softly through the vegetation," and drew great black lines across passages which he wanted removed, such as the parody of "The Rape of the Lock" with which "The Fire Sermon" originally opened, or the apostrophes to London which studded that same section. Pound advised Eliot not to make a series of last-minute changes which seem to have arisen from the latter's concern that the poem's narrative needed more connective tissue. Eliot asked whether he should cut "Phlebas" and preface the poem with "Gerontion" (129, 127). Pound stood firm on the inadvisability of both of these moves. Yet Eliot ignored Pound's advice when he was sure of a line, such as "To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours, / With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine," which he retained despite Pound's labeling it "Blake" and "too often used" (*Facsimile* 9, 126). Content to call the transformation of "He Do the Police in Different Voices" into *The Waste Land* a collaborative process, I am more concerned with identifying Browningesque elements of the original poem which this process effaced.

In the drafts, "The Burial of the Dead"—and hence the entire poem—begins not in a lyric mode ("April is the cruelest month") but in a dramatic one. An account of a night of debauchery in Boston, the page-long monologue is indebted to Joyce's "Circe" chapter, set in Dublin's "Nighttown." The narrator, like Stephen Daedelus, is saved from being arrested for "committing a nuisance" through the timely intervention of an influential acquaintance. Like Stephen, he stays out all night; his monologue ends with "I got out to see the sunrise, and walked home." As an editor at the *Egoist*, Eliot was able to read the manuscripts for the individual chapters of *Ulysses*, which the magazine was publishing in serial form. He said in 1921: "The latter part of *Ulysses*, which I have been reading in manuscript, is truly magnificent" (*Letters* 452). This first monologue, like much of the imagery of *The Waste Land*, shows the influence of Joyce. Eliot knew how much of an impression Joyce had made upon him; he remarked of *Ulysses* "I wish for my sake I had never read it" (letter of 21 May 1921).

Nevertheless, while the Nighttown monologue appropriates some of the plot and the frenetic energy of Joyce's "Circe" chapter, it is, by comparison, traditional in its narrative technique and in its representation of consciousness and phenomena. A series of events narrated by one character in what we presume to be his speaking voice, this is more purely a Browningesque dramatic monologue than anything Eliot had written since "The Love Song of Saint Sebastian." While the subject matter may be drawn from Joyce, the form of the Nighttown monologue is essentially Browning's.

Eliot's colloquial diction and syntax in this monologue are reminiscent of Browning. It may be that Eliot was consciously or unconsciously influenced by Browning's style of representing spoken English. Eliot may, on the other hand, have

developed such a style independently of his forerunner. Regardless of the degree of Eliot's indebtedness to Browning, the two poets have a comparable interest in and technique for representing the abrupt and energetic cadences of a character who uses spoken English to tell a story about himself. Take a passage from Eliot's monologue:

> I tried to put my foot in the drum, and didn't the girl squeal
> She never did take to me, a nice guy—but rough;
> The next thing we were out in the street, Oh it was cold!
> When will you be good? Blew in to the Opera Exchange,
> Sopped up some gin, sat in to the cork game (*Facsimile* 5)

Consider also one from a Browning monologue, in which Fra Lippo Lippi describes climbing out of his window to chase after a group of girls:

> All the bed furniture—a dozen knots,
> There was a ladder! Down I let myself,
> Hands and feet, scrambling somehow, and so dropped,
> And after them. I came up with the fun,
> Hard by Saint Laurence, hail fellow, well met,— (63-67)

The speech of both characters is marked by interjections, broken syntax, comma splices, slang phrases, and omitted personal pronouns. In "He Do the Police in Different Voices," Eliot's colloquial monologue would have been immediately followed by "April is the cruelest month." The juxtaposition of these two passages would have underscored the orality of the opening monologue in comparison to the lyric mode in which the final version of the poem begins.

Eliot's Nighttown monologue, like so many of Browning's poems, is concerned with the self-representation of a narrating persona that is distinct from that of the poet. Eliot would return to his Nighttown narrator in the Sweeney poems, for he had an abiding interest in rough customers and their urban patois. Sweeney, despite or perhaps because of his atavistic nature, is famously aware of the Bradleyian limitations of his own self. He tells Dusty and Doris in the "Fragment of an Agon:"

> I gotta use words when I talk to you
> But if you understand or if you don't
> That's nothing to me and nothing to you
> We all gotta do what we gotta do.

Sweeney's story, which begins "I knew a man once did a girl in," seems to be lost on Dusty and Doris: neither identifies Sweeney with the murderer whose story he tells. Most readers, however, knowing the conventions of such works as "My Last Duchess" or "Porphyria's Lover," interrogate Sweeney's story more closely.

The original "Death by Water" likewise evinces Browningesque elements which are effaced in the final version of *The Waste Land*. The narrative of an overreaching sailor's final, doomed voyage, the monologue with which "Death By Water" originally opened is in the tradition of Ulysses' speech from the *Inferno*. In his essay "In Memoriam," Eliot would compare Tennyson's "Ulysses" unfavorably to Dante's Ulysses episode, as "a static poem, and a moving poem, on the same subject..." (*Selected Essays* 331). For Eliot, "Dante is telling a story. Tennyson is only stating an elegiac mood" (331). In his own Ulyssean poem, Eliot infuses the narrative structure of Dante's account with the New England coastal imagery which would later inform "The Dry Salvages"

(seamarks which are, in fact, first mentioned in "Death by Water"). Eliot's poem is convincingly nautical in a way that Dante's is not: Dante was a landlocked Florentine, whereas Eliot, like Tennyson, knew the sea. Although he echoes Tennyson's "Ulysses:" "The sea with many voices / moaned all about us," Eliot has written a colloquial narrative rather than a rhetorical set-piece. The language of the sailors, in particular, is far removed from the literary: "Where's a cocktail shaker, Ben, here's plenty of cracked ice" (61).

To this Dantean narrative Eliot appends a variation on Ariel's sea dirge which he originally composed, in French, as the conclusion of his "Dans Le Restaurant." This final passage is the only element of "Death by Water" which appears in the final version of *The Waste Land.* In addition, the sailor's narrative is introduced by a third-person description which applies Homer's terms for Odysseus to this New England sailor: "From his trade with wind and sea and snow, as they / Are, he is, with 'much seen and much endured' (55). The concentrated, crystalline form of Section IV as it saw print, a form which Eliot employed in the fourth section of each of the *The Four Quartets*, was originally discursive and dramatic. Like *The Odyssey*, the original "Death By Water" begins and ends in the third person, imbedding the Odyssean figure's first person account of his voyage in the long middle.

Yet these three complementary sections are also reminiscent of Browning. One must remember that the conventions of "Fra Lippo Lippi" and "My Last Duchess," poems which consist entirely of one character's spoken words to a silently responsive audience and which in the popular imagination become paradigmatic of Browning's form, are not the only conventions which Browning established for himself. He

frequently prefaced or followed a long spoken monologue with third-person commentary. "Caliban Upon Setebos" begins with an introductory passage which establishes the general character and situation of Caliban. "Bishop Blougram's Apology," a very long dramatic monologue, concludes with a third-person narrative in which Mr. Gigadibs, the skeptical dinner guest, responds to the Bishop's argument by emigrating to New Zealand. This shift from first-person to third-person narration is one of the means by which Browning both produces irony and escapes the narrative constraints of the first person monologue. It is again worth noting that Browning did not use the term "dramatic monologue": he considered "My Last Duchess," "Childe Roland," and "Porphyria's Lover" to be "Dramatic Romances," a term which does not imply a single-voiced narrative.

The Tennyson/Dante dichotomy that Eliot established in "In Memoriam" may obscure the presence of Browning in "Death by Water" and in other monologues in *The Waste Land* manuscripts. In the original "Death by Water" Eliot tries to evince the "gift... for narrative" he ascribed to Dante and denied to Tennyson (*Selected Essays* 331). Here again, Dante is the influence about whom Eliot feels no anxiety. Browning, possessing the Dantean "gift for narrative" in a way that Tennyson does not, may be a more anxious figure. Moreover, several of Browning's narratives seem to be told, like Dante's, from beyond the grave. Having died and gone to Hell, Purgatory, or Heaven, Dante's speakers can reflect not only on the whole of their lives, but on the manner and significance of their deaths. Browning sets a number of his own monologues at deathbeds and funerals, lingering on the margin of the undiscovered country in which Dante's characters dwell. "The Bishop Orders His Tomb," "A Grammarian's Funeral,"

"A Death in the Desert," and "Pompilia," to name a few, are summations of a life. Other of Browning's monologues, however, seem to end with their speaker's destruction and may therefore be told from beyond the temporal world. Childe Roland, like Eliot's sailor, tells a story that, according to one reading, seems to end in his own death. The wounded messenger boy's words in "Incident of the French Camp," are another version of the voice from beyond the grave: "I'm killed, Sire!"

Elsewhere Browning constructs narratives of journeys which end not in destruction but in the "good moment." The term comes from "Two in the Campagna," and its context stresses its transitory and fleeting nature: "I pluck the rose / and love it more than tongue can speak-- / Then the good minute goes." Kermode argues, in *The Sense of an Ending*, that as apocalyptic endtime—the concept that Judgment Day will bring an end to time and hence to all narratives—lost its vitality, the teleological thinking of which it partook was displaced onto narrative endings which occur in time rather than out of it. For Browning, time moves towards moments of clarity or significance which are both endings and, as Herbert Tucker argues, beginnings. In "How They Brought the Good News from Aix to Ghent," the good moment is that in which the heroic messenger finally imparts his message. Yet in many of Browning's journey poems, the message is not the cause of the journey, but the journey's effect. Roland does not know the purpose of his quest until its end: the journey produces its own purpose. Similarly, while desire may engender the lover's journey in "Meeting at Night," certainly the journey further engenders desire. This journey culminates in the momentary union of the two lovers. Yet the poem's companion piece, "Parting at Morning," underscores the transience of such a moment. At sunrise, the man who rowed and ran to his lover's farmhouse the

night before finds himself needing "a world of men," and sets out with equal determination to make the reverse journey. Unlike Porphyria's lover, the speaker of these two poems knows that even his happiest moments, being subject to time, will pass.

Removing the Nighttown monologue and the bulk of "Death by Water" (as well as the Fresca passages—a parody of fin-de-siècle sensibility cast in Pope's rhymed couplets) changes the contours of Eliot's long poem. For each of these narratives from the Ur-text is complete, contextualized, and discursive. Each is, to put it simply, a dramatic story narrated in the first person. Each has a particularized setting, a protagonist, a beginning, middle, and end. With the excision of both passages, few sustained "oral" narratives remain in the poem: Madame Sosostris's reading, the complimentary depictions of married life in "A Game of Chess," the undoing of the woman at Richmond. The straightforward narrative of Lil's abortion thus becomes an exception to the poem's otherwise fragmented narratives rather than one of four long narratives. In his line-by-line exegesis of the text of *The Waste Land*, Schwartz writes of the scene in the public house, "Least opaque of any part of *The Waste Land*, devoid of allusions except in the final line, this scene requires little or no exegesis" (149). The same could be said for the Nighttown monologue, the Fresca narrative, and the original "Death by Water." In its draft form, *The Waste Land* would have contained sustained narratives readily comprehensible to an audience familiar with Victorian and Edwardian poetic monologues.

The Waste Land is better for Pound and Eliot's excisions. Yet reading the Ur-text reveals how much closer to Victorian models Eliot's poem originally was to have been. Objecting to studies of influence that pay too little attention to manuscripts and drafts,

Bornstein proposes, "Surely the dynamics of influence show themselves most clearly first in the prior-unrehearsed-original beginning of the poem than in successive revisions toward the final published version" (1988: 11). This is certainly the case with *The Waste Land*. Like Browning's *Men and Women, Dramatis Personae*, or *The Ring and the Book*, and, perhaps more to the point, like the "Men and Women" grouping of 1863 or the compilation of "Browning Monologues" which Eliot owned as a boy, much of *The Waste Land* consisted of contrasting speakers representing themselves. Howe argues that "the voices of *The Waste Land* were conceived as dramatic characters" (46). Something changes between conception and the Pound-Eliot caesarian operation. In the poem that Pound helped to deliver, these characters are still present, but their presence is attenuated, decontextualized, and ghostly. Marie, the "I" who speaks to Stetson, the woman at Richmond are, to use Stephen Dedalus's phrase, refined almost out of existence.

Characters pass in and out of the text of *The Waste Land* with little or no introduction. Consider the opening passages of the final version of the poem. The lyric descriptions of April with which the poem opens modulate into a more particularized narrative "summer surprised us, coming over the Starnbergersee with a shower of rain." The voice of the *vates* becomes that of a man of leisure, perhaps that of Eliot himself during the summer of 1914, which he spent in Germany. In the Hofgarten, this narrator and a companion drink coffee and talk for an hour. A snatch of overheard conversation, paradigmatic of the fractured cultures of modern Europe, makes its way into the text: "Bin gar keine Russin, stamm' aus Litauen, echt deutsch" (I'm not Russian, I am from Lithuania, true German). Then, suddenly, Marie begins her reverie:

And when we were children, staying at the archduke's,

My cousin's, he took me out on a sled.

And I was frightened. He said, Marie,

Marie, hold on tight. And down we went. (13-16)

Lacking typographic indices, introductions, or transitional narration, the text shifts from one speaker to another. The first-time reader asks "Who is Marie?" and perhaps, "Has the whole poem thus far been narrated by Marie?"

This is exactly the response that Elizabeth Barrett Browning cautioned her husband to anticipate from readers of his *Dramatic Lyrics*. She urged him to preempt this narrative confusion by means of "some word of introduction...a title... a name." She describes Browning's monologues, using the same word *The Waste Land* artificer will, as "fragments:"

> Now these fragments... you mean to print them with a line between... and not one word at the top of it... now don't you! And then people will read
>
> "Oh, to be in England,"
>
> and say to themselves... "Why who is this? Who's out of England?" (Harrold 11)

Browning apparently took his wife's advice, adding to the poem a title that indicated the mindset and situation of its speaker: "Home-Thoughts, From Abroad." Eliot, on the other hand, does exactly what Barrett Browning cautions against. He puts "a line between" Marie's speech and that of the Ezekiel-like prophet, with "not one word at the top of" either. No competent reader could attribute these two passages to the same speaker—but, of course, not all of the transitions in *The Waste Land* are so obvious.

Browning and Eliot were both concerned with whether their collections of monologues would be intelligible to their readers. Yet reading the published work of each poet tells only half the story. In the case of *Dramatic Lyrics*, Browning's process of revision, guided by Elizabeth Barrett Browning's advice, serve to produce a finished product in which "fragments" of speech are more clearly distinguished from each other and located in space and time. Browning's ongoing revision and reorganization of his earlier poetry furthers this end. Aided by Ezra Pound, Eliot achieves just the opposite result in his own revisionary process: he deliberately effaces the connective tissue and narrative markers that distinguished voices from each other in his manuscripts. Whereas Elizabeth Barrett Browning urged Browning to give his readers more clues as to context, Pound insisted that Eliot not provide such clues.

Ironically, the early drafts of Browning's and Eliot's poems are more alike than the published versions: Browning's drafts are more fragmentary and disjointed than his published poems; Eliot's are less so. In their processes of revision, the two poets put more distance between one another: Browning's work becomes less opaque, while Eliot's becomes more so.

The Waste Lands of Browning and Eliot

The Waste Land is encyclopedic enough to contain, encoded or openly, many of the preoccupations, images, and forms that run through Eliot's earlier work. Because *The Waste Land* was Eliot's most ambitious work in scope and scale, and because it grew out of his earlier poems, it necessarily encompasses and reorders the concerns of these

poems. Eliot was alive to this sort of process, writing in a 1928 review entitled "Poets' Borrowings:"

> The debt of every poet to his predecessors and contemporaries is a scent eagerly sniffed and followed by every critic; but the debts of poets to their own earlier work are apt to be overlooked. Yet any intelligent psychologist ought to see at once that any poet, even the greatest, will tend to use his own impressions over and over again. (*TLS* 5 April 1928)

In the same year, Eliot wrote of the likelihood of "a poet in maturity working up into better form some image or rhythm which was an inspired flash of his youth" (*The Criterion*, iv June 1928; Ricks 393).

The Waste Land owes such a debt to Eliot's earlier work, for it revisits the urban psychogeographies of "Preludes," the "Caprices," "Prufrock," and "Portrait of a Lady." The violet hours, the smoke and fog, and the treading feet of the Eliotic city make up a part of the psychological terrain of *The Waste Land*'s governing consciousness. Yet this modern city is put into dialogue with other terrains of which, for the poem's artificer, the city is an aspect. Underlying modern London is a vision of a desert "where the sun beats, / And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water" (22-24). This desert, which will appear again in "Choruses from the Rock" and "Ash Wednesday," is a familiar compound ghost, an amalgam of Ezekiel's valley of dry bones, the desert of Christ's temptation, the land beyond the oasis of *The Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam*, the "*gran diserto*" in which Dante called upon Virgil (*Inferno* 1.64), the "*terra lagrimosa*" that rings the Acheron (*Inferno* 3.133), and the wasteland that hides the

Chapel Perilous. Eliot's desert also draws, of course, on the grey plain of "Childe Roland."

In "What the Thunder Said," the desert is most obviously Dantean. The artificer's questions,

> 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 (367-70)

echo those of Dante to Virgil: "Maestro, che è quell ch'i' odo? / e che gent'è che par nel duol sì vinta?" ("Master, what is that which I hear / and what people so overcome with grief?") (*Inferno* 3.32-33; translation mine). The hooded hordes are the same faceless London crowd that caused the Eliotic narrator to muse, in Dante's words, "I had not thought death had undone so many" (63). In the artificer's consciousness, contemporary London and the plains ringing Dante's hell are brought together.

