



# T. S. Eliot's Menippean *Waste Land*: Enthymemic Irony and the Nekyia

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## I

THE identification of *The Waste Land* as a Menippean satire is not new: Max Nännny in 1985 was the first to suggest it as the genre to which Eliot's 1922 poem belonged, although to my knowledge there has not been a reading of the work in the context of that identification since.<sup>1</sup> In this essay, I will examine some of the gestures towards Menippean satire in *The Waste Land*, most notably (but not solely) with regard to Petronius' *Satyricon*, and will then proceed to give a close reading based on a number of features characteristic of Menippean satire: the rhetorical figure of the enthymeme, the topos of the nekylia, or dialogue with the dead, and the fragmentariness of the work as read against a late Romantic background. By providing a slightly different context for reading *The Waste Land*, I hope to open new lines of inquiry into understanding the distinctive contribution made by Eliot's seminal modernist poem.

The epigraph and the dedication to *The Waste Land* are an example of a characteristic of Menippean satire: a linguistic *mélange*, in this case constituted by the Latin of Petronius' *Satyricon*, which provides the frame for the Sibyl's utterance in Greek, the original language of the menippea, followed by the Italian of Dante and the English of Eliot. The *Satyricon* is a fragmentary Menippean satire, and Eliot's use of the fragment taken from the *Cena Trimalchionis* can be read as a gesture towards that genre.<sup>2</sup> The parvenu Trimalchio, and much of the coarseness, or 'slum naturalism' of the *Satyricon*, as Bakhtin would have it, reminds one of the sketches

of 'He Do the Police in Different Voices' in the unedited version of the manuscript.<sup>3</sup> The figure of the Sibyl, like that of Tiresias, is an element of the fantastic, which is also characteristic of Menippean satire. More importantly, the Sibyl and, specifically, the Sibylline books or leaves suggest a fundamental fragmentariness which is an essential part of *The Waste Land*, which I will discuss in detail later. The epigraph is not the only influence of the *Satyricon* on *The Waste Land*. In a letter to John Hayward, Eliot explicitly mentions several 'points of similarity'.<sup>4</sup>

## II

The enthymeme is a rhetorical figure which can be variously characterised as: maintaining the truth of a proposition from the assumed truth of its contrary; an abridged syllogism in which one of the terms is omitted as being understood; and Aristotle's sense of the term as a rhetorical, or probable syllogism. *Enthymeme* literally translates as 'something located in the heart or mind'.<sup>5</sup> Walter J. Ong sees enthymema as 'signifying something within one's soul, mind, heart, feelings, hence something not uttered or "outered"'.<sup>6</sup> Another translation of the term – from Mikhail Bakhtin, via the Russian *podrazumevaemoe* – renders the same term as 'undermind-ed', suggesting his notion of the material lower bodily stratum.<sup>7</sup> In fact, this suggests an element of the enthymeme which is conducive to, or characteristic of, comic structures. Robert Bracht Branham has written that all true humour has an enthymematic [*sic*] character: it requires the audience to perform an act of mental collaboration that can be variously described as bridging a logical gap; moving between alien codes, frames of reference, or universes of discourse.<sup>8</sup> Formal heterogeneity and discursive polyvalency, which are primary features of the menippea, often manifest themselves rhetorically as enthymema, among other common rhetorical features of the genre, such as catachresis, digression and aposiopesis. In general, the enthymeme relies on silence, just as menippean satire 'relies for its meaning on silence, for the truth that appears between the lines, that emerges from the spectacle of inconclusive debate'.<sup>9</sup> I therefore want to consider the enthymemic character of *The Waste Land* as a series of discontinuities, movements and 'plays' of historical meaning.



I want to demonstrate how *The Waste Land* exhibits an enthymemic irony which is at once radical and deeply conservative. This ambivalence is similar to some aspects of Romantic irony, particularly with regard to the Romantic fragment, which I explore in detail below. However, before I do this I need briefly to consider the relation between Romanticism and *The Waste Land* before returning to a detailed consideration of the enthymeme and the Romantic fragment.

