THE PSYCHOGEOGRAPHY OF T.S. ELIOT'S CITY POEMS[1]

T.S. ELIOT'IN KENT ŞİİRLERİNE PSİKOCOĞRAFİK BİR YAKLAŞIM

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Abstract

T.S. Eliot's poems "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" may be read as examples of how the poet depicts kaleidoscopic portrayals of the city. In these poems, Eliot incorporates various walking personae to construct a multifaceted image of the city. This enables a spatial reading of the poems in which different layers of the city are depicted and a means in which a cartography of the city may be established. As such, London and other real or imaginary cities are described through fragments by these personae and their conversations and previous literary works accompany the urban descriptions. Thus by using such personae Eliot enables the reader to do the impossible, that is, to envision the city in one sitting. To this end, the personae in these poems not only describe the city by looking at it from a distance, but also by walking in the streets and becoming part of it, which allows the reader to view the city panoramically and from up close. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to illustrate the ways in which memory, literature, and experience work hand in hand in the poem to portray these cities which include London not only as a metropolis made up of buildings and people, but also a means of constructing the soul of the city.

Öz

T.S. Eliot'ın "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Preludes" ve "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" şiirlerinde kent sürekli değişen, farklı yönleriyle betimlenen bir imgedir. Eliot bu şiirlerinde kentte yürüyen bir şiir kişisi kullanarak farklı açılardan kenti okuyucunun zihninde yeniden oluşturmaktadır. Kullandığı bu kent imgesi Eliot'ın şiirlerinin mekansal yaklaşımlarla incelenebileceğini ve bu sayede kente dair edebi bir harita oluşturulabileceğini göstermektedir. Örneğin Londra gibi kentler ve başka kurgusal kentler parçalı imgelerle birleştirildiğinde kentin edebiyatı geçmişi ve çağdaşı birlikte barındırabilmektedir. Kent içerisinde yürüyerek gördüklerini betimleyen şiir kişisi kullandığında Eliot, bir oturuşta okuyucunun kenti zihninde bütünüyle canlandırmasını sağlayabilmektedir. Bu izlenimi verebilmek için şiir kişisi bir yandan kentin sokaklarında dolaşır, bir yandan şehrin panoramasını uzaktan seyre dalar. Makalede Eliot'ın şiirleri incelendiğinde kenti kent yapanın sadece binalar ve insanlar değil aynı zamanda bellek, edebiyat, ve deneyimlerin kentin kimliğini oluşturmada nasıl bir rol oynadığı tartışılacaktır.

Introduction

The city is never depicted in its entirety in Eliot's poems, rather, it is an "*Unreal*" city, made up of "*A heap of broken images*," and "*half-deserted streets*," "*sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells*" surrounded with "*brown waves of fog*" in which the smiles of people "hover" in the air and disappear into the roofs (Eliot, *The Waste Land* 1.22, 1.60; "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," line 4, 7; "The Morning at

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the Window," line 5, 8) [2]. The images in his poems, especially early in his career, are that of the city. Eliot's use of the objective correlative to portray a fragmented city image may be seen as a means of constructing a kaleidoscopic, multi-voiced experience of urban life. His poems also reveal the response of the poet to the modern world; the culmination of the complex relationship between the poet and the city. He constructs a composite city image and characterizes walking personae into this city as a metaphor for the relationship of the poet to the language of poetry, in order to establish his poetics for modernist poetry.

In his city poems, which include *The Waste Land* as well as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Preludes," and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," Eliot reconstructs the city through fragments, using sets of objects, important figures, brands, particular buildings related to cities, and the earlier literary representations of cities. These fragmented descriptions partly derive from the metaphorical ground he invokes. The city image is not only influenced from London as seen in *The Waste Land* (1922) but a number of cities in which he lived (Eliot, "Influence," par. 3). In the mentioned poems, the descriptions of fragmented cities, are blended to create a fictional city with characteristics that apply to any city in the world in the mind of the reader. Eliot welds together the earlier representations of the city by English and American writers in such a way that his poems transcend their national, identifiable characteristics which transform them into representations of *any* city. As such, Eliot's representation of London in *The Waste Land*, with its fragmented portrayal, spawns other cities in ruins which metaphorically links London and its decaying culture to other cultures in decline, joining all these cities together on a common ground of loss suffered as a result of modernity (Eliot, *TWL* 69; 5.373-376; Summers-Bremner 264; Cook 344). Thus, by using fragmented representations of the city as a metaphor, he provides a solution for this cultural degradation and offers future poets a model that could later be applied to any culture in any part of the world. The aim of this article, will be to illustrate the ways in which memory, literature, and experience of the city are manifested in the poetry of T. S. Eliot, which include "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Preludes," and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," as a means of constructing a blueprint fictional city that would show a new poetics of poetry. Taken from this perspective, studying Eliot's poems

[2] All poems of T. S. Eliot discussed are taken from the recent and authoritative edition in two volumes of *The Poems of T. S. Eliot*, edited by Ricks and McCue. The notes by the editors will be cited using their last names and page numbers from the same volumes.

from a spatial perspective enables the reader to trace the meanings attached to cities through poetry of the city.