The very obviousness of Eliot's references to Dante in *The Waste Land* may occlude his references to Browning's "Childe Roland." The passage which follows the Dantean description of Hell draws on the imagery of Browning's grotesque landscape:

> And bats with baby faces in the violet light
> Whistled, and beat their wings
> And crawled head downward down a blackened wall
> And upside down in air were towers
> Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours
> And voices singing out of empty cisterns and exhausted wells. (380-5)

The noise Roland hears at the Tower similarly "tolled / Increasing like a bell. Names in my ears / Of all the lost adventurers my peers" (194-5). In "Reminiscent Bells in 'The Waste Land'," Martin Puhvel argues that while one should not "assume even the slightest direct connection between the two poems... Yet in examining phrasing and diction we meet an instance of verbal similarity coupled with seeming parallelism in underlying ideas" (287). Puhvel says of the word "reminiscent:"

> In Eliot the bells are probably church-bells and the term 'reminiscent' presumably means that they merely 'keep the hours,' having lost all spiritual significance in the secularization of the Waste Land. Further, however, 'reminiscent' may also imply that by their very existence and action they remind of their former spiritual significance, thus, like the tolling in 'Childe Roland,' of a happier past." (287)

I would add that Eliot's "tolling bells" are the same church bells that would have rung for the burial of the dead. Roland's bells—or the names which sound in his ears and which he twice likens to bells—are likewise remembrances of the dead. Roland says that his comrades are "Lost, lost! one moment knelled the woe of years." For the *Waste Land* quester, as for Roland, the tolling is a reminder both of his fallen peers and of his own fallen purpose. The "seeming parallelism" which Puhvel fails to note, however, is that in each poem the bells ring when the quester arrives at the place which he has sought: the Dark Tower or the Chapel Perilous. The bells therefore signal not only a return of memory, but a return of purpose. They are reminders not only of the fallen past, but of a potentially redeemable future.

Incidentally, it is worth noting that bats and babies, which *The Waste Land* quester links in his figurative description, also occupy Roland's thoughts. Roland wonders "whether the night will send a howlet or a bat," and thinks that the unseen thing he spears in crossing the river "sounded like a baby's shriek." Moreover, his arrival at the Tower is heralded by the appearance of a menacing bird with bat-like wings: "A great black bird... his wide wing dragon-penned" (160-1). The *Waste Land* quester is rather more preoccupied with the grotesque bats than one might notice at first, for the "upside down towers" represent not his own natural point-of-view, but that of the "head downward" crawling animals. I would argue that either the quester momentarily adopts the bat's point-of-view, or, perhaps more logically, tilts his head so as to see the bats' baby-like faces "right side up." He briefly shares the bats' vision of towers that hang "upside down in air."

The next passage of "What the Thunder Said" describes "the empty chapel, only the wind's home. / It has no windows and the door swings." The Dark Tower, too, has no windows ("a round squat turret, blind as the fool's heart"), a quality which, if one remembers Psalm 14, marks it as the seat of atheism. The chapel is both windowless and empty, likewise associating it with the absence of belief. Yet confronting absence seems to invoke presence for both Browning's and Eliot's quester. "Day came back again" to illuminate Roland's struggle with atheism and meaninglessness, while a flash of lightning and the crowing of a cock (the herald of the morning and hence a symbol of Christ) serve a similar role in announcing the *Waste Land* quester's arrival at the empty chapel. The quester's realization that "Dry bones can harm no one" is inherently Christian: death has

no power over the believer. The empty chapel may therefore suggest the empty tomb which the body of a resurrected Jesus no longer inhabits.

In evoking Roland's grey plain, the governing consciousness of *The Waste Land* makes explicit the connection between the deserted streets of *Prufrock and Other Observations*, the plains ringing Hell, and the deserted land which Childe Roland must cross to reach the Dark Tower. All are places of trial and temptation that one must cross to reach the salvation articulated in "What the Thunder Said." This compound landscape underscores the opposing ways in which Browning and Eliot view cities. For Browning, the city is, by and large, the locus of civilization and refinement. Horror is found not in the marketplace but in isolated cottages ("Porphyria's Lover," *The Ring and the Book*), country estates ("My Last Duchess," *The Ring and the Book*), abbeys ("Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister"), and empty plains or fields of battle ("Childe Roland," "Incident at the French Camp"). Eliot's shifts the ground—literally—by making his own city one with Roland's wasteland. The desert, as the Rock would later say, "is not remote in southern tropics, / The desert is not only around the corner, / The desert is squeezed in the tube-train next to you." One can be as alone in the city as on an empty plain.

Vatic Roles in *The Waste Land* and *The Ring and the Book*

Eliot's original title for *The Waste Land*, "He Do the Police in Different Voices," a line taken from Dickens' *Our Mutual Friend*, puts the poem in dialogue with Victorian popular fiction—and specifically with Dickens' novel of murder, refuse, and assumed identities—in a way that his final title does not. Gregory Jay, tongue only half in cheek,

goes so far as to read *The Waste Land* itself as a murder mystery (4). He notes that *Our Mutual Friend* begins with a body, thought to be John Harmon's, being fished out of the Thames. At the end of the book, Harmon is "resurrected," revealed to have been walking the streets of London in disguise. *The Waste Land*, according to Jay, is likewise the story of a drowned man who may return to life. Although Jay does not do so, one could cite the centrality of Tiresias as further evidence that crime and detection are concerns of *The Waste Land*. In Sophocles, as in Eliot, Tiresias is both witness and, along with Oedipus, proto-detective.

Yet parallels between "He Do the Police in Different Voices" and any of its nineteenth and early twentieth century novelistic "intertexts"—which include *Our Mutual Friend*, James' "In the Cage," Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, and Joyce's *Ulysses*—are inherently limited by the very different formal exigencies and capacities of prose and verse. Whatever thematic continuities Eliot's long poem, in any of its stages, may have with Victorian novels, it is ultimately the formal and structural precedents of the Victorian long poem by which, through imitation or reaction, *The Waste Land* must define itself. I would argue that Browning's *The Ring and the Book*, referred to nowhere in the text of *The Waste Land* or in its notes, may therefore be a powerful forerunner of Eliot's own long poem. In its coupling of sex and violence, its contrapuntal arrangement of a multiplicity of voices, and its deployment of a vatic character who serves to witness and bring order to conflicting testimonies within the text, *The Ring and the Book* may have provided Eliot with a model for his own longest poem to date.

Eliot assigned *The Ring and the Book* to his University of London extension course students in 1916, and one may safely assume that he read or reread at least part of

the work in preparation for teaching his class. Of course, one should keep in mind the old joke about the professor who when asked if he had read a particular book replied, "Read it? I haven't even taught it yet!" Nevertheless, both Eliot's account of his students' "great enthusiasm" for Browning (*Letters* 168) and his praising of *The Ring and the Book* as "the greatest long work" by Tennyson's "greatest rival" (*Selected Essays* 331) indicate that he was indeed familiar with the long poem. While Eliot assigned his students the entire poem, he noted that the students should "especially" read Books I, V, VI, VII, and X. These sections are the heart of the poem: the monologues of Browning-as-poet, Guido, Caponsacchi, Pompilia, and the Pope. Eliot read these complementary monologues a year after his "Prufrock" had first been published and a few years before starting work in earnest on "He Do the Police in Different Voices." Browning's monologues from *The Ring and the Book* may therefore have provided Eliot with one model for how individual monologues could be orchestrated and juxtaposed to create a whole that is greater than its parts.

Yet one must not accept the premise that *The Waste Land* was significantly influenced by *The Ring and the Book* to find value in putting the works in dialogue, for both occupy a comparable position in Browning's and Eliot's respective *oeuvres*. Having written both psychological monologues that stand alone and others which are somehow linked or complementary, each poet constructs a long poem in which a great many characters' voices are incorporated into a larger, architectonic whole. Each poet eschews the poetic drama, the form which would seem to lend itself most readily to such a project, in favor of what Eliot would term, in reference to *The Ring and the Book*, a "hammered out... personal form." The very density of each poem seems to have compelled the poets

to create for themselves an authorial double within the text: Pope Innocent and Tiresias, whose vatic roles are meant to partake of witness, judge, poet, and prophet. The vatic figure is charged with bringing order to the text's disparate representations of reality and thus of constructing a whole truth out of subjective fragments. That Eliot's notes overstate the centrality of the Tiresias figure to the other parts of the poem, positing him as the governing consciousness which witnesses all of the events of *The Waste Land* (*à la* Prufrock or Gerontion), underscores the degree to which Eliot was concerned with the poem's lack of such a vatic presence. The notes on Tiresias establish the importance of such a vatic presence for Eliot's concept of the long poem, if not for his practice of it. Ultimately, too, Eliot's anxiety concerning Tiresias indicates the degree to which Eliot has retreated as an author-narrator in comparison to the presence of Browning the poet and his intradiagetic doppelgängers in *The Ring and the Book.*

Eliot is never cagier about the relationship of his own work to that of the Victorians than in his revisions of "He Do the Police in Different Voices" and in his appending of notes to the quarto edition of *The Waste Land.* Both the excisions and substituted titles and epigraphs of the former process and the possum-scholarly annotations of the latter deflect attention from the great long poems and novels of the previous century, directing the reader instead to French, Italian, Elizabethan, and classic sources. Reading the *Waste Land* manuscript reveals how many allusions to nineteenth and twentieth century literature were removed in the Pound-Eliot caesarian operation. The poem's notes further distance Eliot's work from the Victorians, electing Dante, Baudelaire, the Elizabethans, Frazer's *The Golden Bough*, Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, and Greek and Latin writers as *The Waste Land*'s intertexts. Eliot's

subsequent comments demonstrate, however, that the notes themselves are, as Kenner, Schwarz, and others have argued, a final monologue, spoken from behind the mask of the academic. Eliot eventually expressed regret that these notes sent credulous readers on a "goose chase" (*On Poetry and Poets* 110). Many of Eliot's sources lie closer to home than he led his Grail-hunting readership to believe.

One of Eliot's most telling comments regarding *The Waste Land* came in 1960, when he admitted having been absorbed as an adolescent by Thomson's *The City of Dreadful Night* and Fitzgerald's *Rubáiyát* (*Critic*, xviii; Ricks 398). Thomson's poem both prefigures Eliot's unreal city and guides Eliot's use of Dante's Hell as an analogue for modern London. The *Rubáiyát*, too, with its anti-Carlylian gospel of retreat, pleasure, and resignation, seems to inform Eliot's visions of receding into the stillness of the hyacinth garden, the rose garden, and the chambers of the sea. Yet more significant for Eliot's work than the imagery of either poem is their form: it is important to note that the model of the Victorian long poem once captivated Eliot. While the long poems of Fitzgerald, Thomson, Tennyson, and Browning are all absent from Eliot's notes, they are nevertheless a part of the tradition out of which *The Waste Land* came into being.

The erudition evident in Eliot's literary and cultural references, the gravity of his critical enterprise, his classicism, and the air of propriety he cultivated in his own person all tend to occlude the degree to which he enjoyed popular, lowbrow entertainment. In a 1927 essay on Wilkie Collins, he proposes that the study of Collins' fiction might serve as a counterbalance to that of Henry James, since "Collin's novels suggest questions which no student of 'the art of fiction' can afford to neglect. It is possible that the artist

can be too conscious of his 'art'" (*Selected Essays* 469). While at Harvard, he joined a gymnasium and took boxing lessons; in fact, he continued to attend boxing matches, with Wyndham Lewis, after moving to London (Ackroyd 31, 105). Finally, the rhythms of Boston and London music halls reverberate not only in "Sweeney Agonistes" (Ackroyd 105) but in the "Shakespearean Rag" of *The Waste Land*. While the overcultivation of Prufrock may be more readily apparent in Eliot's own public persona and in the voice of his critical essays, the atavistic, brute physicality of Sweeney (to say nothing of the sexual exhibitionism of King Bolo) is no less important to an understanding of his preoccupations. Yet Pound and Eliot's revisions of *The Waste Land* emphasize the former aspects of the Eliot's authorial persona by suppressing the latter. An incipient violence—a violence often linked with sexuality—underlies many of Eliot's poems and plays. His work is haunted by murdered women: the strangled lover of "The Love Song of St. Sebastian," the "done in" girl kept in the bath of Lysol in "Sweeney Agonistes," the "torn girl trembling by the mill-stream" in *Murder in the Cathedral*, Harry's drowned wife in *The Family Reunion,* and the crucified Celia in *The Cocktail Party*.

The Waste Land, too, couples sex with violence and death. The copulation of the city clerk and the typist has overtones of necrophilia. The clerk's "[e]xploring hands encounter no defence; / His vanity requires no response, / And makes a welcome of indifference" (240-242). Like Porphyria's lover or St. Sebastian, the clerk would rather possess a lifeless female body than be rejected by a living woman. For the woman who echoes Dante's La Pia in the latter half of "The Fire Sermon," the binary opposite of birth is not death, but sex: "Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew / Undid me. By Richmond

I raised my knees / Supine on the floor of a narrow canoe" (293-5). In this clinical, anti-erotic metonymy, birth, sex and death are conflated in a raising of the knees.

The Ring and the Book, like other of Browning's poems which Eliot incorporated into his own poetry, may therefore have appealed to Eliot in its sensational coupling of sex and violence. Like Eliot, Browning explores again and again the theme of a woman "done in" by a lover: it is the dark possibility inherent in his preoccupation with the Perseus and Andromeda myth. Because Perseus and the dragon together determine whether Andromeda will live or die, their roles as lover and devourer somehow collapse into each other. The Andromeda myth is ultimately concerned, in Browning's reading, with how a man will exercise his power over a woman who is somehow bound to him. Many critics and biographers have noted that Browning himself stepped into the Perseus role by courting and eloping with Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In this respect, his life and his art may have mutually reinforced the centrality of this myth to his own artistic purposes. Despite, or perhaps because of, his own success as a Perseus figure, Browning continued to be drawn to the trope of the enchained, sacrificial woman and of the man who exercises power over her. Yet Browning's retellings of the myth always warp its lines. In "Count Gismond," for example, the Perseus figure rescues a lady who is at heart a kind of serpent, one who perhaps should have been left for the monster. "Porphyria's Lover," "My Last Duchess," and *The Ring and the Book*, on the other hand, are all versions of the myth in which the dragon—or Perseus—devours Andromeda.

"Porphyria's Lover" clearly made an impression on Eliot, for his "Love Song of Saint Sebastian" imitates it in theme and form. Nor is this the only of Browning's poems involving a beautiful dead woman that Eliot was to incorporate into his own work. In the

impressionistic collage of literary portrayals of Venice which opens "Burbank with a Baedeker," Eliot quotes a snatch of verse from Browning's "A Toccata of Galuppi's." Eliot includes only, "...with such hair too!" The full lines from Browning's poem are "Dear dead women, with such hair, too—what's become of all the gold / Used to hang and brush their bosoms? I feel chilly and grow old" (44-5). One of the elements that Eliot seems to gravitate to in Browning's oeuvre is the image of the beautiful woman who has died or been murdered. *The Ring and the Book,* Browning's most ambitious reworking of the Andromeda myth, may likewise have appealed to Eliot in its conflation of sexuality and violence.

Browning's Count Guido Franceschini may also have held some fascination for the Eliot who returned several times to the brutish, murderous, but charming Sweeney. Like all great villains—Iago, Milton's Satan, Jason Compson—Guido's fascination lies not in his capacity to do evil but in his capacity to reflect upon the evil he has done. It is not so much the man, but the man's representation of himself, that holds us rapt. Guido's serpentine villainy reveals itself through ironic double-voicedness; his favorable self-portrayal contains his self-condemnation. He muses that perhaps he made a mistake in being so patient with Pompilia, and should have "[c]almly and quietly cut off, clean through the bone, / But one joint of one finger of my wife" (950). This measure might have produced "reproaches,--but reflections too!" For Guido, not having cut off a finger is a sign of humanity; for most readers, his entertaining the merits of such an action reveals the depth of his depravity.

Eliot's unfinished "Sweeney Agonistes" would have put the "Guido-esque" Sweeney at the center of a closet drama and hence have given Eliot more scope to

explore this character. As it is, Sweeney appears in "Sweeney Erect," "Sweeney Among the Nightingales," and in the "Fragment of an Agon" from "Sweeney Agonistes." In the first two poems, Sweeney is described by an outside observer. In the fragment, he speaks in the context of what Eliot carefully labeled "an Aristophanic melodrama." Yet these three works are enough to establish him as one of Eliot's most compelling personae: a grotesquely decisive, ruthless inversion of Prufrock, Gerontion, and the precise pedant of "The Dry Salvages." Sweeney is also present, in an attenuated form, in the Nighttown monologue. Like Sweeney, the speaker of that monologue thinks of himself as "a nice guy—but rough." Browning and Eliot alike are fascinated by ruthless men, the Guidos and the Sweeneys of the world who use their power over women to devour rather than to save.

Ultimately of more significance than the poets' shared concern with murdered women or ruthless men are their comparable experiments in writing poems and monologues which are linked through titles, settings, or characters. For Browning and Eliot, *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land* represent a movement beyond the complementary linkages which each had long practiced and into the architectonics of the long, dialogic poem.

Admittedly, *The Waste Land* and *The Ring and the Book* might seem, at first glance, to have little in common. Pound called *The Waste Land* "the longest poem in the language," but it is dwarfed by *The Ring and the Book*. Browning's long poem offers a superabundance of plot. The story of the Roman murder is plotted out twelve times, such that even a casual reader who essays one or two of its books can summarize the events which make up the substance of the case. The clarity of its story may partially account

for why this poem did not meet with the charges of obscurity and difficulty that haunted Browning's earlier work. *The Waste Land*, on the other hand, can seem, at least to the uninitiated, cryptic and stripped of plot. It seems to require for a full understanding of its meaning the sort of key that Eliot's notes purport to provide. Yet despite these differences in length and opacity, *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land* are driven by a shared impulse: each represents a new form of dialogic verse, an alternative to the form at which Browning had arguably failed and in which Eliot feared he would fail, the poetic drama. In *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land*, each poet developed a new way to put characters and their accounts of the world into dialogue with each other.

In *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land*, the dialogic element of Browning's and Eliot's earlier monologues is writ large. Yet the two poems are dialogic or multivoiced in different ways. *The Ring and the Book* is the culmination of Browning's experiments in writing complementary poems: in each of its twelve books, a different character constructs a narrative, interpreting the same events according to his own lights. Each narrative is a unique construct of perceiving persona and perceived phenomena. *The Waste Land*, on the other hand, is the product of Eliot's synthetic process of composition. Combining fragments from his readings and from his own writing, he creates a new order out of disparate parts. His speakers' connection to each other lies in the text of the poem itself rather than in an intradiegetical world described by the poem. Dante's *Inferno*, Ezekiel's desert, and Eliot's London overlap in the consciousness that constructs the poem rather than in the phenomenal world. As Schwarz puts it, *The Waste Land* is "an amalgam that could exist only within the tissue of literature itself" (17).

This essential difference between Browning's and Eliot's forms of polyglossia seems to grow out of their disparate modes of composition: it is manifest in the process by which each wrote as well as in the finished product of their writing. Browning generally composed any two complementary monologues, such as "Meeting at Night" and "Parting at Morn," around the same time (Harrold 5). In other words, he knew the poems would complement each other, and wrote each with an eye to the other. In other cases, having written one poem he set out within a relatively short period to compose a second poem which would augment it. Harrold cites complementary pairing as the salient feature of Browning's poetry, arguing that "the technique of writing complementary poems is a more encompassing literary device than the dramatic monologue, which [Browning] also perfected, for it is greater in scope than a single monologue" (3). Browning began composing *The Ring and the Book* having already charted out its twelve-part structure and the uses to which he would put the accounts contained in "The Old Yellow Book" (Collins and Altick vii). This was to be, from the start, a series of interlocking monologues, Browning's most ambitious deployment of complementary poems to date.

Eliot did not often write with such a scheme in mind. Or, to be more exact, the projects which he envisioned his writing eventually culminating in often came to nothing—his "Agony in the Garret," the unfinished "Sweeney Agonistes" and "Coriolan," as well as numerous proposed, but unwritten, volumes of criticism attest to this tendency—while new structures emerged which incorporated fragments from his earlier work. Eliot's genius lay in a gift for synthesis, for creating architectonic structures that incorporated fragments of poetry which he originally composed independently of

each other. He described this process, in a 1959 interview with Donald Hall of the *Paris Review*, as "Doing things separately and seeing the possibility of fusing them together, altering them, and making a kind of whole of them" (Gardner 14). Nowhere is Eliot's genius for synthesis more evident than in *The Waste Land*.

The notes that Eliot appended to *The Waste Land* subsequent to its printing in book form (upon the publisher's request for more pages to round out the quarto volume) is therefore best read as an *ex post facto* imposition of a symbolic and narrative scheme onto the work rather than as the revelation of the scheme according to which the poem was written. Schwarz argues of *The Waste Land*,

> My original supposition was that the poem had no preconceived plan to which it had to adhere. Not only did this seem reasonable in view of the inadequacy of the Weston-Frazer interpretation [as set out in Eliot's notes], but, when the facsimile of the original drafts of the poem were published, it was borne out by the evidence of the composition. (17)

Eliot's own description of the manuscript as a "scrawling, chaotic poem" supports this position (Bush 70). The word "scrawling" seems to imply that the poem has been written—and continues to write itself—without a detailed, preconceived plan.

While his own process may more accurately by described as synthetic, Eliot was certainly drawn to the sort of complementary poems that Browning composed. Murray Prosky brilliantly points out that in editions of Palgrave's *Golden Treasury* published after 1892, Ariel's song ("Full fathom five thy father lies") and Webster's dirge from the "The White Devil" ("But keep the wolf far hence, that's foe to men") are printed on facing pages (3). In juxtaposing these two passages, Palgrave took his cue from Charles

Lamb, whose assessment of the two pieces was reprinted in *The Golden Treasury*: "I never saw anything like this Dirge, except the Ditty which reminds Ferdinand of his drowned father in the Tempest. As that is of water, watery; so this is of the earth, earthy" (Prosky 3; Lucas 192; Palgrave 353). Prosky writes: "Not only the dirges, but the interaction of earth and water imagery is central to the structure and imagistic apparatus of *The Waste Land*" (4). Despite Eliot's generally dismissive attitude toward *The Golden Treasury* and anthologies in general (*On Poetry and Poets* 41), Prosky finds "most of the allusions to English poetry in *The Waste Land* can be found in Palgrave" (3). In excerpting and associating these two verses, Lamb, Palgrave, and Eliot synthesize earlier literary work to produce a complementary pair of poems. Eliot's form of synthesis in *The Waste Land* therefore interpenetrates Browning's form of complementary poems.

Eliot's earlier work likewise betrays an interest in complimentary, mutually illuminating poems. *Inventions of the March Hare* is full of sequences: the "Mandarin" poems, the "Preludes," the "Caprices." Like Browning, Eliot often linked poems by means of titles. This is a practice in which Browning was encouraged by Elizabeth Barrett Browning. In a letter of October 1845, she urged him to "stoop to the vulgarism of prefixing some word of introduction, as other people do... You perplex your readers often by casting yourself on their intelligence in these things" (*Letters of R&B*, 229). Barrett Browning knew how greatly readers are led by titles and subtitles: in some cases, it is only the title and subtitles that situate a Browning monologue in a particular time and place.

Despite their different modes of dialogism, complementary and intradiegetical versus synthetic and extradiegetical, both *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land* are

profoundly referential or "intertextual." While Browning's poem draws on one primary text, the unpublished "Old Yellow Book" he bought for a lira in Florence, that text is itself a compendium of all of the statements of the participants in the 1698 Roman murder case. Moreover, Browning's Pope, who like the poet reads the transcripts of the witnesses, reinforces the inherently textual concerns of the poem. Eliot's poem appropriates and transforms lines from dozens of poems, plays, novels, operas, songs, and memoirs, drawing together in one text many of the works and authors that were of abiding interest to Eliot's poetry and criticism. Where Browning's "Old Yellow Book" is obscure and, arguably, not of real literary merit, Eliot's sources represent at least some of what Arnold termed "the best that has been thought or said."

It is perhaps this transformation of received literature, however different in scope and quality that literature may be, into a new form that marks both works, for Eliot, as "personal." He termed *The Ring and the Book* a "personal form" and his own long poem "the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life" (*Facsimile* 1). Again, Eliot's statements must be taken with a grain of salt. They evince an anxiety about the greatness of an earlier poetic work—be it that of Browning or of Eliot's younger self. Charging both works with being personal is thereby a means of downplaying their significance for subsequent poetic endeavors. Yet Browning seemed to consider his own poem to be distinctly impersonal: the poet figure of the first book says, "I disappeared; the book grew all in all" (533). This sentiment seems proto-modern, akin to Eliot's dictum that the poet has "not a personality to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality, in which impressions and sensations combine in peculiar and unexpected ways" or Stephen Dedalus' credo that

"the artist, like the God of creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, paring his fingernails."

Likewise, the immense popularity of each long poem questions Eliot's assertion, in regard to Browning, that "no man can invent a form, create a taste for it, and perfect it too." Which of these did Browning not do? One might argue that he perfected in *The Ring and the Book* a form Wilkie Collins had invented and popularized in *The Woman in White*. Collins had employed a series of first-person prose narratives to move his mystery forward in time. Covering the same events again and again, Browning's verse narratives required a greater depth of characterization and ironic tension to mitigate a lack of new plot material. Yet Eliot sees it as just the opposite: Browning "hammered out" the form of *The Ring and the Book*, but was not able to perfect it.

How, too, does Eliot's claim apply to his own work? There was, almost immediately, "a taste for" *The Waste Land*: it quickly became the central text of Modernism. Pound, for example, said in a 1922 letter, "Eliot's Waste Land is I think the justification for the 'movement,' of our modern experiment, since 1900." Did Eliot then invent the form of *The Waste Land*—a form which he later employed in the *Four Quartets*—or did he rather perfect, through subversion and compression, a form that had already been invented? If the latter, then what invented form does *The Waste Land* perfect, and to what extent is Eliot indebted to the long poems of the Victorians?

I would argue that Eliot used the Victorian long poem as a point of departure for *The Waste Land*, and that his anxiety about the lack of a clear authorial presence or governing consciousness in his own poem reveal both the degree to which he deviated from a Browningesque mode of complementary monologues meant to represent the same

set of events from multiple points of view, and the degree to which this mode of representation still informed Eliot's theory of the long, dialogic poem.

In *The Ring and the Book*, Browning created a structure dense enough to require him to employ an authorial figure within the text who would serve as witness, reader, and judge. Pope Innocent is the character who most clearly speaks for Browning; he is the text's *vates*, one who is able, as Browning said of the subjective poet, "to see the world steadily and see it whole" (*Essay on Shelley*). While the Pope is distinct from "Browning the poet," who introduces the poem in Book I and concludes it in Book XII, his role in the world described by the text is comparable to the poet's role in the world outside of the text. Like Browning, he reads the transcripts of the murder trial and reconstructs a "whole" truth from them. He is, in other words, a stand-in both for the reader and for the author. While "Browning the poet" speaks extradiegetically about his mode of composition, the scheme of the poem, and the nature of its characters, Pope Innocent judges and orders all of the poem's other voices from within the text itself. The Pope's reflections and judgments concerning the guilt and innocence of Pompilia, Guido, and Caponsacchi are therefore definitive and authorial in a way the other characters' monologues are not.

Eliot would seem to elect Tiresias to a comparable vatic role in the notes for *The Waste Land*. Eliot writes that Tiresias, "although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character,' is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest... What Tiresias *sees*, in fact, is the substance of the poem" (52). Like Browning, Eliot would seem to be creating in Tiresias an authoritative double within the world of the poem, one

whose consciousness brings order to otherwise chaotic fragments of monologues, descriptions, and quotations. Tiresias, like Browning's Pope, is a spectator and a judge of crimes rather than a participant in them. Yet Eliot's own assessment of Tiresias's role seems overstated and reductive. The poet's assertion simply is not born out by a reading of his poem: Tiresias possesses neither the authority that Eliot would ascribe to him in his notes nor the ordering, vatic role that Browning granted his Pope in *The Ring and the Book.*

Ellmann suggests interpreting the Tiresias note as "an afterthought, a token placation, say, of the ghost of Bradley, rather than as elucidative of the assumption under which the writing was originally done." Koestenbaum, writing after the 1973 publication of *The Waste Land* manuscripts, cites Pound's marginal note, "make up yr. mind you Tiresias if you know damn well or else you don't," as influencing Eliot's vision of Tiresias. Koestenbaum believes that "Pound convinced Eliot, by addressing him as Tiresias, that this androgynous seer was the poem's center" (128). Like so many of Eliot's notes, the Tiresias comment constitutes an imposition of a structuring principle adopted after the composition of the poem rather than the revelation of an underlying structure that guided that composition.

The Tiresias footnote is not the only instance of Eliot's attempting to impose a governing consciousness on *The Waste Land.* He briefly considered affixing "Gerontion" as a "prelude" to the poem (*Facsimile* 127), a decision which might have rendered all of *The Waste Land*'s voices the "tenants of the house, / thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season." Both the note and the proposed inclusion of "Gerontion" would seek to locate the text of *The Waste Land* within the psyche of a single perceiving character or persona.

However, the voices, characters, and terrains of *The Waste Land* are diffused in a way that mitigates against this sort of intradiegetical narrative framework; *The Waste Land* is beyond the scope of a Prufrock or a Gerontion. Within the poem, neither Tiresias nor any other character or personage can fill the role of Browning's Pope. Rather, it is an artificer outside of the framework of the poem who arranges what the Pope calls "rags" and "tatters"—and Eliot calls "fragments"—into a solid artifice. Moreover, Eliot's fragments, unlike Browning's testimonies, are not reconcilable within the context of a single world. The disparate voices of *The Ring and the Book* all refer to the same set of circumstances and happenings in seventeenth century Rome, and a skilled reader such as the Pope may use them to reconstruct a single historical event. The fragments of *The Waste Land* construct an order which is removed from history: they point not to a truth located in the material, temporal world but to one found beyond the material and the temporal.

Eliot's anxiety concerning the lack of what I have termed a vatic figure in *The Waste Land* reveals much about both the models of poetry with which he was comparing his work-in-progress and the degree to which his practices as a poet had outpaced his theory of poetry. A comparison of Browning's Pope and Eliot's Tiresias reveals the widening of a fundamental divide between the central tenets of Browning's and Eliot's poetic enterprises. The Pope, like Browning's Roland and Karshish, validates an engagement with text and world. In what he says and in the role he fills in the structure of the *Ring and the Book*, the Pope is an advocate for active struggle against the chaos of the world and for the (re)construction of a whole truth out of fragments. Eliot's Tiresias, like Prufrock and the Magus, is a passive figure who offers salvation through withdrawal

and retreat rather than through engagement and struggle. The effaced figure of the poetic consciousness who brings together *The Waste Land*'s many voices has retreated even further from materiality than has Tiresias. Ultimately, *The Waste Land*'s lack of a governing vatic consciousness, its erasure of individual identity, and the effaced character of the medium in which its textual elements combine are the features that most compellingly express Eliot's poetics of retreat and that most dramatically represent his break with Browning and the long poems of the Victorians.

The twelve perspectives on Guido's crime represented in *The Ring and the Book* are not of equal authority: Pope Innocent's monologue is not one of testimony or partisan advocacy, but of final, binding judgment. Yet the Pope makes it clear that he does not derive his authority from his Papal title. In fact, he begins his narrative by rejecting the doctrine of Papal Infallibility. The shifting fate of Pope Formosus serves as his test case. Pope Stephen VII, who exhumes Formosus in order to hold "a ghastly Trial... of a dead man by a live man," has the corpse's fingers and head cut off and cast, with the body, into the Tiber. Formosus is later beatified by Stephen's successor, then damned again by a subsequent pope. In the course of this narrative, the very word "pope" begins to lose its meaning, as Formosus is "unpoped" and "repoped" (110). Innocent concludes by asking "Which of the judgments was infallible? / Which of my predecessors spoke for God?" (151-2).

Browning is writing almost two years before the Vatican Council of 1870 would announce its doctrine of Papal Infallibility, but the issue would already have been in the air. Its corollary, the inerrancy of the Bible, had been challenged decades prior by works

of the Higher Criticism, such as Strauss' *Das Leben Jesu*, and of science, such as Darwin's *The Origin of Species*. Browning's Pope weighs in on an issue that would have had arguably more relevance in Browning's day than in Guido Franceschini's. Infallibility and inerrancy are inherently reactionary ideas, attempts to reestablish the monolithic constructions of thought and belief that nineteenth century science, philology, and archaeology had fragmented.

Rather than in reactionary papal doctrines, the Pope locates his authority in his own experience of the world. Acknowledging his fallibility, he declares "I must give judgment on my own behoof" (161). He does not speak as the Pope, but as "Antonio Pignatelli, thou / My ancient self, who wast not Pope so long... Thou, not Pope but the mere old man o' the world" (383-4, 393). As a man of the world, his role is to reach a decision based on evidence and experience rather than to look for divine inspiration. The truth may have been distorted or misrepresented in any number of the trial's "dismalest of documents" (214) but the Pope may still reconstruct a whole truth out of fragments that are less than wholly truthful:

> Truth, nowhere, lies yet everywhere in these—
> Not absolutely in a portion, yet
> Evolvable from the whole; evolved at last
> Painfully, held tenaciously by me. (229-32)

It is hard not to miss the Darwinian theory informing the Pope's choice of words. Getting at the truth involves a process of evolution. The Roman murder case tests his abilities as a reader and a writer, for ultimately he must "evolve" the truth from texts

which are only partially true, and must in turn produce a text which expresses that whole truth.

In acknowledging that he is a fallible individual, the Pope signals his need to engage with some order greater than the individual self. It is precisely because man is weak that he must construct something beyond the capabilities of any individual man:

> To our last resource, then! Since all flesh is weak,
> Bind weakness together, we get strength:
> The individual weighed, found wanting, try
> Some institution, honest artifice
> Whereby the units grow compact and firm! (1492-6)

The institution of which the Pope speaks is, of course, the Catholic Church. The Pope's first metaphor speaks of the church in terms of the Roman fasces, the bundled sticks which represented dictatorial power. His second seems to partake of Jesus' recurrent metaphors equating his followers with the edifice of the church in which they worship. Jesus says to Peter: "You are the Rock, and upon this rock will I found my church." In the Sermon on the Mount, he declares, "The stone that the builder rejected has become the cornerstone." Calling the church an "artifice" underscores its artificiality, or constructedness, as does comparing it to the bound fasces. The church was formed in order to build collective strength out of weak individuality.

Yet the term "artifice" is related not only to "artificial" but to "art," and the Pope will assume the role of the artist in constructing an "honest artifice." By weighing and arranging individual, subjective accounts into an artificial and artful whole, he will produce an honest account of the Roman murder case. Because he is a fallible man rather

than omniscient God, he must construct the truth out of "Filthy rags of speech... / tatters all too contaminate for use" (373, 375). This is why, despite his papal title, Antonio's words are not equal to God's Word. Antonio's words are a lesser approximation of divine truth, but like Sweeney, he's got to use words when he talks.