Poetry of the City and the Spatial Turn

Since the second half of the twentieth century, a group of critics have focused on the significance of space, the city, and the rural landscapes in their works[3]. Similarly, by responding to and continuing the discussions of these pioneering critics and their works, recent critics including Doreen Massey, Kenneth Mitchell, Ian Davidson, Merlin Coverley, and Robert Tally Jr., have increasingly taken interest in the use of spatial elements in works of literature, an approach which has been defined as the "spatial turn" in literary criticism. Namely, geography and regional studies scholar Doreen Massey describes the "spatial turn" as a shift of emphasis in criticism; which enables a discussion on the role of space and the foregrounding of spatial elements in literature and argues that these questions have eclipsed earlier criticism that once only focused on temporality, resulting in a re-evaluation of modernity and its representations (Massey 64). Accordingly, the spatial turn in literary criticism provided a medium for the discussion of the significance of the relationship between the individual and his environment, the history and memory of place, landscape, and the city.

The concerns with spatial phenomena, as Canadian poet and playwright Kenneth Mitchell argues in his essay "Landscape and Literature," were a result of the differentiation between urban and rural landscapes in the nineteenth century. Especially after the Industrial Revolution, due to the increasing interest in living in the city the social gap between the rural environment and the urban setting had widened, which he believes to be the reason for the emergence of a spatial turn in literature (Mitchell 23-24). As the disparity between rural and urban settings widened, writers and artists chose the relationship of the individual and his environment as their subject and explored the effects of place on the individual. Therefore, as suggested by Mitchell and Massey, spatial criticism was a result of the changes brought by the Industrial Revolution, which led writers from the nineteenth century onwards to take the significance of the landscape and place as their subject matter.

[3] Some of these critics include: Benjamin, Walter. *The Arcades Project* (1982); Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle* (1967); De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984); Frank, Joseph. *The Idea of Spatial Form* (1945); Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space* (1974); Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City* (1960); Mumford, Lewis. *The History of the City* (1961; Simmel, Georg. "Metropolis and Mental Life" (1971); Williams, Raymond. *The Country and the City* (1973.)

Although spatial criticism has emerged in the mid-twentieth century, Ian Davidson in *Ideas of Space in Contemporary Poetry* (2007) argues that the gradual awareness of the role of space may be traced in the works of artists and writers from the early modern period to the Victorian, well into the modern and contemporary periods (I. Davidson 26). These spatial investigations on the relationship between the individual and the spaces he occupies were not limited to the physical space of the environment but also to the abstract spaces of the mind explored in literature. To illustrate, in the second half of the twentieth century, under the leadership of Guy Debord and the Situationists, the relationship between psychology and geography was investigated through the psychogeographical approach. Psychogeography, by compounding these two fields of study, explores the role of the psychology of the individual on his perception of the city. Merlin Coverley, the author of *Psychogeography* (2010), claims that this interdisciplinary field in fact, had examples that dated earlier than the Situationists:

> [...] psychogeography is retrospectively supported (or undermined) by earlier traditions and precursors that have been neglected or wilfully obscured. When we focus upon the predominant characteristics of psychogeographical ideas – *urban wandering, the imaginative networking of the city, the otherworldly sense of spirit of place, the unexpected insights and juxtapositions created by aimless drifting, the new ways of experiencing familiar surroundings* – one can soon identify these themes in the examples of earlier figures whose work pre-dates the formal recognition of the Situationists. (Coverley 31-32; emphasis added).

From Coverley's words it may be deduced that psychogeography acknowledges the existence of a dynamic relationship between the individual and his environment (the urban setting) and that these "*psychogeographical ideas*" underscore the ways that this relationship may be detected. In the light of Coverley's words, it may further be argued that by studying a literary work in which the writer makes use of the representation of a city, similarly, would illustrate the relationship between the individual and the urban setting. Moreover, as Coverley asserts, psychogeography has today evolved to encompass more than the physical relationship of the individual and his environment. Psychogeography today involves,

> [...] the mental traveller who remakes the city in accordance with his own imagination is allied to the urban wanderer who drifts through the city streets; the political radicalism that seeks to overthrow the

> established order of the day is tempered by an awareness of the city as eternal and unchanging; and the use of antiquarian and occult symbolism reflects the precedence given to the subjective and the anti-rational over the more systematic modes of thought. (Coverley 41-42).

As Coverley points out, writers who write about the city do not limit themselves to its physical representations but also investigate, by using psychogeography, the psychological, emotional, and intellectual responses of the individual which in turn may affect the individual's spatial perceptions and "*modes of thought*" (41-42). Accordingly, it may be argued that the role of space for writers who depict these spaces have led to the exploration of metaphorical borders as well, such as the borders between remembering and forgetting.

Another outcome of the spatial turn is to view the city as a text that renders multi-layered, subjective narratives. Literary cartography, for instance, categorises city literature as a type of literature that creates maps of the environment it describes, bridging the gap between spatiality, representation, and narration. As Robert Tally Jr. remarks, narratives of real or fictional cities "*produce maps*" in the mind of the reader who attaches meanings to the place created by the narrator (Tally, 3). This cartographical approach views the city, and any space in general, to be "*embedded with narratives*" that "*organize spaces*" into narratives by selecting, juxtaposing, and arranging specimens from the city as perceived by the writer, the narrator, the characters, or personae (Tally 1-2). Narratives in turn, become "*mapping machines*" that maintain a "*dynamic tension*" of what it "*maps*" and to which map it attaches itself to (Tally, 3). As Tally remarks, the city attains new meanings due to the narratives created by each city-dweller walking in its streets, which suggests that these imagined cartographies or maps of the city may be traced also in the representations of the city. Hence, the narratives in which the cities are reconstructed through a process of selection, also contains a process of remembering and forgetting induced by the memories of the city.

The literary text about the city, therefore, becomes a medium in which the representations of the city in earlier texts, the real city, and the way the writer perceives and writes about the city may be collected. As Pierre Nora claims in *Realms of Memory* (1996) the topographical "*lieux*" (realms) are embedded with different connotations from monumental structures:

> Other lieux are topographical: what matters is their specific location, their rootedness. […] Some sites are monumental, not to be confused with others that are architectural. Statues and monuments to the dead, for example, derive their significance from their very existence. Although location is by no means unimportant with such monuments, they could be placed elsewhere without altering their meaning. *Structures that develop over time are different: their meaning stems from the complex relationship of their component parts, so that they become mirrors of a society or a period, like the cathedral of Chartres or the palace of Versailles*. (Nora 18; emphasis added).

In the light of Nora's description of the unique nature of topographical realms of memory, it can be argued that the fictional and experiential narratives of the city are intertwined with the reality of the city (of the landscape, geography, or the region), which, in turn, conveys multitudinous representations of the city, and adorns the city with a literary history. That is to say, the city itself also becomes a "*structure*" that "*develop[s] over time*" and reflects the modes of thought of a society or a period (Nora 18). Nora's statement on realms of memory may be adopted for the purposes of the present study to argue that the representations of the city in Eliot's poetry contributed to the meanings of the city by selective memories of the past being intertwined with the first-hand experiences of the city. By such similar contributions to the meanings of the city, the literature of any place produces, in Tally's words, "*dynamic*" meanings of the city in the mind of the reader (Tally 3-6). Overall, the representations of the city may be regarded as reconstructions of the city, and each new representation seems to accumulate and form new meanings of the city. As Eluned Summers-Bremner argues in her essay "Unreal City and Dream Deferred," the representations of any city, once expressed, transform all "*geographies*" into "*psycho-geographies*," interactive settings that are shaped by the cultural history and myths and the experiences of the writer-traveller (Summers-Bremner 262). Furthermore, Ian Davidson claims that these literary representations of place are interconnected with the changes in the city, and are at the same time attempts of recovering history:

> […] in an increasingly spatialized world, notions of place have to change, so too will notions of poetry. If a place is traditionally characterized as a bounded community with its own history, then a 'poetry of place' frequently sought to identify the nature of a place through an exploration and recovery of its past. (I. Davidson 31).

From the assertions made by Davidson, Tally, and Nora it may be argued that poems about the city are not only representations of the city and its inhabitants, but also a clue to the complex relationship between the poet and the city which the poet attempts to reclaim by portraying the 'unofficial history' of the city.

As a culmination of the arguments proposed by the critics mentioned above, city literature, then, can be defined as any literary text that foregrounds the importance of the city by describing its architecture, its citizens, and its cultural significance. In the light of the fields of study these critics belong to, one can also claim that the interdisciplinary nature of city literature has positioned it between architecture, urban studies, geography, sociology, cartography, and literature, among many other fields of study. Therefore, the genre itself may be said to have oscillating boundaries that make it a subject of study by various scholarly disciplines. In literary criticism, the city has been often analysed in terms of its significance as a setting, a character, a metaphor, or a symbol. Most of the questions raised on the explorations about the role of space in general, and the city in particular, dwell on issues about the development of their representations in literature and their relationship to what Jim Wayne Miller describes as the "*dominant intellectual view[s],*" by tracing the historical development of these representations (Miller 14). The "*lack of orientation*" or limitations of space, as Miller suggests, has triggered a re-evaluation of numerous works which were earlier not accounted for in terms of the role of place and its representations in literature (Miller, 14).