Later in the poem, the Pope voices one of Browning's most celebrated metaphors for artistic creation and for epistemology:

> Man's Mind, what is it but a convex glass
> Wherein are gathered all the scattered points
> Picked out of the immensity of sky,
> To re-unite there, be our heaven for earth,
> Our known unknown, our God revealed to man? (1311-15)

Nichols sees this passage as "a particularly modern view of human psychology. The mind makes a model of reality on its own terms" (129). This is the reality-making process—part conscious, part unconscious—in which Roland, Prufrock, and the narrator of "Portrait of a Lady" engage. It is not merely the reader of a monologue who sees reality reflected in the mind's convex glass, but the character himself. In other words, when a man looks up at the stars, he sees not "the immensity of the sky" but his own psycho-phenomenal construct of that immensity, an internal approximation or model of an independent reality.

According to the Pope's metaphor, the acts of narrating, reading, and judging constitute a hall of mirrors. Pompilia, Guido, and Caponsacchi each represent the events of the Roman murder case according to his or her particular, convex vision. The Pope, in turn, reflects on all of these representations of reality and then constructs his own model

of events. For Plato, mimesis always involves a loss of verisimilitude. To imitate an imitation is to move further away from the sunlight of pure forms and into the cave of instances. Yet despite the Christian Platonism inherent in the convex-glass metaphor, the Pope seems to believe that by studying mimetic representation—here the testimonies of the participants—one can approach the truth rather than retreat from it. In passing judgment on the witnesses and the accused in the trial, the Pope passes judgment on their ability or willingness to reflect accurately the external world of which, through their perceptions and their representations in words and text, their testimony creates a model.

Other Browning characters likewise articulate some version of a Christian Platonism by which earthly instances are imperfect manifestations of a divine ideal and by which temporal epiphanies are glimpses of an a-temporal revelation. Abt Vogler, for example, sees "on earth the broken arcs, in heaven the perfect round." When Andrea del Sarto declares "A man's reach should exceed his grasp, else what's a heaven for?", he, too, seems to imply that heaven involves a perfection of earthly imperfection.

The Pope's theory is in keeping with the values of the grotesque, which, as Bagehot argues, "shows you what ought to be by showing you what ought not to be." Reflected upon in the right light, even the most untrue of representations, such as those of Guido and of "Half-Rome," reveal rather than obfuscate the truth. Through knowledge of both the tale and teller, one may evolve the whole truth which an account would seek to hide or distort. The teller is always in dialogue with his tale, and much of the appeal of dramatic or narrative poetry lies in determining to what end a narrator uses a story. The misogynistic speaker in "Half-Rome," for example, tips his hand only in the last four

lines of his monologue, arguing that Guido's righteous murder of a faithless wife might set an example for

> A certain what's-his-name and jackanapes
> Somewhat too civil of eves with lute and song
> About a house here, where I keep a wife.
> (You, being his cousin, may go tell him so.) (2.1544-7)

Half-Rome's representation of reality suddenly takes on a wholly different character when read as a threat crafted for one particular listener.

Nichols argues that Browning's metaphor of the convex glass is grounded in religious faith, and contrasts such a faith-based, referential model with the isolated aesthetics of Modernism:

> What separates the highly wrought epiphanies of the nineteenth century from their twentieth century counterparts is the poet's desire for these epiphanies not to exist in isolation. The quality of aesthetic isolation, which determines a poem's value for the Symbolists and the Imagists, is the one most dreaded by Tennyson and Browning. For these two poets, the image produced by the epiphany, no matter how powerful in itself, must exist in relation to a transcendent reality. (128)

Yet I would argue that Eliot—despite his admiration for the Symbolists and his *quondam* association with Pound's Imagists—does not believe that "aesthetic isolation... determines a poem's value." "Tradition and the Individual Talent" would argue just the opposite: that no poem can exist in aesthetic isolation. For Eliot, poems do "exist in relation to transcendent reality," a reality constituted by existing monuments of literature.

The Waste Land puts the theory of "Tradition and the Individual Talent" into practice by creating a poem which, through allusion and appropriation, "changes the existing order" of literature.

Moreover, the Pope's convex glass is akin to Eliot's concept of the poet as a "medium... in which impressions and sensations combine in peculiar and unexpected ways," in that both formulations posit the creative process as one that is largely unconscious and always transformative. Because the Pope does not specify the subject of "picked," it is unclear to what degree the individual may choose which scattered points he wishes to reflect. Likewise, Eliot's term "impressions" renders the poet passive (in a way that "observations," for example, might not): the world acts upon him. Browning's convex glass and Eliot's medium are both inherently transformative models of representation. The glass is curved, and therefore produces an image which is changed and distorted in accordance with its own contours. Likewise Eliot's medium yields not faithful recreations of "the real," but new combinations and revelations thereof. The mind cannot retain the original substances that make up the world of impressions and sensations: the eye transforms that which it sees; the memory, that which it remembers; the word, that which it signifies.

The convex glass and the medium both provide workable metaphors for the processes by which *The Waste Land* both reflects and transforms external reality and for the degree to which that constructed reality can be ascribed to any of its characters or personae. Tiresias may "see" all of the events that make up the "substance of the poem," but that which he sees is contained within the convex glass of a single man's mind—a mind not his own. In each of his several literary incarnations, Tiresias' role involves

observation. It is the Tiresias of Ovid's story, who was transformed into a woman after witnessing two snakes copulating, who witnesses the equally cold-blooded copulation of the estate-agent's clerk and the typist. Eliot includes in his notes a lengthy quotation from the account in *Metamorphoses*. Yet Eliot's Tiresias is also Sophocles' Tiresias, the reluctant witness to murder and incest ("I who have sat by Thebes below the wall"). By way of Freud, moreover, Tiresias becomes the proto-psychoanalyst: he sees desires of which Oedipus is unconscious. He is, too, the seer of the underworld from Book XI of Homer's *Odyssey* ("And walked among the lowest of the dead"), a figure uniquely suited to a poem which concerns itself with the burial of the dead and the hope of their rebirth. Tiresias is a witness, judge, and prophet, but it is not his mind which gathers the scattered points of *The Waste Land*'s convex glass.

Koestenbaum speaks of *The Waste Land* as having a "protagonist," a term which I believe treats the reflecting mind as a character and hence misses the distinction between extradiegetical and intradiegetical presences in the poem. Moreover, Koestenbaum's term is too caught up in plot and action: it imposes on the poem a traditional narrative arc which is largely the product of Eliot's notes rather than of *The Waste Land* itself. Kenner's analysis of Prufrock as "the center of a field of consciousness" may be more apt for discussing the constructing mind of *The Waste Land*. Yet an even stronger narratological precedent is to be found in Hayman's term for the figure who manipulates words and effects behind Joyce's narrators: the arranger. The arranger is responsible, according to Hayman, for such intrusions as the subheads that invade the text of the "Aeolus" chapter in *Ulysses* or the evolving English dialects and styles of "The Oxen of the Sun." He is a presence, distinct from the narrator, who manipulates textual effects.

When the Joycean arranger recedes into the background—as in the first five chapters of *Ulysses*—the narrative of the novel proceeds apace.

I would argue that the reflecting mind of *The Waste Land* plays a role comparable to that of the Joycean arranger—a role not to be found in Browning. I will take a cue from Hayman without actually adopting his term, for I believe the arranger is a bit of a Thackerayan showman, while Eliot's constructing consciousness is far more self-effacing. The reflecting mind of *The Waste Land*, which I would identify (appropriating Eliot's term) as the "medium" of the poem, is the psyche which brings together—consciously and unconsciously, logically and sub-logically—the fragments of verse, song, conversation, observation and recalled experience that constitute its model of reality. "Medium" in this context denotes the chemical catalyst of Eliot's example, the individual who is able to channel spirits, and the mode of discourse by which information is conveyed. In *The Waste Land*, it is the medium's reflection of texts, conversations, memories, and observations that Tiresias witnesses.

For the Pope, the world and the written word contain a truth which is assailable and "constructable." The testimonies of the trial participants are laid out before him, just as they were laid out before Browning the poet, who through the poetic act brought them closer to the truth, and just as they are laid out before the reader. The Pope's challenge lies in properly reading and interpreting these testimonies. Apprehended in the right spirit and from the right angle, they will reveal a "known unknown," the truth as reflected in a series of funhouse mirrors. Nor does the Pope need any authority or qualifications beyond having lived in the world. Experience on earth, rather than authority from on high, equips him to separate truth from deception. Despite each man or woman's

warping of the truth in the acts of remembrance and narration, that truth is never wholly lost. The misrepresentation of a Guido is as instructive, for an experienced reader of the grotesque, as the accurate representation of a Pompilia.

The Pope therefore constructs the truth through engagement with the texts and with the world to which they refer. For the Pope is, before all else, a good reader. He has not listened to the trial participants, but rather has read the transcripts of their testimonies:

> I have worn through this somber wintry day,
> With winter in my soul beyond the world's,
> Over these dismalest of documents...
> I read here why it was, and how it went. (212-4; 219)

All of these texts, whether more or less credible, refer to the same "real world." By reading and writing, the Pope can get at the whole truth which lies scattered among the documents before him. His reading and writing will produce tangible, material results in the world outside his office. The poetic act, for Browning's Pope, is concomitantly a moral one, transforming not the existing literary monuments of Eliot's analogy but the social conditions of the world in which the poet lives.

The "texts" which Tiresias "reads" are of a very different sort from those of the Pope, for they are located not on a table in the Vatican but in the reflecting mind of the medium as represented in the text of *The Waste Land* itself. Tiresias neither lurks in the shadows of the typist's flat nor reads a transcript of her testimony. Rather, he directly apprehends the encounter between the typist and the clerk as represented in the text of *The Waste Land*. To again quote Schwarz, *The Waste Land* is "an amalgam that could exist only within the tissue of literature itself" (17). Its many voices do not refer to the

same assailable truth or to the same objective reality, as do the testimonies in the Roman murder trial. Rather, *The Waste Land* is a textual and psychological landscape of fragments, the referents of which are found no longer in the material and temporal world but in a divine or poetic order which transcends materiality. The relationships among these fragments are located not in one objective reality to which they all testify but rather in the text of *The Waste Land* itself. Like the pearls that were Ferdinand's eyes, experiences in time have crystallized into verses removed from time. Where the Pope is interested in texts because they reveal a whole truth located in a particular historical moment, the medium of *The Waste Land* is concerned with texts which transcend the historical moment and enter into an order outside of time. The text of *The Waste Land* does not attempt to locate truth in the material world, but rather retreats into a truth located beyond the material.

While the Pope is essentially an empiricist, he does give credence to divine revelation and to the transformative potentiality of the epiphanic moment. His monologue, like *The Waste Land*, ends with the invocation of the thunderstorm as the symbol of revelation. The Pope recalls a dark night when he stood on a bluff outside of Naples to watch a storm rain down on the city:

> But the night's black was burst through by a blaze
> Thunder struck blow on blow, earth groaned and bore,
> Through her whole length of mountain visible:
> There lay the city thick and plain with spires,
> And, like a ghost disshrouded, white the sea.
> So may the truth be flashed out by one blow,

And Guido see, one instant, and be saved. (2122-8)

Knowledge of a whole truth, divine or otherwise, can come in a moment of sudden illumination. Yet despite his hope that Guido will see God's presence and his own crime so illuminated, the Pope's own epistemological processes work themselves out in several thousand lines of exposition rather than in a sudden flash of lightening.

Ironically, then, it is Browning's "Victorian Pope," and not Eliot's "Modernist Tiresias," who argues for an empirical, as opposed to a mystical or religious, construction of the truth. The Pope is a reader and a poet, but he is also, as his concept of evolvable truths indicates, a scientist. Like Browning's earlier proto-scientist, Karshish, the Pope would transcend the limits of his own perceptions and approach God through a passionate and personal engagement with the world as he finds it rather than through a retreat into the doctrine of divine revelation.

In *The Waste Land*, neither engagement with world nor engagement with text will produce a whole truth located in the temporal world. Instead, the fifth section of *The Waste Land*, "What the Thunder Said," heralds religion as a transcendent reality and as the ordering principle for mimetic representation. The Christian imagery with which "What the Thunder Said" opens and the Buddhist incantations with which it closes locate meaning outside of the realm of the particular, the apparent, and the self-determined. These two interpenetrating transcendent orders—the poetic and the religious—allow characters, themes, and settings to flow into each other, for each is an instance of a transcendent type or form and each is, like Eliot's city, "unreal."

The differences between the Pope and Tiresias, as well as between "Browning the poet" and "Eliot the medium," may testify to Browning's and Eliot's fundamentally

different estimations of man's ability to know the world and to transform the world for the better. Optimism, a word used *ad nauseum* in discussions of Browning, may play a role in these opposing estimations of man's transformative ability. A simple analysis of the two poets' long poems would argue that Browning, in comparison to Eliot, is optimistic about man's ability to construct meaning and to transform, through poetic and moral acts, the conditions of the world in which he lives. For the Victorian, man's reason and ingenuity are the means by which his own nature and the state of his world will steadily evolve. Struggle and progress go hand in hand, for man's readiness to engage the world is concomitant with his ability to transform it for the better.

However, after the trenches of World War I and the wide-scale devastation of Europe, struggle, ingenuity, and progress could no longer be seen as absolute goods. Atavism, rather than evolution, seemed to mark the world's entry into the twentieth century. There had certainly been brutal wars during the Victorian and Edwardian era, but the British public had been insulated from them to a degree they were not from the Great War. Eliot, therefore, had good reason to question the valuing of an active engagement with the world. Struggle, even the struggle of those who acted out of the best of intentions, had not evolved European culture but nearly destroyed it. It is no surprise, then, that *The Waste Land*, with its poetics of fragmentation, atavism, and retreat from the world of appearances, was taken—and may still be taken—for the quintessential poem of post-World War I Europe. Struggle does not equal progress in *The Waste Land*: the "crowd that flowed over London Bridge" is also the "crowds of people, walking round in a ring." Progress is, at best, an illusion.

Eliot was later to claim that *The Waste Land* grew not from his second-hand awareness of trenches and slaughter, but from "a wholly personal gripe" (*Facsimile* 1). Taking him at his word, one could proffer an even simpler argument for Browning's and Eliot's opposing values by attributing them to personal character and temperament rather than to the historical circumstances in which each man lived. Nevertheless, the contemporary reception of each poem attests to the differing values of the reading publics of the 1860's and the 1920's. Browning's portrayal of man's capacity for reason and his valuing of engagement with materiality as a route to constructing meaning resonated with his Victorian contemporaries, just as Eliot's portrayal of a fragmented and impotent culture did with the Modernists. In this interaction between poet and public, authorial intention plays a relatively small part in determining a poem's relevance for the period in which it was written—or for any period in which it is read. Indeed, Browning and Eliot continue to be read as representative, to one degree or another, of the ages in which they wrote and as reflective of the historical circumstances in which they found themselves.

Yet none of these arguments fully delineates the role of optimism in Browning's and Eliot's positioning of text and truth. Browning may have more faith in man's ability to construct truth and to enact his good intentions than does Eliot, but his emphasis on man's transformative capability belies his doubt in the existence of a divine order. Man must transform his world, creating what the Pope calls a "heaven for earth," precisely because a heaven beyond earth may be illusory. The Pope is certainly Browning's most sympathetic clergyman, coupling the intelligence and sagacity of Bishop Blougram with the moral center of Count Gismond. Yet to create a wholly sympathetic pope, Browning needed to render him an agnostic. The Pope's sagacity flows from the basic premise that

man must rely on his own experience to create meaning. The *reductio ad absurdum* case of Pope Formosus establishes Pope Innocent's doubt that any man can claim to speak for God. Despite his hope that Guido will "see... and be saved," the Pope does not himself rely on a flash of divine revelation. Rather, his own route to true vision is found through "painfully" reconstructing reality by drawing on his experience of the world.

On the issue of divine order and the promise of salvation, Eliot, not Browning, is the optimist. Struggle is futile in *The Waste Land* precisely because it distracts man from listening to the voice of the thunder. Where Browning's Pope claims that no one can speak for God, Eliot's poem is full of characters who do precisely that. The Sybil and Tiresias are seers who access a divine order that the Pope can only "painfully... evolve" through the exercise of his rational faculties (229-30). Madam Sosostris, ironically termed "the wisest woman in Europe," is presented satirically as a fraud (43). Nevertheless, she reads the tarot cards accurately, introducing and ordering the figures and landscapes of *The Waste Land* and of Weston and Frazer's symbologies. She herself does not seem to be aware of the vatic power which she possesses. In "Mister Sludge, the Medium," Browning portrays the sort of spiritualism to which Elizabeth Barrett Browning subscribed as a cynical exploitation of man's desire to engage with a higher power. Madam Sosostris's reading may also be a form of exploitation, but it is nevertheless a true approach, through however debased a medium, to a higher power.

Moreover, it is Eliot's poem, not Browning's, which ends with a divine voice speaking through the thunder. Browning's Pope invokes the flash of lightning which illuminates the city of Naples as a metaphor for the sudden illumination which could save Guido's soul. In *The Waste Land*, the thunderstorm is more than a metaphor. In the fable

which Eliot excerpted from the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, the thunder *is* the voice of God. The precepts "'Datta, dayadhvam, damyata' (Give, sympathise, control)" give order to the images with which the poem concludes and therefore infuse what would be lyrical poetry with an element of the prophetic or revelatory.

The Ring and the Book and *The Waste Land* stand in comparable positions in the development of Browning and Eliot as poets. In each long poem, a poet who has made his mark with psychological monologues deploys a more ambitious and complex form which involves the orchestration of a series of monologues. The juxtaposition of voices in *The Ring and the Book* and *The Waste Land* intimates that fragments or tatters may be shored into a whole, revelatory truth. Yet truth is arrived at by different paths for Browning and for Eliot. In *The Ring and the Book*, the Pope serves as a stand-in for Browning's poet and his reader, an authorial figure within the text who synthesizes the conflicting narratives of Pompilia, Guido, and the others. The Pope evolves, by reading and writing, a whole truth located in a particular, reconstructable historical moment and hinted at in the disparate monologues which lie before him. Knowing the truth of the Roman murder trial allows him to act decisively and pass judgment on its participants. Mimetic representation becomes, for the Pope, a practical and decisive act of engagement with the material and the temporal.

The truth of *The Waste Land* is not located in time, but beyond it, in the "existing monuments" of literature which the poem's medium invokes and in the divine order which the voice of the thunder and the elements of the Buddhist liturgy intimate. Despite Eliot's efforts in the notes to elect Tiresias to a witnessing role comparable to that of

Browning's Pope, there is neither a "character" nor a "personage" within the text who functions as a *vatic* seer. Rather, it is the reflecting mind of the poem's medium that assembles disparate quotations and fragments of speech into a new, a-temporal order. The "whole truth" of *The Waste Land* is found in the text itself as an object removed from time rather than in that text's revelations about a particular moment in time.

Yet in his efforts to create a figure of authorial consciousness within the poem, Eliot indicates the degree to which he envisioned his project as following, to a certain extent, the conventions and structures of the Victorian long poem. The relationship between Eliot's poem and Browning's is of interest precisely because of these complications and ambiguities, precisely because Eliot's failure to impose on his poem a Browningesque governing consciousness is the hallmark of the quintessential high modern poem.

Chapter Four:

The Finite and the Infinite in Browning's and Eliot's Biblical Epistles

"All poetry [is] a putting of the infinite into the finite" –Browning, in a letter to Ruskin

"to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time, is an occupation for the saint" –Eliot, *Four Quartets*

Eliot claims that "the most important personage" in the *The Waste Land* is Tiresias, for "what Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem." In "Journey of the Magi" (1928), Eliot employs a different kind of blind seer. Where Tiresias sees despite his blindness, the Magus is blind despite his seeing. Although present at the nativity, the Magus either cannot grasp or cannot articulate the implications of the event he has witnessed. Moreover, while he recalls in detail his journey to Bethlehem, he is unwilling or unable to bear witness to what he saw in the manger, testifying only that "it was (you may say) satisfactory" (31). His experience of the divine has left him dissatisfied with a temporal world in which he once took pleasure, and he finds himself welcoming "another death."

Browning wrote three monologues which, like "Journey of the Magi," are dictated or written by witnesses to early Christian history: "An Epistle Concerning the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician," "A Death in the Desert," and "Cleon," all published in 1855. Richard Altick suggests adding "Caliban Upon Setebos" and "Saul" as two more of this "sequence which in effect trace the history of man's

groping progress toward a realization of the Christian God" (1959: 494). "An Epistle of Karshish," in particular, exploits the conventions of the first-person monologue and of epistolary fiction to produce an account the meaning of which is hidden from both the historical "writer" and the "reader" but revealed to a modern reader. While this double-voicedness can be found in many of Browning's poems, the historical setting, Biblical references, and epistolary mode of "An Epistle of Karshish" makes it inherently intertextual and therefore of particular relevance to a discussion of "Journey of the Magi."

Ariel Poems are perhaps Eliot's most Browningesque efforts, less so in their prosody than in their concern with an individual speaker's fragmentary and imperfect interpretation of the events which he witnesses. In three of the four poems, "Journey of the Magi," "A Song for Simeon," and "Marina," meaning is constructed through two disparate acts: the reporting or misreporting of phenomena by a speaker and the discriminating interpretation of a later reader. I have argued that Eliot's earliest monologues, the poems from *Prufrock and Other Observations* and *Inventions of the March Hare*, both imitate and subvert the monologues of Browning. *The Waste Land*, which seems at first blush to explode Browning's monologue form, in fact bears a resemblance to *The Ring and the Book*, and to Browning's complementary poems, as a long poem in which the voices of different speakers are contrapuntally arranged for dramatic and ironic effect. *Ariel Poems* marks Eliot's fullest and last engagement with the monologue form that Browning created and eventually popularized.

The *Ariel Poems* are important for the present study because they represent not just Eliot's closest, but his final, modeling of Browning's forms and themes. I agree with

Davies that, "[w]ith *Ash Wednesday*, Eliot's poetry begins to move in new directions and to achieve symbolic dimensions which separate it from Browning's always discursive poetry of voice" (29). I would hazard an explanation for this departure from the Browningesque monologue: Eliot found an outlet for his dramatic impulse in his writings for the stage. His poetry came to be dominated, in the *Four Quartets*, by a different set of concerns. Thus "Journey of the Magi" and the other *Ariel Poems* represent Eliot's final negotiation with the exigencies of Browning's monologue form. A comparison of "Journey of the Magi" and "Karshish" reveals the two poets' differing approaches to the representation of reality and their differing views on the path which an individual must follow to put his finite existence in communication with the infinite.

It may be worth saying a few words regarding the relative importance of the *Ariel Poems*, which have traditionally received short shrift from critics, to Eliot's body of work. These poems have been undervalued for a number of reasons. First, they were written, for lack of a better term, on commission. In 1927, Geoffrey Faber invited Eliot to write the first of them, "Journey of the Magi," for his series of illustrated pamphlets (the title *Ariel Poems*, incidentally, is Faber's, not Eliot's). Yet the fact that these poems were commissioned should not automatically relegate them to the second-class carriage—Virgil's *Aeneid* and the bulk of Renaissance art, after all, were also commissioned. Timmerman compares Eliot's commission with that of Gerard Manley Hopkins, who ended his seven-year hiatus from writing poetry only when invited by his rector to compose a poem on the sinking of the Deutschland. In Timmerman's analysis, each poet found himself, before having his respective assignment thrust upon him, "unable to find a new voice—a theme and a way of expressing it—that would incarnate

his own sense of spiritual reality" (17). The invitation to compose a poem for a specific purpose may have freed Eliot to write in a mode which departed from that of *The Waste Land* and "The Hollow Men."

A second factor which has militated against a critical valuation of the *Ariel Poems* is their position between *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*. They have often been treated as diversions or as a transitional stage between Eliot's early poetry of disillusion ("Prufrock" through *The Waste Land*) and his later poetry of belief ("Ash Wednesday" through the *Four Quartets*). Again, I agree with Timmerman that *Ariel Poems* "are not merely steps out of one kind of writing and into another; for their intrinsic aesthetic merits as well as thematic patterns, they form a unified and significant body of work" (24).

Finally, the four *Ariel Poems* as we read them today tend to be overshadowed by "Ash Wednesday," parts of which were originally published in Faber's *Ariel Poems* series. In its final form, "Ash Wednesday" boasts a six-part architectonic structure which seems to align it with the five-part structure of *The Waste Land* and of *The Four Quartets* as a "major" Eliot work. Indeed, in earlier drafts the poem was in five parts; in revising the poem, Eliot divided one of its longer sections in two. Yet "Journey of the Magi" is no less important to Eliot's development as a poet and as a Christian philosopher: appearing in print on August 25, 1927, it is the first work Eliot published after his baptism and confirmation.

In this chapter, I will contrast "An Epistle of Karshish" with "Journey of the Magi" as two Biblical "documents" dictated by eyewitnesses to God's Incarnation. The

two poems explore two contrasting ways in which a vision of the divine can transform a man's daily life and his relationship with the phenomenal, temporal world. Lazarus, like Karshish and Browning, is engaged with the quotidian and the phenomenal to a degree that his contemporaries are not. Having returned from the infinite to the finite, he "eyes the world now like a child" (118). While Karshish wavers between a nascent faith in Lazarus' God and a lifetime's training in the empirical study of nature, it is in this very empiricism that he most resembles Lazarus. Karshish's fascination with Lazarus lies, in part, in the shared wonder with which both men study the phenomenal world and with which each seeks meaning.

In Eliot's "Journey of the Magi," contact with the divine has a nearly opposite effect on man's ability to engage meaningfully with his surroundings. The narrator leaves the manger disillusioned with the world of the senses. Not having full knowledge of a divine order which would give meaning to the phenomenal, he finds himself alienated from and dissatisfied with the world in which Lazarus and Karshish both delight. If "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* intimate that transcendence can only be found through a renunciation of the world of appearances, "Journey of the Magi" makes such intimations explicit.

Both "An Epistle of Karshish" and "Journey of the Magi" explore a concern which is at the core of Browning's and Eliot's work alike—the exploration of psychological constructions of the visible world as a mode of intuiting an objective, divine, and un-constructable reality. Where Eliot's witness to the divine would reach such truths through a renunciation of the material world, however, Browning's witness would do so through a wholehearted engagement with the material. The differences

between the psychological quests of Roland and Prufrock, between the vatic roles of Tiresias and the Pope, and between Browning the poet and Eliot the medium continue to manifest themselves in the contrasting routes to transcendence offered in "An Epistle of Karshish" and "Journey of the Magi."

Such a distinction is apparent in the poets' disparate approaches to the physical world of the first century and to the very concept of historicity. Browning, like Karshish, seems ever to be on the verge of losing himself in the particularities of place and time: he is fascinated by his own efforts to recreate an historical moment. Browning loads his poem with descriptions and references which establish and reinforce its first-century setting. In the elaborate syntax of its salutation, Browning's epistle imitates not only the letters of Paul (Altick: 1957) but Egyptian papyrus manuscripts and the translations thereof which Browning may have seen in the British Museum (Loucks: 1993). Browning's epistle therefore attempts to reconstruct an historical moment through its very form. Karshish, like his creator, is fascinated by the world through which he travels. He interrupts his account of Lazarus's resurrection not only because he fears the abandoning of empiricism that a leap of faith would require, but because he is genuinely interested in other phenomena which he has observed in Judea.

For Eliot, historical setting is unimportant: his characters are witnesses to events which transcend history and which therefore challenge the very notion of the historical moment. Eliot engages in what Harris terms the "blatant anachronism" of putting the words of the seventeenth century Lancelot Andrewes into the mouth of a first-century witness to the Incarnation (838). Just as Eliot has no interest, in "Journey of the Magi,"

in historical verisimilitude, so his Magus has no interest in his own historical moment: poet and pilgrim alike look toward a divine order which transcends the temporal.

The Magus' experience of the Divine has rendered him unable to live with contentment in a pre-Christian world. He has been transformed into a second Gerontion—discontented by the summer houses and dancing girls that once gave him pleasure, "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation / With an alien people clutching their gods" (41-2).

Browning's "Biblical documents"—"Karshish," "Cleon," and "A Death in the Desert"—have all received critical attention in recent years. A. S. Byatt, in 2000, reads "An Epistle of Karshish" as emblematic of Browning's "sense of our confinement in history and our own bodies, and of our wish to think and feel our way out of these closed places, our sense that we are not separate" (12). Michael Johnstone, discussing "A Death in the Desert," posits that Jesus can be seen, "figuratively, as the element of language that shifts constantly in relation to the truth, 'God,' that he ultimately qualifies" (1). Therefore John the Evangelist's portrait of Jesus evolves as he modulates from the role of witness to that of interpreter: "Moving further away from the empirical moment of Jesus, John's predictions eventually employ reason, the force of 'knowledge' and logic, to relay what Jesus directly 'taught' him" (375). Joseph Dupras studies "Cleon" as Browning's inquiry into the relationship between the self-doubt of the composing poet and the "eroding faith" of nineteenth-century Christianity (251).

These recent studies center around the epistemological and textual issues that Browning's Biblical documents raise. "An Epistle... of Karshish" is a study in

misapprehension and in the precariousness of both verbal (Lazarus to Karshish) and written (Karshish to Abib) communication. Karshish is not writing, but dictating, and is therefore limited by the willingness, ability, and honesty of his scribe as well as the constraints of his own finances. He initially concludes his account to his teacher, Abib, without making mention of Lazarus. The scribe, however, encourages Karshish to continue; Karshish says: "Yet stay: my Syrian blinketh gratefully, / Protesteth his devotion is my price— / Suppose I write what harms not, though he steal?" (62-4). It is only after this false ending that Karshish, with hesitation and embarrassment, begins to tell the story of Lazarus: "I half resolve to tell thee, yet I blush, / What set me off a-writing first of all" (65-6). Yet even after concluding his account, Karshish notes, paradoxically, that Abib, the man to whom he is addressing himself may never "hear" him: "Regard it as chance, a matter risked / To this ambiguous Syrian—he may lose, / Or steal, or give it thee with equal good" (298-300).

The long title of Browning's poem—"An Epistle Concerning the Strange Medical Experience of Karshish, the Arab Physician"—indicates that Karshish's letter has yet to reach a reader fully equipped to understand it. Whether the letter ever reached Abib, it has since passed out of his hands, for one may presume that only a non-Arab would specify that Karshish is an "*Arab* physician." Some non-Arab has read and titled the epistle, specifying its form, content, and author; it follows that the epistle has made its way into a catalogue or collection. The title also indicates that the collector is not a Christian, for the case of Lazarus is a "strange" one. A Christian would recognize Lazarus, whom Karshish names, or Christ, whom Karshish identifies as "the Nazarene," as the center of interest in Karshish's account, and title the epistle accordingly (244). The

document may therefore have been given its title by a pre-Constantinian Roman; as Vespasian's army stands massed at the borders of Judea, it is not unlikely that Karshish's letter could have fallen into Roman hands. Browning's epistle, then, should be thought of as immured in some forgotten library, a document read, misapprehended, and filed away.

A man of science, Karshish couches his encounter with Lazarus in medical terminology; he begins, "'Tis but a case of mania—subinduced / By epilepsy, at the turning-point / Of trance prolonged unduly some three days" (79-81). Such a diagnosis frames Lazarus' condition within the rationale of Karshish's empirical science and therefore precludes the possibility of his having witnessed the miraculous. Karshish concludes his letter by reporting what the thunder said to Lazarus: "And thou must love Me who have died for thee!" (311). He then attempts to deflate the power of this statement, by returning to his initial diagnosis, "The madman saith He said so: it is strange" (312). Yet in the process of reporting Lazarus' condition, Karshish seems to skirt the edge of faith. His own nascent belief in Lazarus' words spills out of the empirical framework by which he would contain it. He must twice break off his account to remind Abib and himself that Lazarus "Is stark mad; should we count on what he says? / Perhaps not..." and to chide himself "but why all this of what he saith? / Why write of trivial matters...? (264-5, 277-8)

In *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Wayne Booth coined the term "the unreliable narrator" to describe a speaker whose perspective on the narrative he relates is distanced from that of the implied author. The term is not quite appropriate to Karshish and the Magus. They are not so much "unreliable" as "incompetent" narrators, each lacking the language,

symbology, and historical perspective necessary to construct a narrative which recognizes the significance of its subject. Each tells a narrative the meaning of which he is unaware. Karshish's incompetence is most glaring as he approaches what the Christian reader would judge the most important part of his story: Lazarus' words concerning Christ's resurrection. Karshish's syntax begins to fail as he relates Lazarus' belief in Jesus as the incarnation of God, and he breaks off on the verge of saying "resurrected" or "raised." Karshish reports that Lazarus,

> --'Sayeth that such an One was born and lived,
> Taught, healed the sick, broke bread at his own house,
> Then died with Lazarus by, for aught I know,
> And yet was... what I said nor choose repeat
> And must have so avouched himself, in fact,
> In hearing of this very Lazarus
> Who saith—but why all this of what he saith?
> Why write of trivial matters, things of price
> Calling at every moment of remark?
> I noticed on the margin of a pool
> Blue-flowering borage, the Aleppo sort,
> Aboundeth, very nitrous. It is strange! (271-282)

Despite his assertion that "in writing to a leech / 'Tis well to keep back nothing of a case," Karshish will not utter the word that should lie at the center of his narrative (265-6).

Perhaps to say the word "resurrection" would be to give Lazarus's story more power than it already has. Karshish wishes to deny the possibility not only of Lazarus' resurrection, but of Jesus', for the veracity of either one would upset the system of medical knowledge to which Karshish has devoted his life. For Altick, the poem, like "Cleon," is meant to "deplore the blindness of intellectually complacent men who fail to accept the assurances both desire" (494). Teetering on the brink of faith, Karshish throws himself back onto the rational empiricism by which he makes sense of the phenomenal world. The blue-flowering borage and the mania of Lazarus are of equal value to the physician; and, indeed, he makes the same remark concerning both: "It is strange." Like so many Browning characters, Karshish does not achieve true closure by the conclusion of his monologue. Rather, he is still struggling to reconcile the disconcerting power of this new knowledge with the comforting surety of the old.

In his readiness to label Lazarus a "madman," Karshish fails to realize that he and Lazarus share a fascination with the material world. Armstrong calls Lazarus' state "an autistic condition of detachment, strangely paralleling the detachment assumed by Karshish" (309). While Armstrong is quite right to see a parallel in Lazarus and Karshish's mode of engagement with the phenomenal world, calling this mode "detached" describes only one of its manifestations. Lazarus is certainly detached when Karshish and the elders of the tribe describe his condition; he "folded his hands and let them talk / Watching the flies that buzzed: and yet no fool" (123-4). Yet at other times Lazarus is intensely engaged not only in his surroundings but in reportage:

> Speak of some trifling fact—he will gaze rapt
> With stupor at its very littleness,

(Far as I see)—as if in that indeed

He caught the prodigious import, whole results. (150-3)

Karshish locates Lazarus' mania not merely in his belief that he has been resurrected or that Jesus is God, but in the attention he gives to phenomena which should be of little or no significance: "The man is witless of the size, the sum, / The value in proportion of all things, / Or whether they be little or be much" (143-5). Such a description is particularly ironic coming from one whose name in Arabic means "the picker up of learning's crumbs" (1). For Karshish, like Lazarus, is fascinated by minutia. His meticulous descriptions of natural phenomenon give ample testimony to his own "autism":

Or might I add, Judaea's gum-tragacanth

Scales off in purer flakes, shines clearer-grained,

Cracks 'twixt the pestle and the porphyry,

In fine exceeds our produce. (55-8)

One could argue that Karshish's brand of particularity serves a purpose, where Lazarus' does not. Keenness of observation is necessary for a medical researcher. Yet this is circular reasoning, for surely Karshish has consciously or unconsciously gravitated to one of the few professions that gives him license to indulge in his predilection for painstaking inspections of the natural world. As Armstrong argues, "Karshish attempts to the scientific mode which determines him as external to and outside all phenomena, whether material or psychological. But objectivity is actually a passion and shapes his research..." (309).