When poems that use the city as their subject matter are analysed, a definition for city poetry may be devised. City poetry, or urban poetry, may be defined as a subgenre of city literature which describes as well as imitates the city in terms of form and content. It usually refers to particular physical locations, landmarks, monuments, or neighbourhoods of a city and foregrounds these urban elements to address broader issues of class, gender, race, history, nationhood, administrative power, politics, and aesthetics among many others. One may claim that city poetry becomes a medium in which the poet's experience of the city and the city's literary representations are negotiated, through the use of the persona of the poem. That is, the poet is able to dramatize his experiences of the city and juxtapose them to interact with and respond to past representations by devising a fictional persona. Therefore, due to the multitudinous ways in which the city may

be represented in literature, the role of the persona becomes significant in exploring the ways in which poets chose to depict the city from the viewpoint of the persona characterized in a particular fashion. Additionally, in Davidson's words, the poem also becomes a "*representation of space*" due to its "*verbal description* of *the landscape*" (I. Davidson 12, 38, emphasis added). Thus one may deduce that one of the essential components of city poetry is the persona since he conveys more than the experiences of the poet in the city.

The Poetics of Modernism: Representations of the City and the Role of the Persona in Eliot's Poetry

There is ample critical work including John H. Johnston's *The Poet and the City* (1984), William H. Sharpe's *Unreal Cities* (1990), and William B. Thesing's *The London Muse* (1982) which focus mainly on English poets who used the city image in their poems. Although Eliot is neither the first nor the last poet to portray the city in his poems, he differs from his predecessors in that he blends various positions from which the city is described by employing a walking persona, resulting in the representation to belong neither to a local nor a foreigner. That is to say, his personae view the city from a threshold. Eliot neither describes the city merely from a distance nor from a street-view perspective like his predecessors, instead blends the two perspectives which would suggest the alienation of the personae from the society. His personae simultaneously gaze at the city from a distance and walk in the streets; they are able to view the city from a remote perspective and from up-close within the same poem, which compounds the types of personae used in other such city representations.

Eliot lived in and travelled to a number of cities, and this resonates in his poems. He spent his early childhood and teenage years in St. Louis, a city that affected him "*more deeply than any other environment*" and spent his summers in Maine and Massachusetts (Eliot, "To the Editor," 194). After he left St. Louis in 1905, he went to Milton Academy in Massachusetts and admits that rivers near these cities remained influential places for him:

> [...] I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood beside the big river, which is incommunicable to those who have not. Of course my people were Northerners and New Englanders, and of course I have spent many years out of America altogether; but Missouri and the Mississippi have made a deeper impression on me than any other part of the world. ("To the Editor" 194-195).

In his early essays it is clear that Eliot identifies himself as an American writer living in London. Although he was naturalised as a British citizen in 1927, he remarked in his later essays and lectures that he was influenced by both the American landscape and the English landscape.

In his lecture entitled "The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet," which he delivered at the presentation of the Emerson-Thoreau Medal for Achievement in Literature in 1960, reveals that he was influenced not only from London but a "*composite*" of the landscapes he had lived throughout his life (Eliot, "Influence," par. 3). Since the beginning of his career, as he states in his address, he was frequently asked whether he considered himself an American or an English poet (Eliot, "Influence," par. 3). Accordingly, there are two locations that manifest themselves in his poetry dating back to his early childhood; the landscape of New England and the cityscape of St. Louis. However, he also acknowledges the influence of London and Paris, "*superimposing*" themselves on his notion of the city ("Influence" par. 3),

> English landscape has come to be as significant for me, and as emotionally charged, as New England landscapes. I do believe, however, that the impressions made by English landscape upon myself are different from those made upon poets for whom it has been the environment of their childhood. ("Influence" par. 4).

Unlike English writers who depicted London as a familiar setting in their works, Eliot underscores that his American past has been fundamental in his perception of the English landscape. In the quote above, he acknowledges his American influences as well as English and European influences. His allusions to earlier texts about London such as Edmund Spenser's "Prothalamion" (1596) in which Thames is "*painted all with variable flowers*," is replaced in *The Waste Land* with the lines "*empty bottles, sandwich papers, / silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends, / Or other testimony of summer nights …*" where "*the nymphs have departed*" (Spenser 13, Eliot, *The Waste Land* 3.177-179). This shows that Eliot was adding another layer to Spenser's image by alluding to his lines and subverting them to portray a city filled with waste instead of beautiful flowers. In the light of his address "Influence" it can be claimed that Eliot was introducing a new perspective on a conventional subject by using a persona who is alienated from his surroundings ("Influence" par. 3). By inserting such a portrayal through the eyes of the personae the city is described in fragments, creating a threshold that renders the dichotomy of outsider-insider.

Eliot's poems are embedded with urban descriptions which enable a psychogeographical reading of his poems, contributing to the plethora of narratives about the city. For instance, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," is a poem with a loosely set, unidentified urban location. The ambiguity of locations in the poem is reminiscent of his essay "The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet" where he reveals that he was influenced by composite landscapes (Eliot, "Influence," par. 3):

> Let us go then you and I,
>
> When the evening is spread out against the sky,
>
> Like a patient etherised upon a table;
>
> Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
>
> The muttering retreats
>
> Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels
>
> And sawdust restaurants with oyster-shells:
>
> Streets that follow like a tedious argument
>
> (Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," 1-8).

Even though the walk mentioned in the poem remains in the imagination of the persona instead of physically walking in the city, the image of these locations listed one after the other evokes the sensory experience of walking in the city. As mentioned above in his article "Influence," Eliot pieces together his influence from a number of cities, including the literary works about the city to depict a city in fragments. For instance, in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," by making use of the fog he hides and disrupts the unified image of any particular city. As such, the poem, first published in *Chicago* in June 1915, seems to be set in London owing to the recurring yellow colour of the fog-like cat and the sawdust restaurants in endless streets: in fact, the poem was written before he came to London (Ricks and McCue 373). Although critical works have been published on the fog and setting of "Prufrock" to be London[4], Eliot explains in an interview that he had in mind the fog in St. Louis, his hometown, when he composed the famous lines in the poem (Ricks and McCue 380). Thus the common assumption that the fog refers to the London

[4] The following critical works assert that the fog in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" marks the setting of the poem as London. Holdsworth, Roger. *Arthur Symons: Selected Writings*. Routledge, 2003. 14; Kettle, Arnold. "Dickens and the Popular Tradition." *Literature and Liberation: Selected Essays*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1988. 155; Rummel, Andrea. "People in the Crowd: British Modernism the Metropolis and the Flâneur." *Literature in Society*. Editor Regina Rudaitytė. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012. 57-77; Carrey, John. *The Intellectuals and the Masses Pride and Prejudice Among the Literary Intelligentsia 1880-1939*. Faber and Faber, 2005.

fog among critics may be seen as an example of the effect of the "*composite*" landscapes and its influence on the meanings attached to London in its literary representations.

Like the evening sky that resembles a "*patient etherised upon a table*," the fog suppresses the consciousness of the city, and the mind of the persona ("The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" line 3). By imagining a walk in the city, the persona tries to locate himself in a world he cannot make sense of, resulting in his alienation. The secrets hidden under the fog thus may register the persona's alienation from his surrounding, regardless of him being a visitor or a local.

The image of the city in the poem, then, would be affected by the ways in which the poet characterizes and positions the persona. Moreover, the image described in the poem would be reshaped in each line if the persona is walking in the city. When the persona walks in the city throughout the course of the poem, his perception of the city is reconstructed in every step he takes, whereas the persona describing the city without moving would imitate an "image" of the city as unchanging. Eliot's poetry, read from a spatial and in particular psychogeographical perspective shows that his poems may be regarded as "city poems" and his use of urban elements as a technique employed for a new modernist poetics for poetry.

Instead of trying to portray the city *in toto*, in a single encompassing reality, Eliot offered a solution to the problem of representation by suggesting that all versions of the city accumulate in time to voice all representations including contemporary ones. According to Eliot, the poet, like a scientist, without prejudice, gives voice to all the different voices in the society (Eliot, "Tradition" 8). Thus, if a writer desires to convey the effect of speech rather than the artificial language of poetry, he must "*give the effect of himself talking in his own person or in one of his rôles [...]*" and adapt his "*manner to the moment with infinite variations*" (Eliot, "'Rhetoric' and Poetic Drama," 26). In the light of Eliot's assertions, one may claim that to portray the city in a realistic fashion, the writer or poet needed to voice these "*rôles*" mentioned (Eliot, "Rhetoric" 26). Additionally, in "Three Voices of Poetry," he argues that dramatic verse embodies three different voices; the poet talking to himself, to his audience, and the dialogues of the fictional character created by the poet:

> The first voice is the voice of the poet talking to himself – or to nobody. The second is the voice of the poet addressing an audience, whether large or small. The third is the voice of the poet when he

> attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse; when he is saying, not what he could say in his own person, but only what he can say within the limits of one imaginary character. ("Three Voices of Poetry" 89).