Karshish would probably differentiate his brand of particularity from that of Lazarus by arguing that his interest lies with materials that have some potential medicinal value. Thus he studies the spider, "sprinkled with mottles on an ash-gray back," not for its own sake, but because it is a vital ingredient in a cure for epilepsy (47). Karshish appreciates things which have practical value, while Lazarus gives his attention to phenomena which seem to have none. In censuring Lazarus for being unable to recognize "value in proportion of all things," Karshish is vaguely reminiscent of the Duke from "My Last Duchess." Where the duchess' freeness of gaze and her readiness to find beauty in all things threaten her husband's own value system, Lazarus' attention to the insignificant—most glaringly manifested in his belief that the man who healed him of his sickness is, in fact, a god who raised him from the dead—threatens to parody and subvert Karshish's mode of practical empiricism.

Whatever may have been the character of Browning's Lazarus in his first life, he has returned from the dead with the eye of an artist. In "How it Strikes a Contemporary," a poet is mistaken for a chief-inquisitor of the Spanish Inquisition because of the intentness with which he studies the quotidian:

> He stood and watched the cobbler at his trade,
> The man who slices lemons into drink,
> The coffee-roaster's brasier, and the boys
> That volunteer to help him turn its winch.

The poet's interests are polymorphous: he peers through windows, pokes at the mortar between the bricks of a new building, inspects books and broadsides. The townspeople correctly intuit that "this man walked about and took account / Of all thought, said and

acted, then went home, / And wrote it fully." Yet what he writes are not official reports, but poems. The townspeople's mistake, and the resulting fear with which they regard the poet-inquisitor, lies in assuming there to be some practical, rather than aesthetic, end to the stranger's observations and to his writing.

Lazarus, like the poet-inquisitor, sees differently from his contemporaries. He will "turn to us the bystanders / In ever the same stupor (note the point) / That we too see not with his opened eyes" (154-6). Lazarus has assumed the vatic role, seeing men and events in relation to God and to a divine order positioned outside of time. It is for this reason that he does not fear death or the future. Karshish repeatedly cites this lack of fear as a sign of Lazarus' madness. He notes, "Should his child sicken unto death,—why look / For scarce abatement of his cheerfulness" (159-60). Lazarus likewise shows no concern when Karshish tells him "Rome is on her march / To stamp out like a little spark thy town, / Thy tribe, thy crazy tale and thee at once" (222-4). Nor is Lazarus upset when Karshish or others deny the truth of his beliefs concerning his own resurrection and Jesus' divinity. Yet none of this should be taken as evidence that Lazarus wants to die. Rather, Karshish reports that Lazarus "will live, nay, it pleaseth him live / So long as God please" (209-10).

It is odd, then, that many critics read the resurrected Lazarus as dissatisfied with life. Crowell, for example, argues,

> Lazarus, after seeing the white radiance of eternity and attaining absolute knowledge, is forced to take up again his station in life and wearily wait in patient boredom until death a second time releases him from an existence which now is without function or interest. (59)

Crowell generalizes elsewhere that "exposure to absolute truth, again in the manner of Lazarus, destroys the worth of life and man's values" (41).

Such a reading seems to put too much faith in Karshish's own representation of Lazarus—and in particular to his metaphor of the beggar who, having found a treasure, "puts the cheap old joy in the scorned dust"—rather than interrogating that representation (132). Lazarus' power lies in his new understanding of "the worth of life and man's values." Far from waiting in "patient boredom," Lazarus plies his trade, seeks to live according to God's will, quietly testifies to the nature of the miraculous, and takes an intense interest in the world around him. Death and resurrection, his own and that of Jesus, have revitalized rather than cheapened the stuff of his old life.

Eliot's eyewitness account of the miraculous bears a number of surface resemblances to that of Browning, and it is hard to imagine his composing "Journey of the Magi" had he not read Browning's poem. Both poems, of course, begin by implicitly positing a gap in the Bible's account of Jesus' history. "An Epistle of Karshish" and "Journey of the Magi" purport to be eyewitness accounts of the miraculous; they mimic the epistles and testimonies from which the church fathers compiled the New Testament. Both poems are dictated by illiterate narrators who have made a conscious decision to preserve their oral accounts in written form. Browning's and Eliot's poems therefore represent simultaneously the process of documentation and the written document itself, for the occasion of each speaker's monologue is the transference of speech to text.

Both Karshish and the Magus describe trying journeys which bring them into contact with a potentially revelatory presence. In this respect, their monologues resemble

not only each other, but those of Roland, Prufrock, and *The Waste Land* quester. Like these three travelers, Karshish and the Magus each tells a story which centers on a presence that escapes articulation. Roland does not say what inhabits the Dark Tower, while Prufrock never asks his overwhelming question. In *The Waste Land*, too, the chapel of the Siege Perilous is empty, holding only "dry bones."

Karshish and the Magus, for their part, will not describe the miracles with which their journeys brought them into contact and the Incarnation around which their new relationships to the phenomenal world center. Karshish's syntax crumbles as he reconstructs Lazarus' belief that Jesus was resurrected, and he breaks off his narrative rather than say the word "resurrected." The Magus, despite his prolix account of his journey, provides not a description of the scene in the manger but a laconic assessment of that scene's significance: "It was (you may say) satisfactory." The presence of the divine in the world becomes an absence in the text: neither Karshish nor the Magus has a sign which would signify the Incarnation. The irony of both accounts lies in the witnesses lacking the vocabulary, the historical perspective, and, perhaps, the faith necessary to relate what they have seen. The competent reader, on the other hand, knows the sign without having seen the signified.

Before turning to this central, paradoxical absence, it is worth detailing one of the most important recent contributions to scholarship on "Journey of the Magi." Daniel Harris argues that in having the Magus allude to texts that had not yet been written, the seventeenth century sermon of Lancelot Andrews and the New Testament, Eliot exploits anachronistic "laminations of text" to "multiply the poem's explorations beyond the

Magus' own awareness" (847). According to Harris, the poem is an "epistemological and moral trap":

> The poem's grand paradox is that those who can read the signs, through education or mere assimilation, ultimately know less than the Magus, who cannot—in Andrewes' phrasing—"open the signature." ...the ease of recognition pushes the reader into superiority and condescension: "How can the Magus not see such obvious symbols?" (841)

Harris's argument seems to grow out of the mode of reader-response theory that Stanley Fish put forward in *Surprised by Sin*: Eliot's poem, like the initial books of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, is designed to elicit a response from the reader which the text will subsequently criticize. Two of the responses that the anachronism of "Journey of the Magi" would critique, according to Harris, are the notions that linear time represents progress and that developing a more sophisticated symbology brings one closer to the experience signified. There is, incidentally, great irony in a reading of Milton being used as a guide for reading Eliot.

Harris recognizes Eliot's indebtedness to Browning, seeing *The Ring and the Book* as one of the models for Eliot's lamination of texts in "Journey of the Magi." Eliot draws on or creates four accounts of the Incarnation: the Andrewes Nativity Sermon, the book of Matthew, the Magus' spoken account, and "the Magus' recitation as offered in the poem." Harris argues, "Together, taken synchronically, they operate like the monologues in *The Ring and the Book*, each of which adds a limited truth to the final totality that transcends them" (849). He argues that Eliot is "profoundly indebted to *The*

Ring and the Book, a poem in which a real work (the Old Yellow Book, Browning's source) is, as Henry James observed, 'hammered... into powder'" (851).

Elsewhere Harris distinguishes Eliot's poem from Browning's Biblical epistles, arguing that Eliot is concerned with the differences between orality and textuality in a way that Browning, or at least his speakers, are not. Harris writes,

> Although it was Browning who taught Eliot how the dramatic monologue could encompass such problems of textuality, poems like "Cleon" and "Karshish" remain epistolary monologues whose speakers are not conscious of changing their thoughts into literary artifacts. (842)

Such a conclusion seems both to overemphasize the Magus' awareness of the process of transcription (Harris spins brilliant but rather far-fatched conclusions from the Magus's command to "set down / this set down / this") and to ignore Karshish's articulation of the paradoxes inherent in writing for an audience that may not read one's text.

The most compelling difference between "Karshish" and "Journey of the Magi" lies not in Browning's and Eliot's respective treatments (or lack thereof) of the dynamics of orality and literacy, but in the contrasting ways in which they imagine contact with the divine would transform an individual man's perceptions of and attitude toward the temporal world. One should compare the Magus not only with Karshish as witnesses dictating their accounts for posterity, but with Lazarus himself as men who have seen Jesus with their own eyes. Both the Magus and Lazarus have come into the presence of the Incarnation, whereas Karshish is one step further removed from that presence. Yet the revelation of divinity alters their appreciation of the temporal in markedly different ways. Where Lazarus, I have argued, returns to life with a profound interest in earthly

matters and in the particular, the Magus returns from the Birth dissatisfied with the earthly.

The Magus was once at home among a people whom he now finds "alien." He recalls that on his journey to Bethlehem: "There were times we regretted / The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces, / And the silken girls bringing sherbert." Yet his vision of the Incarnation leaves him unable to find peace in his own country:

> We returned to our places, these Kingdoms,
> No longer at ease here, in the old dispensation,
> With an alien people clutching their gods.
> I should be glad of another death. (40-43)

Nothing has changed in his kingdom except for the Magus himself. Palaces, silken girls, and sherbert—temporal riches and pleasures—no longer satisfy him. To use Arnold's term, the Magus finds himself "[w]andering between two worlds, one dead, / The other powerless to be born" ("Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse," 85-6).

Lazarus, on the other hand, who as an early Christian would also have been surrounded by "an alien people clutching their gods," is able to return happily to his old occupation. Holding to "some thread of life" which connects him to the divine, Lazarus sees "the spiritual life around the earthly life." He is intensely interested in the world because he sees in it a pattern and meaning which is hidden from his neighbors. Lazarus seems to illustrate one of Blake's Proverbs of Hell: "Eternity is in love with the productions of time."

Admittedly, Lazarus's experience of the divine has been more profound than that of the Magus. The Magus saw the infant Jesus; Lazarus was taught by the adult Jesus,

died, and was raised from the dead, and knows of Jesus' own death and resurrection. While the Magus has a nascent understanding of the pattern of birth, death, and rebirth which the Incarnation represents, Lazarus has not only witnessed, but undergone, such a process. Finally, the Magus clearly has no news of the death and resurrection—nor does the poem make it clear whether those events have yet occurred.

It would be a mistake, however, to attribute the Magus' dissatisfaction with his kingdom wholly to a lack of theological understanding. Indeed, just the opposite is true: it is his knowledge of the Incarnation, however fragmented it may be, that produces his dissatisfaction with the temporal. In the poem's much-analyzed second stanza, the Magus describes a series of images which are loaded, for a post-Christian reader, with Christian symbolism. The three trees, the running stream, the white horse, the hands "dicing for pieces of silver," are charged with a significance that escapes the Magus. A contemporary reader can make facile associations between these phenomena and their Christian analogues: the stream is the water of life; the three trees, the crosses on Calvary; the hands dicing recall the soldiers who drew lots for Christ's garments, their pieces of silver the sum which Judas accepted to betray Christ. Even the empty wine skins refer to a parable from the Sermon on the Mount. The "old white horse" which "galloped away in the meadow" has been something of a crux. Some critics have equated the horse with the old dispensation, which departs at the time of Christ's birth, or with the white horse of *Revelation* 6:2, upon which sits the spirit of conquest. Smailes makes the rather more compelling association of the white horse, which is presumably riderless, with Christ's eventual departure from the earth.

While the Magus somehow recognizes the trees, the white horse, and the soldiers as important enough to include in his brief narrative, he is not in a position to define their importance. Whether the Magus knows it or not, these phenomena are significant not in and of themselves, but as symbols of a divine order of which the Magus is yet unaware. In the world through which he traveled and in the text by which he represents that world, the approach to the Incarnation is marked by proleptic signs which may only be "read" by one whose knowledge is not bound to the moment in which those signs manifest themselves. The temporal world refers to and offers a symbol of the divine order.

Lazarus, on the other hand, marvels at phenomena which are not properly symbols of Christian cosmology, but rather evidence of a Christian God's presence in the world. A "word, gesture, glance" from his child will "startle him to an agony of fear." The child's word and gesture are not prophetic in the way the Magus' three trees or riderless horse are. The proleptic phenomena which the Magus sees as he approaches Bethlehem are significant because they represent a divine order located both in time future and outside of time. The child's expression, on the other hand, is not the symbol of a divine plan but the presence of God in the world. In the last chapter, I spoke of Browning's Pope as subscribing to a form of Christian Neo-Platonism. Here I would shift ground and read Browning's Lazarus as an Aristotelian thinker. At the risk of grossly oversimplifying three systems of philosophy, I would argue that the Magus is essentially a Platonist, seeing worldly phenomena as manifestations of a divine form, while Lazarus, like Karshish, shares Aristotle's interest in the particular or Scotus's interest in *haecceitas*. If Browning's Lazarus were to write a poem, it might sound like

Gerard Manley Hopkins "Glory Be to God for Dappled Things," a paean to varying minutiae as evidence of God's presence in the varying world.

There is a subtle but profound difference between seeing earthly phenomena as symbols of a divine plan and seeing them as evidence of the presence of the divine in the material world. The former construction is fundamentally eschatological in a way the latter is not. To again hazard a broad generalization, this may be the difference between a certain brand of High Church Catholicism—be it English or Roman—and a certain brand of Protestantism. The iconography, ritualized mass, codified prayers, and ecclesiastical hierarchy of Catholicism reinforce a Platonic vision of the world as temporal manifestation of a divine form. In equating the birth of Christ with "bitter agony" and death, and in his own readiness for "another death," the Magus has expressed, as many critics have noted, the central paradox of Christian faith. Yet what the Magus might welcome almost as much as another death would be a *creed.* His dissatisfaction largely arises out of his inability to articulate, lacking a church, a creed, and a New Testament, the divine plan a part of which he witnessed. The "old dispensation" no longer holds, but the Magus, who was once both wise and happy, lacks the philosophical and theological formulations necessary to live happily in the new. The Magus is trapped in one of history's "cunning passages": a time after the Incarnation but before the Crucifixion and Resurrection—or, at least, before news of those events and their significance has spread. In Eliot's construction of early Christianity, the Magus must wait not only for the death and resurrection, but for that which will make clear the implications of those events.

The distinction between Lazarus' and the Magus' contrasting relationships to the finite becomes more apparent when one compares each of them to Karshish. A. S. Byatt

makes this distinction between the Arab physician and Lazarus: "Karshish delights in the finite... Lazarus, on the other hand, is incarnate having known the infinite" (2000: 14). Yet quite rightly, she does not characterize as opposites "delight in the finite" and "knowledge of the infinite." Rather, Karshish's inquiries into the finite approach Lazarus' knowledge of the infinite: "Karshish's intelligence, and our imagination, mediated by Karshish and RB, with their earthly intelligences, reaches for Lazarus' privileged knowledge" (15).

Cynthia Walsh, reading Karshish's monologue through the lens of Bakhtinian heteroglossia, reaches a similar conclusion. Although at the beginning of Karshish's monologue he represents the body and soul as binary opposites (the former being a prison to contain the latter), "[w]hen faced with the case of Lazarus... Karshish begins to explore the possibility of material/spiritual interaction" (215). It is important, too, taking a cue from Tucker, to think of Karshish's monologue as the beginning rather than the end of his negotiations with the demands of faith and empiricism. Ultimately, these demands are not opposed, but interpenetrating, and Karshish must determine how best to reconcile them into a meaningful relationship.

The question is not so much whether Karshish will adopt Lazarus' beliefs, but whether it is necessary for him to do so. Lazarus' faith and his resulting fascination with the phenomenal seem to validate a mode of apprehension which Karshish already possesses. Might Karshish have come to some form of Christianity on his own, even had he not met Lazarus? Might he come to adopt some form of Christianity long after leaving Lazarus? Where the Magus needs a new testament, Karshish may need nothing more than time in which to reflect. These are issues that Browning would confront more

directly in "Caliban Upon Setebos, or Natural Theology on the Island" (1864). Caliban, despite being entirely uninstructed in Christian doctrine—indeed, being raised to believe in his mother's powerful but malignant god, Setebos—comes to articulate its central tenets. He ponders whether there may be "something quiet o'er [Setebos'] head" which will one day conquer Setebos (132). Caliban's Quiet is an omniscient, benevolent God: "This Quiet, all it hath a mind to, doth" (137). The implication of Caliban's insight is that man can "naturally" reason his way toward Christian belief. Church and creed are unnecessary because the Christian God, having been born into time, is discoverable in the temporal. To find God, one must, like Caliban, struggle with oneself and one's surroundings to discern the pattern that underlies existence. If Caliban, ignorant and alone, can see Christian doctrine as inherent in the natural world, then anyone who looks and thinks hard enough should be able to do the same.

Karshish, like Caliban, reasons his way to the brink of faith. His most powerful articulation of Christian doctrine comes not in reporting Lazarus' words, but in reflecting on the implications of those words. He asks:

> The very God! Think, Abib; dost thou think?
> So, the All-Great, were the All-Loving too—
> So through the thunder comes a human voice
> Saying "O heart I made, a heart beats here!
> Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself!
> Thou hast no power nor mayst conceive of mine,
> But love I gave thee, with myself to love,
> And thou must love me who have died for thee!" (304-311)

Although Walsh is right to see Karshish as reconsidering the body/soul dichotomy to which he initially subscribed, I believe that "Karshish" is less about the physician's rejection of his earlier mode of apprehending the world than it is about his realization that this earlier, empirical mode has been tacitly predicated on the sort of faith which Lazarus articulates. Moreover, Karsish's empiricism has prepared him for the sort of analysis which leads him, again like Caliban, to the beliefs at the core of Christian doctrine. In short, Karshish and Lazarus share an interest in the particular, but the relationship of that interest to the belief in a Christian God is inverted. Lazarus's apprehension of a divine order fosters in him an appreciation for all things temporal; Karshish's appreciation for all things temporal may lead him to an apprehension of the divine order. Ultimately, as Byatt argues, the reader can only identify with Karshish and his imperfect knowledge of the divine, not with Lazarus and his "privileged knowledge" (2000: 15). The route to transcendence which Karshish is beginning to take involves struggling with one's own limitations and looking intently for the presence of a divine pattern in the quotidian and the particular.

Implicit in the physician's empirical, logical struggle toward an apprehension of Christianity is a valuing of science and progress as morally redeeming forces. Like Browning's Pope, Karshish is both a believer and a scientist. Karshish intuits the central belief of Christianity, but also marshals scientific and forensic methods to evaluate and interrogate that intuition. Lawson sees in Browning's own faith a similar "paradox" (91). He argues that "the modernity of Browning's faith consists in just this paradox: he holds in uneasy tension both an existential and an experimental (that is, 'scientific') attitude" (91).

Indeed, it is Karshish's scientific training and his disciplined modes of speculative thought that allow him to construct a proto-Christian doctrine. Admittedly, he does not make the leap of faith required to accept that doctrine. Nevertheless, the habits of observation, analysis, and hypothesizing which he has cultivated as a physician are precisely those which prepare him both to articulate and to examine, if not yet embrace, Christian faith. Science and technology are therefore not opposed to religious belief, but predisposed to support such belief.

Like Karshish, the Magus is willing to speculate about the nature of the miracle he has witnessed and to consider the ways in which this miracle challenges his assumptions about the nature of life and death. In asking, "Were we led all this way for a birth or a death?", he indicates the degree to which his witnessing of the Incarnation has challenged all of his preconceptions about the world. Furthermore, the question gives voice to the central tenet and paradox of Christianity: that through the death of Christ and through one's own death, one is reborn. Like Karshish, therefore, the Magus has intuited the full pattern of Christian cosmology by witnessing one aspect of that pattern. However, for the Magus, intuition is not enough. He waits, as Karshish does not, for a full articulation of the new dispensation, and his partial apprehension of a divine order leaves him dissatisfied with a temporal world which once pleased him.

For Karshish, Christianity leads back into the material world and is, in fact, discernable through a study of the material. Karshish and Lazarus are alike in this appreciation of the finite. For the Magus, on the other hand, Christianity renders the material world unsatisfactory. Meaning is to be found not through an engagement with materiality, but through a retreat from it. Despite surface similarities between the

monologues of Karshish and the Magus, therefore, the two men follow radically different routes to transcendence, for their respective experiences of the divine transform their apprehension of the temporal world in a nearly opposite manner.

Both Karshish and the Magus describe in some detail the trying journeys which brought them to their places of witnessing. Karshish has been robbed twice and accused of being a spy, menaced by a snarling lynx and by the massing Roman army, and has left "flesh and bone / on many a flinty furlong of this land" (24-5). He meets Lazarus in a place charged with eerie import:

> I crossed a ridge of short sharp broken hills
> Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
> A moon made like a face with certain spots
> Multiform, manifold, and menacing:
> Then a wind rose behind me. So we met... (291-5)

Like Roland, Prufrock, and *The Waste Land* quester, Karshish must pass through a wasteland in order to find enlightenment. Yet Karshish takes all of this in stride, for "[w]ho, studious in our art, / Shall count a little labor unrepaid?" (22-3).

The Magus likewise suffers a trial by landscape. His pilgrimage to Bethlehem is a process by which he passes from the material to the spiritual and through which his appetite for material things is gradually replaced by an appetite for spiritual things. The first section of the poem describes the trying conditions of the journey: cold, exhaustion, recalcitrant men and beasts, and the nagging doubts—those of the guides and perhaps of the Magi themselves—that dogged their pilgrimage. These initial descriptions of the journey are the most particularized and therefore the most grotesque aspects of Eliot's

poem. Such suffering ultimately transforms the Magi's vision of the material and spiritual worlds. On the journey, they "regretted / The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces, / And the silken girls bringing sherbert" (8-10). Wohlpart argues that "regret" should not be glossed, as it generally has been, as "to miss or pine for." Rather, the magi should be seen as regretting, or feeling penitent for, lives of empty luxury which their trying journey and concomitant spiritual awakening has revealed to be empty. Even if Wohlpart's argument seems precipitous, it touches on an essential fact of the Magus's story: after the journey is over, the Magi will be "no longer at ease here, in the old dispensation."

The proleptic signs of the poem's second section are a liminal stage between material and spiritual realities, phenomena charged with a symbolic resonance that indicates the need to be "disillusioned with disillusion." The landscape through which the Magus journeys becomes increasingly less concrete and increasingly more symbolic. This process could also be described as a movement through and beyond the grotesque. The exaggerated particularity, or grotesqueness, of the camels and their drivers gives way to the symbolically charged landscape beyond the three trees. Finally, at the scene of the incarnation, the Magus, in his own representation of reality, passes entirely from the concrete to the abstract. He does not attempt faithfully to represent what he has seen, for he no longer places value on the world of materiality and temporality.

This passing beyond the material goes to the heart of the Magus' laconic description of the Adoration, "It was (you may say) satisfactory." Some critics have argued that the Magus indicates either his disappointment with or misapprehension of the circumstances into which the Christ child has been borne. The sight of a child born in a

manger is less than impressive—at least for a pre-Christian audience that does not know to associate this birth with divinity. Indeed, the Magus may avoid describing the scene precisely because he fears its humbleness might cause his audience to doubt the importance of Jesus' birth. On the other hand, the Magus may be using "satisfactory" ironically to imply that words cannot adequately describe that which he has experienced. "You may say" it was "satisfactory"—but you might be better off not saying anything at all.

A third interpretation reads "satisfactory" as referring to the fulfillment of the Zoroastrian prophesy which led the Persian Magi, who were priests rather than kings, to Bethelehem. They traveled, after all, to witness and verify a birth which would meet the terms of Zoroaster's prophecy. Burgess argues that "satisfactory"

> simply means that every condition of the prophesy was met, leaving the alienated magus, a priest no more, secure in his knowledge of Zoroaster's truth, and in that knowledge stranded, suspended between the realization and the consummation of God's plan (36)

Other critics, following the lead of Rosemary Franklin and R. D. Brown, read "satisfactory" as alluding to two texts: Article 31 of the Anglican Church and a sermon of Lancelot Andrewes. Having recently been confirmed into the Anglican Church, Eliot would have been quite familiar with the former text: "The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect Redemption, Propitiation, and Satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both Original and Actual." Andrewes, of course, wrote the ur-text of Eliot's "Journey of the Magi," which is quoted in the first six lines of Eliot's poem. A subsequent Andrewes sermon reads: "the Son of the Most High God of Heaven and earth

took on Him our nature, that in our nature, for our nature, He might make to God... a complete full every way sufficient satisfaction" (Franklin 21). Thus "satisfactory" becomes another instance of the Magus' unconsciously proleptic diction. Where Burgess, Harris, and others would have the term look back to conditions set out in the old dispensation, Franklin and Brown would have it look forward to a codification of Christian belief that will not come about for over fifteen hundred years. There is no reason the word "satisfactory" should not, Janus-like, do both.

I find both Burgess's and Brown and Franklin's analyses convincing: the term "satisfactory" clearly has a valence for the Magus that, while understated, goes beyond its secular, pedestrian definition. The birth is satisfactory because it meets with the conditions which the Magus, as a wise man, knows herald the arrival of a divine ruler. The word which the Magus uses in the context of the old dispensation has a different import, of which he himself cannot be aware, in the new one. None of these explanations, however, addresses what is for my own purposes the single most important aspect of the Magus' précis of the Incarnation. The absence of detail—indeed, an absence of description entirely—indicates the degree to which the Magus' vision of the temporal world is opposed to that of Karshish. For the Magus, the details of the scene in the manger are inconsequential. Only the divine nature of the birth of Christ is important; everything else is incidental. Knowing, to one extent or another, the cosmological significance of the birth renders its materiality unimportant. The Magus has seen an event the essence of which lies outside the temporal world. To try to describe what he has seen would be to represent only the unessential and the temporal. Therefore the Magus presents not a description of the "evidence and sure signs" from which he knew

this to be the Christ child, but rather his own assertion that such phenomena were present and that he has indeed correctly read them (37). The reader is given not the object, but the Magus' assessment of the object.

Another Eliot text, the first section of "Little Gidding," illuminates the Magus' journey. A conditional journey ("If you came this way...") ends not with the achievement of the traveler's purpose, but with his realization that "[e]ither you had no purpose / Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured / And is altered in fulfillment" (33-5). The traveler—who may, like the Magus, be "a broken king" who "came at night" (26)—finds his role at journey's end very different from the one he imagined for himself:

> ...You are not here to verify,
> Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity
> Or carry report. You are here to kneel
> Where prayer has been valid... (43-6)

Eliot's Magus seems to follow these dictates. In "Little Gidding," as in "Journey of the Magi," the object at the journey's end is not revealed. Instead, the central truth of the quest is located not in its object but in the transformation of the quester's original purpose. As Gerontion says, "[T]he giving famishes the craving" (40).

The absence at the heart of the Magus' narrative is an absence of material, or, to be more exact, the substitution of an abstract conclusion for the concrete evidence from which the conclusion was drawn. For the Magus, the infinite replaces and renders unimportant the finite. Karshish, on the other hand, would not be so willing to dispense with details. Karshish seems to believe that the finite and the infinite inform and give

value to each other. Of course, Karshish's narrative, like that of the Magus, centers on an absence: Karshish will not repeat Lazarus' claim that Jesus was resurrected. Yet these absences are of two very different orders. Karshish, an empiricist and an observer, leaves out not what he has observed but what has been reported to him by Lazarus. And he does so precisely because Lazarus' claims fly in the face of everything the physician has observed concerning life and death. Again, by his own standards, Karshish is wrong to leave out the most important symptom of Lazarus's "mania": the omission indicates the degree to which his encounter with Lazarus has unsettled his previously conceived notions about the relationship between the soul and the body. Yet Karshish's impulse to omit data comes from a very different quarter than that of the Magus. Where the Magus chooses to omit that which he has observed and which confirms his prior knowledge, Karshish chooses to omit that which he has *not* observed and which would destabilize his prior knowledge.

Furthermore, Karshish's thoughts are "in process" to a degree which the Magus' are not. Browning's epistle is the twenty-second one that Karshish has sent to Abib, and he promises to write a twenty-third letter the next morning (52). The reader can assume that Karshish will write many more. The case of Lazarus, which has become something of a compulsion for Karshish, may continue to surface in his subsequent dictations. After all, he is writing almost immediately after having met the man. Thus his current reticence to discuss Lazarus' and Jesus' resurrections may not be his final word on the matter.

Unlike the prolix Karshish, the Magus has, to use Conrad's terms (or, more properly, the terms of Conrad's Marlowe), summed up and judged. In his insistence that

the scribe "Set down / this set down / This," he indicates that this account will be his definitive narrative of the adoration (33-5). The events which he narrates occurred "a long time ago," and he has therefore had years to process the scene which he witnessed in the manger (32). What he tells the scribe is what will be handed down to posterity.

Barbour makes the imaginative suggestion—for which there is no textual evidence—that the scribe to whom the Magus dictates is none other than St. Matthew the Evangelist. He argues:

> the occasion is the Evangelist's searching out of the magus to gather information about those events of 'a long time ago' (l.32); ...the dramatic monologue is precipitated by the magus' reading of (or, more likely, listening to) a different account of the journey (the first five lines), which St. Matthew has gotten earlier from a second magus. (190)

Whether one adopts Barbour's imaginative reading or not, it is clear that the Magus believes himself to be setting down his final word on his journey, his vision of the incarnation, and the conclusions, questions, and disquietude which that vision prompted in him.

In short, if Karshish's narrative is one of beginning, the Magus' is one of closure. Karshish's ironic false conclusion, "Here I end," demonstrates the openness of his narrative structure and the fluidity of his own thoughts on the matter of Lazarus and Jesus (61). It is only after declaring that he has ended the letter that Karshish tells the story of Lazarus. Karshish feels a compulsion to return to the event he has witnessed. Karshish's thoughts are in a formative stage while the Magus' are in a summative one.

In Karshish's and the Magus's respective attitudes toward the finite and the infinite, one may locate a variation on the dichotomy between Roland and Prufrock or between the Pope and Tiresias. Roland and the Pope find truth and purpose through struggle, while Prufrock and Tiresias find it through surrender. These binary oppositions, in various permutations and stages of development, continue to mark the difference between Browning's and Eliot's approaches to the divination of purpose and the concomitant transcendence of the self.

Browning's most wholly sympathetic characters— Roland, Fra Lippo Lippi, Karshish, and the Duchess of "My Last Duchess"—are those who are most engaged with the world around them. Indeed, Browning's definition of heroism seems to involve the struggle to apprehend beauty and meaning in all things. Roland's victory, for example, lies in his new way of seeing himself in relation to his world and his forerunners. He succeeds by announcing himself as ready to engage the thing which he fears most; the actual outcome of his engagement is unimportant, and hence not reported. Karshish, too, is set apart by his way of seeing. His form of engagement with and appreciation for the natural world link him with Lazarus and therefore with the enlightened vision of the poet and prophet.

For Eliot, on the other hand, transcendence is found not through engagement with the materials of the temporal world but through a retreat from materiality. Not through struggle, but through surrender, can one escape the prison of the self. In his alienation from the only society which he knows, in his unanswered questions, and in his longing for a form of death, the Magus is very much on a continuum with Prufrock. Just as Prufrock is awakened from his reveries by human voices, so the Magus traveled "with the

voices singing in our ears, saying / That this was all folly" (19-20). Each man has had a vision which is incompatible with the mores of his respective society. George Bellis' recent formulation of the "dilemma that Prufrock must continually face" might also be applied to the Magus: each "is fearful of living by the vision, for that will mean rejecting his old life; yet, having seen the vision destroys the possibility of his being satisfied with the old life" (11). This double bind explains both the strain of lassitude that runs through both speakers' monologues and the inability of each to articulate fully the nature and implications of his transformative experience.

Read through the lens of "Journey of the Magi," "Prufrock" and *The Waste Land* appear more overtly religious than they might standing alone. Many critics and biographers have noted that Eliot's 1927 baptism and confirmation represented not a sudden conversion to Christianity, but the culmination of a decades-long struggle with faith. Cleanth Brooks writes that Eliot's "poetry is obviously a journey and soon enough shows itself to be a journey toward religion. *The Waste Land*... is a work which trembles with the concern for religion" (Brooks, "Serious Poet," 110). Rudolf Germer has recently written of Eliot's poetry:

> From as early as June 1910, there seems to have been an adumbration of ultimate reality, of the existence of a transcendent realm of being. What changes in the course of Eliot's development is that the spiritual insights expressed become progressively and more consciously Christian. (18)

Eliot's formal baptism into Christianity may best be seen as his acknowledgement of a belief he had already long held.

Yet Eliot's Christianity is not properly the orthodox Anglo-Catholicism to which he professed to subscribe. Rather, his religion is infused with a lack of interest in the material world which belongs more properly to the Buddhism which he studied at Harvard and to which he considered converting in 1922. Buddhist doctrine is most obviously present in "The Fire Sermon" and "What the Thunder Said," yet it informs Eliot's sensibility in poems which less obviously invoke it. Eliot's is a religion at once aesthetic and ascetic, a belief not only rich in symbol, ritual, and myth, but also austere in its emphasis on retreat, surrender, and withdrawal. "Journey of the Magi" fuses the richness of Christian symbolism with the asceticism of Buddhist renunciation.

"An Epistle of Karshish," on the other hand, contains no such strain of asceticism or restraint. Browning's poem and the Christianity which it portrays vindicate the grotesque. Lazarus and Karshish alike are set off from their peers by their fascination in the particular and the finite. They are, in their own ways, alienated from their fellow men and brought closer to God and truth through this fascination. Particularity is the essence of the grotesque: it is the lack of proportion which Karshish identifies in Lazarus but fails to recognize in himself.

Eliot's Magus moves ever further from the particular and towards the universal. His account of the journey to Bethlehem represents a passage through the grotesque and the concrete to the universal and abstract. The Magus's journey, in other words, takes him through and beyond Browning country.

Ariel Poems are of particular interest for the study of Browning's influence on, and confluence with, Eliot's poetry. "Journey of the Magi" represents, along with "A

Song for Simeon" and "Marina," Eliot's last engagement with the forms and preoccupations of the Browningesque monologue. As Eliot's concern with Christianity becomes more explicit, his poetry will modulate into a quasi-mystical mode which departs almost completely from the subjective psychological portraits of Browning. With the Dantean narrator of "Ash Wednesday" and the distancing, effaced narrators of *The Four Quartets*, Eliot ceases to be in dialogue with the psychological monologue as Browning practiced it.

Reading Eliot's biblical monologue alongside that of Browning reveals both the degree to which the poets share an interest in dramatizing an individual speaker's flawed perceptions of an event which escapes his comprehension, and the degree to which their visions of the relationship between individual, finite phenomena and a divine, infinite order depart from each other. "Karshish" and "Journey of the Magi" are important poems on their own merits. Read together, however, they provide a metonymy both for the degree to which Eliot engages with and transforms Browning's form of the psychological monologue and for the radical gap dividing Victorian faith in empiricism and constructability from Modernist wonder at mystery and ineffability.