These three different voices that he describes, in fact, may be read as the private and public spaces of the poem; the poet talking to himself represents the most private, "confessional" voice, and the other two represent the public space of poetry. Like that of the city, then, a poem may contain both private and public spaces through the use of multiple voices used by the poet that co-exist in the poem. In dramatic poetry, he maintains, all three voices can be seen, and claims that it is necessary for the modern poet to embody all three voices in order to represent a kaleidoscopic view of the world he lives in ("Three Voices of Poetry" 99-100). He explains that in dramatic verse, various characters are speaking in turns and the differences in the way they speak conveys the impression of *a group of individuals* speaking, which is unlike the effects of a single persona's voice. Thus, the language presented in dramatic verse belongs not to a single person, but to "a world of persons," which he noted Shakespeare excelled in doing ("Music of Poetry" 33). Eliot's dramatization of the persona, as Robert C. Elliott remarks, was a means of updating the persona of the dramatic monologue after poets such as Browning and other Victorian poets (Elliott 16). In Eliot's poetry, the emphasis on the dramatization of the fictional "I" of the persona instead of using the "I" designating the voice of the poet in the poem suggests that the poet was not only challenging the conventions of poetry in terms of its content, but also the ways in which this content was presented. Michael Hamburger, likewise, points out that Eliot experimented with the use of the persona "*with a freedom unprecedented either in the dramatic monologues of the late nineteenth century or in the twentieth-century adaptations of that mode*" both as a continuation of and a break from the conventional uses of the persona (Hamburger 114-115). As such, he states that the personae of *The Waste Land* for instance dissociated the poet and the personae, positioning at the centre Tiresias as the most central of all personae in the poem (Hamburger 114-115). Thus one may deduce that Eliot's multi-layered portrayal of the city could be described by using a polyphony of voices vocalized by a variety of personae in the poem.

Moreover, in "Finite Centres of Point of View," Eliot remarks that these diverse points of view that are voiced through the use of personae may also be regarded as the sum of all views of an "*articulated*" world, which he calls the "*finite*

centres of the world" (Eliot, "Finite Centres of Point of View," 174-175). That is to say, he claimed that each of these points of view contributed to our overall understanding of the world in the present, creating, to a certain extent, an archive that catalogues *all* viewpoints that are known to humankind. Consequently, Eliot's remarks illustrate his style in poetry which may be read as examples of city poetry: by making use of a number of personae in his poems about the city, he articulates a representation of the city that aspires to voice every possible point of view that encompasses all its past and contemporary representations.

Eliot's poem "Preludes" (1915) experiments with the point of view of his personae by using nineteenth-century examples from the literature of London. In the poem he employs a persona that walks in the city at different hours of the day and constructs a city that never sleeps in order to portray a shared experience of eternal human suffering in the city. In the first section of the poem, the persona describes the city on a winter evening. The streets smell of smoke and steak and the mention of streetlights suggests it is almost evening (Eliot, "Preludes," 1.1-2). The persona sees in the streets what remains of the day; newspapers and leaves fly by and the rain hits the blinds and chimney pots of the houses in the streets in vain to wash away the remains ("Preludes" 1.9). These references imply that the persona is in the streets walking at night which was a characteristic way of describing the city especially in the nineteenth century through the eyes of a voyeur as seen in James Thomson's *City of a Dreadful Night* (1874). In the second prelude it is early in the morning and the streets are already being populated by the people. Eliot's style in the poem, where he describes the streets trampled by the workers evokes John Davidson's London poems; in *Crystal Palace* (1910), for instance, Davidson describes the crowds in the Palace: "*But come: here's crowd; here's mob; a gala day! / The walks are black with people: no one hastes; / They all pursue their purpose business-like –*" (J. Davidson, "Crystal Palace," 42-44). While Davidson's lines in the above quotation foreground the crowd and their actions, Eliot's poem lacks the crowd and instead focuses on the urban setting that has been trampled by the crowd:

> The morning comes to consciousness
>
> Of faint stale smells of beer
>
> From the sawdust-trampled street
>
> With all its muddy feet that press
>
> To early coffee-stands. (Eliot, "Preludes," 2.1-5).

Moreover, his description of the city is neither as vibrant nor as distinctive in terms of its portrayal of the setting in time or place as in Davidson's poem which distinguishes clearly the setting in time or place. By the use of olfactory imagery, with the "*faint stale smell of beers*" mixing with the scent of coffee Eliot's poem tells of a night lurking into the day, of a blurred distinction between the night time and daytime ("Preludes" 2.2). The poem thus makes use of the city as a place where evenings have residues of the day, and the morning has scraps of the night, to indicate the fluidity of time, and the everlasting motion of the city ("Preludes" 2.1-3). Moreover, it is implied in the poem that the city is like a machine that never stops, which is indifferent to the individual who suffers from insomnia or nightmares, as, in the third prelude, the voyeuristic perspective this time gazes at another unknown character who has insomnia ("Preludes" 3.10-12). By depicting the walking persona following another character suffering from insomnia, Eliot seems to be using, like a frame narrator, a frame persona who describes the sufferings of another character ("Preludes" 3.1-6; 4.1-9). The latter feels alienated from his surroundings because of his condition. When he falls asleep, he is haunted by nightmares ("Preludes" 4.8-10). In the final prelude, the persona watches over the sleepless man heading into the street who "*stretched tight*" tries not to reveal his suffering, and tries to blend into the crowd ("Preludes" 4.1-2). The persona's attitude to the man he stalks is that of empathy, pointing to a shared experience of suffering:

> I am moved by fancies that are curled
>
> Around these images, and cling:
>
> The notion of some infinitely gentle
>
> Infinitely suffering thing. ("Preludes" 4.10-13).