Chapter Five:

Conclusion

Eliot inherited from Browning a form of poetic monologue—later called the "dramatic monologue," a term which Eliot applied to Browning's work but which neither poet applied to his own—in which a speaker articulates a psychological condition and a set of circumstances and desires understood to be distinct from those of the poet. Such a form provided Browning and Eliot, both men who were concerned with maintaining an image of propriety, with the distance necessary to explore topics and states of mind which were less than proper. My contention has been that Eliot's poems can be read dialectically with those of Browning as explorations of the modes by which an individual may transcend the limitations of his own self-consciousness and enter some order beyond the self. Despite Eliot's frequent criticism of, or lacunae concerning, his Victorian predecessors, Browning, like Tennyson, Arnold, Fitzgerald, and Thompson, to name a few, represented for Eliot a formidable predecessor with whose work he must negotiate.

The psychological monologues of each poet are vehicles by which a man inquires into his purpose in the world and enacts his desire to be placed in a divine or poetic order by which he might transcend "the prison of the self": his memories, perceptions, and psychological limitations and preoccupations. For Browning and Eliot alike, the roles of prophet and poet tend to collapse into each other. The pilgrim's search for God and the artist's search for self-expression are interconnected, yet the routes by which their respective vatic questers achieve their purposes are almost diametrically opposed. For Browning, self-knowledge and knowledge of God, art, love, and right living are found

through an intense engagement with the world. Roland was never more himself than when he "set the slughorn to his lips," announcing his readiness to do battle with the thing in the Dark Tower and to take his place with the fallen peers who have gone before him. Similarly, Browning's Pope discerns the truth of the Roman murder mystery not through metaphysics or divination but by calling on his experience as an "old man of the world." Karshish and Lazarus, finally, take a delight in the finite, through which they apprehend the divine and by which they join the ranks of Browning's artists: Fra Lippo Lippi, the Duchess, and the poet-inquisitor.

Eliot's characters, on the other hand, approach the truth not through engagement with materiality, but through a renunciation of all things material. For Prufrock, the chambers of the sea represent such a renunciation: they are a locus of beauty and meaning found entirely outside of the parlor rooms and foggy streets which make up his actual life. In *The Waste Land*, too, the chambers of the sea are the place where Phlebas's body, like the bones of "Ash Wednesday," is transformed into something rich and strange. Prufrock's quest for meaning continues in *The Waste Land*, where the thunder seems to answer the question Prufrock never asked. "Datta, dayadhvam, damyata (Give, sympathise, control)" are the precepts not of a muscular Christianity or of a constructivist agnosticism, but of a Buddhist doctrine of renunciation and self-abnegation. In what may be Eliot's most Browningesque monologue, "Journey of the Magi," the Magus's vision of the Incarnation leaves him dissatisfied with the material world which once pleased him. Like one of the cave dwellers in Plato's allegory, he has seen the Sun (or, perhaps, the Son) and can no longer be satisfied with shadows. Contrasting "Journey of the Magi" with "An Epistle... of Karshish" underscores the very

different attitudes with which Eliot and Browning view the relationship between spirit and substance.

This dissertation sought to address a topic which several critics have proposed as worthy of study but which none has fully investigated: the nature and scope of the relationship between the poetry of Robert Browning and that of T. S. Eliot. It will end, in turn, by proposing a series of questions and observations concerning the two poets and their milieux which might prove fertile ground for future research. A critical inquiry, to use an image out of Frost or Eliot or Borges, involves taking some passages and leaving others for another day. Here, then, is a chart of passages not taken and doors never opened.

My own methodology in this dissertation has involved the close reading of a series of canonical poems by Browning and Eliot in an attempt to trace both the poets' shared preoccupations as well as their distinctive and conflicting solutions to those preoccupations. I have traced Eliot's shifting relationship to Browning during his first sixteen years as a poet by reading "Prufrock" with "Childe Roland," *The Waste Land* with both *Men and Women* and *The Ring and the Book*, and "Journey of the Magi" with "Karshish." In general, my conclusions from such close readings have revolved around issues of poetic influence, confluence, appropriation and transformation. Yet these comparisons of Browning and Eliot touch on at least three critical issues which might be worthy of further study in the future. The first is that of the wide applicability of the engagement and renunciation dichotomy which I have identified in Browning's and Eliot's psychological monologues to the Victorian and Modern societies and literatures *in*

toto. To what extent is this concept a viable framework for reading other poets of the two periods and for apprehending the shifting social and aesthetic values of the latter half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth? The second issue involves the nature of poetic relationships and the formulation of an analytic model comprehensive enough to encompass both influence and confluence, appropriation and transformation, similarity and difference, and the power which a poet exerts on subsequent generations of poets not just through his strengths and successes, but through his deficiencies and failures. Finally, I would argue that the present study of Browning and Eliot could be expanded by studying the plays of each and the nature of the poet-playwright in an age when the possibility of a poetic drama seems to have become a mirage.

The very popularity of Browning and Eliot may be an argument for reading them as representative writers of the Victorian and Modern periods, and hence of reading their differences as representative of conflicting Victorian and Modern attitudes towards the inherent morality of the well-intentioned struggle. Browning and Eliot alike began their careers dogged by charges of obscurity and morbidity, yet each eventually found himself elevated to the role of cultural sage and elder statesman. Something in the poetry of both Browning and Eliot served as what Pierre Bourdieu calls a *habitas*, or "structuring structure," for the time in which they lived. Each man's poetry at once reflected and created values which his contemporaries, and future generations, recognize as distinctly representative of his age.

Thomas Carlyle argues: "The latest Gospel in this world is, Know thy work and do it. 'Know thyself': long enough has that poor 'self' of thine tormented thee; thou wilt never get to 'know' it, I believe!" (Buckler 144). It would be reductive to call Browning

a poetic Carlyle, but there is certainly some continuity between the latter's gospel of work and Browning's portraits of characters who find purpose and meaning through engagement with a world bent on defeating them. The Victorian reading public, having overcome their long-standing prejudice against Browning's "obscurity" and having become disposed to read the recently-widowed poet's work with sympathy and patience, found in Browning as they had in Carlyle an expression of values which they deemed to be central to their culture. Indeed, in making his readers "work" to arrive at his "moral," in requiring them to construct what "ought to be by showing what ought not to be," Browning's medium may have been his message. The struggle with the text, like the struggle with the world, is a moral act. The Victorians of the 1860's found in Browning's poetry the valorization of the well-intentioned struggle, love as a means of salvation, the duty of man to his fellows, and the rational construction of meaning.

Yet Browning also embraces sentiments and modes of thought which seem to be more at home in the twentieth century than in the nineteenth. First and foremost, so many of the values which have been attributed to his poetry are identifiable only through their grotesque inversions. Browning represents love by depicting hatred, compassion by murder, forgiveness by vengeance. The reader must "painfully evolve" from the monologues of Browning's speakers a grotesquely refracted truth. The retreat of the omniscient narrator and the centering of an "interested," unreliable one is, to my mind, the feature that aligns Browning's poetry with the novels of Ford, Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner, to name a few. Browning's interest in the individual's perception of reality and in his subconscious motivations for acting or for representing seems to prefigure the rise of psychoanalysis. Roland's projection of his own morbid vision onto the grey plain or

Karshish's compulsive reversions to the Lazarus story that his rational mind has dismissed as impossible are only two examples of Browning's awareness of man's subconscious motivations. Finally, Browning's abruptness, fractured syntax, interjections, and non-sequiturs seem to be on a continuum with the experiments of literary Modernism rather than with the poetry of his own contemporaries. Browning would make the text represent a speaker's emotional state not only through the arrangement of words, but through the disarrangement of them: gaps, injections, and silences. Browning's poetry is both a reflection of the culture in which he lived and a structuring principle which shaped not only his own culture, but that of subsequent generations. To call Browning a transitional figure is not simply to claim that he was somehow "ahead of his time," but rather that he was a shaper of the time ahead of him.

Eliot was lionized at an even younger age than was Browning, first as the disillusioned voice of the post-war European wasteland, and eventually as the reactionary Christian man of letters and literary canon-maker par excellence. Elevating Eliot to such a position inevitably involved lowering Browning and other members of the old, Victorian dispensation. Eliot and his poetics of transcendence through renunciation were taken up by a people who may have seen in the trenches of the Great War the catastrophic potential of an unexamined valorization of mere struggle and engagement. Eliot is therefore powerless to reduce any of his own creations, as he tried to of *The Waste Land*, to "the relief of a purely personal gripe." Whatever may have been Eliot's intention in writing *The Waste Land*, it was widely adopted as a manifesto of the Modernism.

Therefore, while my own analysis of the relationship between Browning and Eliot has been founded on dialectical readings of individual poems, one could instead establish their relationship by comparing the reading public's and the academy's reception of the two poets. It is certainly important to note that both poets garnered tremendous followings in their own lifetimes and that each found himself, in the second half of his career, writing for a wide and enthusiastic audience. There is more than a passing resemblance between the Browning Societies that flourished from the 1870's through the early 1900's and the New Critical Movement that would quickly install T. S. Eliot as its chief poet and theorist.

My purpose here is not to line up a series of Victorian and Modernist writers who valorize engagement and renunciation, respectively, in order to argue that this dichotomy can be applied wholesale to the literatures of the nineteenth and twentieth century. Although I do not wish to reduce Modernism to the belief that, as Yeats put it, "the best lack all conviction, while the worse are filled with passionate intensity," I would suggest that one facet of Modernism involved the rejection of decisive action as the means for transforming the world.

Another issue that this dissertation has repeatedly touched on, but which remains fertile ground for future inquiry, is the nature of the relationship between any two poets. Earlier in this project I employed a metaphor from quantum physics to argue that the relationship between two poets, like the nature of light, which is simultaneously a particle and a wave, constitutes one of both influence and confluence. It is the mode and purpose of criticism which determines to what extent common features of two poets' work are read as influencing each other rather than as reflecting common or similar circumstances

or cultural developments. Such a position, admittedly, allows one to have one's cake and eat it, too. Nevertheless, it was crucial for the present argument to be able to describe both how Eliot reworked some of Browning's forms and how Browning and Eliot alike were influenced by a host of common cultural and historical factors: the self-conscious narrator as bequeathed by Romantic lyricism, the rise of psychology, the forces of urbanization and industrialization, Darwinian theories of evolution and atavism, the Higher Criticism, and the reactionary doctrines of the churches of Rome and England.

Nor do I mean to say that only writers who were the products of similar historical or cultural circumstances can be meaningfully discussed in relation to each other. Prodigious readers who gravitated to the obscure, Browning and Eliot alike gathered authors from radically different cultural milieus into meaningful intellectual or aesthetic frameworks. In *Parleyings with Certain People of Importance in their Day*, Browning constructs inter-authorial relationships through the lens of his own readings. The common thread between Bernard de Mandeville, Christopher Smart, Gerard de Lairesse, and the other writers addressed in *Parleyings* is simply that Browning has read them. Eliot, in his criticism and his poetry, likewise contrasts authors who are widely divided by time, culture, and geography but who have meaning for Eliot as a reader and as a poet. That Augustine and the Buddha never read each other's works obviously does not militate against their texts being "read" against each other in the conclusion of "The Fire Sermon." Both Browning and Eliot themselves legitimate the notion that poets can be read in dialogue with each other without their having been shaped by shared cultural circumstances and without the one having studied the other.

Nevertheless, in establishing Eliot's familiarity with Browning's and Eliot's critical and poetic references, both open and oblique, to his predecessor, I have obviously grounded some part of this project in influence theory. Yet I would make a few distinctions regarding my own concept of influence as manifested in Eliot's relationship to Browning. Harold Bloom has popularized a Freudian "family drama" model of influence in which poets react against their "strong" predecessors. Ellmann, on the other hand, posits poetic borrowing as a far more conscious act: the poet "takes what he needs" from his predecessor and may ultimately "override" the work from which he borrows (4). On the whole, I find Ellmann's model more useful than Bloom's, particularly in discussing a poet like Eliot, who routinely incorporates the work of other poets into his own poetry. I would argue, however, that both Bloom and Ellmann ignore a key aspect of "inter-authorial" relationships. In focusing, respectively, on a later poet's anxiety concerning an earlier poet's strength, or on a later poet's conscious appropriation of an earlier poet's innovations, Bloom and Ellmann alike ignore the lessons, demands, and opportunities that one poet sets for another through failure.

I would argue that Eliot often refined his own theoretical and poetic identity through the identification of his predecessor's failings and through seeking to remedy those failings in his own art. Dante, for example, was perhaps the only great poet whom Eliot could render useful to his own creative processes through unmitigated praise rather than through criticism. Yet in reading the original "Death by Water," it is impossible to say whether Eliot learned more from Dante's Ulysses episode, which he admired, or from Tennyson's, which he denigrated. Eliot seems to gain as much from one poet's weakness as he does from another's strength. Eliot's deeming *Hamlet* a "failure" is only the most

extreme example of his constructing meaning for his own poetic theory and practice through the identification—or invention—of a poet's Achilles' Heel.

One could argue that fault-finding is Eliot's disingenuous mode of negotiating with and minimizing the threat of a powerful forerunner to his own creative life. There is certainly some truth to this, but to subscribe wholesale to such a viewpoint, as Bloom might do, is to ignore an arguably more practical aspect of the critical enterprise. Eliot's criticism was a form of assimilation: he knew how to identify and learn from a poet's negative examples, writing a stronger poem because a predecessor had written a weaker one, using a better word because a predecessor had used a lesser one. Is it any surprise, then, that the weaknesses Eliot criticizes in other poets are often those which he seems to suffer from in his own poetry and that his most vociferous criticism is also his most self-reflexive?

The next step in this inquiry would be to examine the poetic dramas of Browning and Eliot. Later in life, Eliot spoke and wrote less of Browning's monologues than he did of Browning's plays. I would argue that while Eliot had exorcised the ghost of Browning in his poetry, and had mastered and moved beyond a form of psychological monologue which took its point of departure from that of Browning, he continued to negotiate with his predecessor's legacy as a poet-playwright. This negotiation illustrates Freud's concept of projection: as a strong poet and a relatively weak playwright, Browning represents Eliot's own fear of failure in writing for the stage. It is difficult not to read as self-reflexive Eliot's 1953 assessment of Browning as possessing the "voice of the dramatic poet whose dramatic gifts are best exercised outside of the theatre" (94).

Browning's relative failure as a writer for the stage fuels Eliot's continued concern with him: Eliot has reached an accord with the poet, but not with the playwright.

Yet if it is through finding fault that Eliot constructs meaning and refines his own poetic sensibility, then continued criticism means continued engagement. It is not enough to say that Eliot's critique of a Tennyson or a Browning reveals the importance of these poets to his own art, for such an observation does not explain *how* these poets are important. Eliot continues to quarrel with Browning long after he has made peace with Tennyson precisely because he still has something to learn from Browning. Finding fault with Browning as a poetic dramatist or as a dramatic poet is not merely a form of subterfuge by which Eliot obscures his indebtedness to Browning, but a mode of critical inquiry through which Eliot apprehends and refines his own weaknesses. Eliot believed in a Christian afterlife, and in some sense his criticism is a Purgatory in which the *foco che affina* burns away weaknesses and failures—Eliot's own and those of the poets who were important to him—and by so doing refines that which is worth saving.

Eliot's criticism of Browning as a playwright leads me to the final issue raised by this dissertation which might be worth discussing at further length: the relationship between Browning and Eliot as manifested in their plays and in their status as dramatic poets and poetic dramatists. I believe there would be profit in an extended study of Browning's and Eliot's plays as an inquiry into what Eliot termed "the possibility of the poetic drama" in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Such a study would concern itself with the nature of the poet-playwright and with the process by which the differing dynamics of writing for the page and the stage show Browning's and Eliot's respective abilities and preoccupations in different lights. The seeming inability of the nineteenth

and twentieth century English literary tradition to produce a body of decent verse plays most strongly supports Eliot's claim that a "dissociation of sensibility" set in between the Elizabethans and the Victorians. What are the factors that account for Browning's gifts having flourished in the context of the poetic monologue but having wilted on the stage? To what extent does Eliot's own status as a poet-playwright resemble that of Browning's? Moreover, do Browning's and Eliot's plays perpetuate their shared exploration of man's desire to transcend himself and their differing valuations of engagement and renunciation as the routes to such transcendence? How do the poetics of intentionality and of renunciation play out as drama? Is each a sufficiently dramatic principle to propel a stage play rather than a psychological monologue? I would venture to say that these questions draw on the present study as a point of departure and open a discussion of Browning's and Eliot's plays in the context of nineteenth and early twentieth century attempts to revitalize the English tradition of the verse drama.

Reading Browning and Eliot in dialogue with each other involves redrawing some of the traditional boundaries between Victorian and Modernist literature. I would argue that many of Browning's and Eliot's characters suffer from a comparable "modern condition:" burdened with a self-consciousness that threatens to imprison them in the solipsistic hell of their own thoughts and memories, each seeks to locate his place in a transcendent order that would give purpose to an otherwise purposeless existence. Yet the contrary modes by which Browning's and Eliot's characters apprehend such a transcendent order, and the contrary effects which that apprehension has on their ability to live in the world, reveal a gulf between the two poets' estimations of man's capacity to

transform himself and his world. The immense, if belated, popularity of Browning's poetry among his Victorian readership and the more immediate but no less widespread popularity of Eliot's work indicate that the value the two poets placed on engagement and renunciation, respectively, both partook of and contributed to the *zeitgeist* of Victorian and Modernist literature and culture. To refine one's understanding of the ways in which Browning and Eliot resemble and depart from each other is therefore to refine one's understanding of the character of Victorian and Modernist poetry.

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