Although the poem does not provide a distinct depiction of London, the urban setting of the poem is reminiscent of a metropolis in which the city never sleeps. Moreover, the chase between the two personae in the final two sections are reminiscent of Poe's "Man of the Crowd" where the narrator follows the mysterious man day and night in the streets of London (Poe 259). The persona's characterization in the poem suggests that the sense of alienation is a feeling shared by other individuals. Yet, these personae can never act upon these feelings, and remain disconnected from each other which further underscores the sense of alienation. Their alienation is caused not only by their loneliness, but also their inability to communicate the emotions of the personae to others around him.

The walking of the personae in Eliot's city poems is similar at times to a wandering in the mind, which renders the fragmented memories one has of experience of the city. To illustrate, in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" Eliot portrays an urban setting at night and compares walking in the street at night, trying to remember one's way to "*a madman shaking a dead geranium*," which suggests that wandering in the city at night and getting lost resemble the human mind "dissolving" into oblivion:

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

In the poem, the persona walks in the city to find a streetlamp directing its gaze at a woman in the street. Similar to the poems of the nineteenth century, in which the city at night time is described to reveal the secretive, unwanted, filthy things in the city, Eliot's poem evokes a parallel image. In these nineteenth century poems, one of the most popular images is that of the working women who wait under the streetlamp. For instance, in Thomas Hardy's poem "Beyond the Last Lamp" (1895) the speaker walks in the street at night accompanied by the London rain. The persona sees two lovers lit by the street lamp (Hardy 1-7). Usually in these poems the persona describes the loiterers at night as indicators of the immorality in the city, whereas in Eliot's "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" the street lamp is personified to point out to the persona the woman approaching the persona:

> 'Regard that woman
>
> Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door
>
> Which opens on her like a grin.
>
> You see the border of her dress
>
> Is torn and stained with sand,
>
> And you see the corner of her eye
>
> Twists like a crooked pin.' ("Rhapsody" 16-22).

The streetlamp drawing the attention of the second persona to the "*twisted*" corner of the eye of the woman in the given lines suggests that all objects can be twisted in the memory. Thus, the physical wandering of the persona can be linked with the wandering of the mind. In the poem, the personified streetlamp symbolizes rational thought and functions as a character who gazes and draws attention to what the persona should look at. In other words, although not mobile, the streetlight also becomes a 'persona' that gazes at the streets and observes the environment and shows the other persona what to look at, disabling the persona to directly observe his environment with his own eyes. Moreover, in the poem the distinction between viewer and viewed is further problematized with the introduction of other "viewers." The streetlamp functioning as the "eye" of the street for the persona is not the only character who gazes over the persona. As the persona indicates, there are "*eyes in the street*" trying to "*peer through lighted shutters*," ("Rhapsody" 41-42). Therefore, in the conventional depictions while the persona views the city and the society, in Eliot's poem, the people in return turn their gaze upon the persona. In addition, the moon also watches and "*winks*" at the persona ("Rhapsody" 52). Hence, the persona, by walking in the street becomes another aspect of the city to be gazed upon. Guided by the streetlamp, the persona walks in the city for four hours without knowing where he is going when finally at the end of the poem the lamp directs the attention of the persona to a door, for which he describes the "*key*" to be the memory of the persona ("Rhapsody" 73). Though the persona travels in a dream-like imagination or the memory of the city, the exploration on viewpoints and notions of the spectacle or the gaze, illustrates Eliot's experiment with depicting objects in general, and cities in particular, to convey the sense of alienation felt by the individual in the metropolis.

As Chilton remarks, it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century when modernist writers were influenced from the great capitals in Europe such as London and Paris which were expanding into metropolitan areas at the time, even though a consciousness about urban change can be observed in the works of writers including Baudelaire, Balzac, and Zola (Chilton 153). Malcolm Bradbury in *Modernism: A Guide to European Literature* (1978) and Alex Davis and Lee Jenkins in *Locations of Literary Modernism* (2000) point out, the development of the city into an industrial metropolis led to writers feeling estranged from their urban environment (Bradbury, 96-97; Davis and Jenkins, 3-32). The historical contextualization concerning the rising interest among modernist writers to use urban images as pointed out by Bradbury, Davis and Jenkins may be adopted to

the present discussion to suggest that Eliot's poems "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," "Preludes," and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" also manifest similar tendencies.

In terms of style, Davidson claims that modernist poets used techniques such as collage and cut-ups to defamiliarize the readers and force them into re-examining the pre-established "*paradigmatic and syntagmatic relationships*" (I. Davidson 11). That is to say, the aim of modernist experimentation was to lead readers into questioning the conventions of literature, and it may be argued that this process of defamiliarization followed in the steps of the changes in the urban environment, leading the modernists to use the city as their material. The process of Modernist experimentation, Davidson states, affords a break from the conventions of literature and opens a path for new ways of "*presenting knowledge about the world*" for the writer (I. Davidson 11).

The interest in cultural geography and the rise of cities as cultural centres led modernist writers to swarm into these modern capitals; but the spatial turn, for them, became also a means of exploring conventions of writing literature. They took the city as their example for revolutionising language and poetics. Monroe Spears, in *Dionysus and the City* (1970), underlines the significance of the city in terms of a physical medium in enabling a break from traditional forms of art and literature in modernism. It was this atmosphere that influenced modernist writers to write about the city, hence the literal and fictional impressions of the city fused into an ambiguous representation (Spears 74).

One may argue that in poetry the persona and his characterization affects the ways in which the city is portrayed. The city becomes, as Molesworth describes, "*an aesthetic object […] not only for those who live in it but for those who try to 'view' it from some safe and significant distance*" (Molesworth 18). Either from within or from a distance, the way the city is presented in poetry is determined by the persona describing it. The use of the persona thus provides a way of exploring the relationship of the poet and the city, also revealing the extent of the inspiration that the poet derived from the city. The poems of T.S. Eliot discussed here similarly manifest such a relationship.

Conclusion

Whether a journey into the mind, or a journey into the city, the personae of Eliot create a medium in which the reader can view the fragmented city from a critical perspective. The emphasis on fragmented city depictions in Eliot's poetry suggests that the city may only be portrayed by the psychogeographical relationship between the persona and his environment. Thus, in a limbo of remembering and forgetting induced by the conflicts between reclaiming the past through earlier literary representations of the city and that of the first-hand experience of the city, the personae of Eliot try to re-imagine the city, which, ironically, further alienates his personae instead of providing them with a sense of belonging. By incorporating multiple personae and their viewpoints, Eliot portrays a three-dimensional view of the city. All these explorations with the representation of the city, together with the use of personae to depict the city in his early poems, paved the way for *The Waste Land* (1922) in which these ideas are blended.

In his poems Eliot alludes to earlier representations of cities which appear as fragments in the poem and renders them to construct an overall image of a city that would be the sum of all past and contemporary cities. The allusions to these earlier representations, enabled him to convey an image that contained not only the essence of the earlier representations that make up the inherent meanings of the city but also innovated them by adding on his experience of the city. Thus Eliot's poems are imbued with earlier representations of cities like London and their cultural artefacts which distinguish his city image from other city representations. By commenting on, comparing, and contrasting these representations with his own descriptions, his poems become texts that both trace the change in the representations of the city, enabling them to be captured in a single poem simultaneously, and make a new image out of all these "unreal" cities of modernity in the Western world.

The use of fragmented representations of the city in Eliot's poetry makes up ambiguous fictional cities that can be considered to share some of the common concerns of modernism; the decay of culture and the urge to renew it by making use of the essence of the past. As argued earlier in the present chapter, the fragmented city becomes a device in which the modernist elements can be conveyed to the reader.

As a cosmopolitan metropolis, London became Eliot's model which exemplified his claims on a transnational literary revolution as the city, like the language, was a mixture of foreign and native influences. The search to find good examples of poetic expression from the literary history led him to use representations of London and other urban representations by writers of the preceding centuries.

In search for a true representation and clear expression of experience his search led him to deconstruct the representations of the city, especially that of London which at the end of the nineteenth century had become the symbol of the British Empire and the centre of the English literary canon. By deconstructing the representations of the city, he problematized its fixed position and incorporated a foreign perspective so as to include the cosmopolitan, transnational voices living in the city that reflected the true experience of modernity.

By reusing the age-old convention of portraying London as a metaphor for the English nation as illustrated above, Eliot constructed a blueprint model of a fictional city made up of such fragments of London and other cities. However, this convention was used only to demolish and rebuild it by incorporating other images of various cities as a means to construct a cosmopolitan, transnational modern city and positioning within it a persona alienated from his environment to express the modern condition felt by the individual in the modern cities of the twentieth century. By doing so, Eliot was able to lay the foundations for a new poetics for the new century. Therefore it can be argued that Eliot aimed to construct a new poetics of poetry modelled after the ever-changing city by incorporating the memory, literary works, and experience of the city.

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