### III

Northrop Frye notes in his *Anatomy of Criticism* that Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Virginia Woolf's last and most profound book, *Between the Acts*, have in common (a fact more striking because they have nothing else in common) a sense of contrast between the course of a whole civilisation and the tiny flashes of significant moments which reveal its meaning. And just as the Romantic poet found it possible to write as an individual in continuous forms, so the ironic mode is rationalised by critical theories of the essential discontinuity of poetry.<sup>10</sup> While Frye goes on to argue that Eliot's and Pound's encyclopaedic yet discontinuous poetic technique is the direct opposite of Wordsworth, it is interesting that he identifies an aspect of Modernism, the brief illumination contrasted against a vast background, that is also an aspect of late Romanticism. Harold Bloom makes a similar observation in comparing Eliot with Pater:

The confusion of purpose [critic, creator and moralist], in both men, was well served by a late version of Romantic art, the usual mode for each being a flash of radiance against an incongruous or bewildering background. [emphasis mine]<sup>11</sup>

The dangers inherent in identifying Eliot as a closet Romantic have been well documented. For one thing, his anti-Romantic line throughout his career as a critic is well enough known to make this problematic. However, it is possible to see how a work like *The Waste Land* has significant Romantic aspects in terms of Eliot's own criticism. Eugenia Gunner expresses it thus:

The Waste Land, itself formed of fragments, both structurally and symbolically, functions in one way as a reflection of some English and German Romantic poetry's lack of traditional form, which for Eliot may



*be taken as symbolic: it represents loss, a loss of belief, of direction, and of historical sense.*<sup>12</sup>

*The Waste Land* is a work inescapably permeated with a Romantic sensibility, yet at the same time can be conceived in terms of Eliot's own anti-Romantic critical stance as part of an 'ideal order'. These divergent aspects of the work are not reconcilable, works like *Tristram Shandy* reveal a Romantic irony which is the product of self-consciousness aware of both the proximity of chaos and the strength of artifice.<sup>13</sup> The lacunae and disjunctions in each are aspects of this Romantic irony, with the qualification that the artifice is all the stronger through apparent chaos.

This particular kind of irony can be termed enthymemic irony and is a consistent feature of the otherwise heterogeneous and disjunctive form of Menippean satire. Lacunae, aposiopesis, dashes and the boundaries between inserted genres are all instances where enthymemic irony can occur in the menippea. One particular aspect of enthymemic irony that is relevant to *The Waste Land*, and dear to theorists of Romanticism, is the fragment.

#### IV

The most convincing argument for the fragmentary nature of *The Waste Land* is that it is evocative, if not synechdochic of a larger whole. Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy describe this aspect of the fragment thus:

*Ruin and fragmentation conjoin the functions of the monument and of evocation; what is thereby both remembered as lost and presented in a sort of sketch (or blueprint) is always the living unity of a great individuality, author, or work.*<sup>14</sup>

Another way of looking at the Romantic fragment is as it was formulated by Friedrich Schlegel:

*A fragment, like a small work of art, has to be entirely isolated from the surrounding world and be complete in itself like a hedgehog.*<sup>15</sup>

The logic of the hedgehog has a few important features which I will summarise briefly. Firstly, Romantic melancholy is much like menippean mockery, which offers nothing positive in place of that which is derided. Secondly, the fragment invokes the idea of what Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy call the System-subject, or 'the philosophy of spirit' which 'designates the philosophy [or System] of the Subject itself, in its ideality,



or, in other words, in its absoluteness'.<sup>16</sup> The logic of the fragment itself, the logic of the hedgehog, assumes 'a fragmentary totality... [that] cannot be situated in any single point: it is simultaneously in the whole and each part'.<sup>17</sup> This leads to the fragment figuring as an *exergue*, in that it exists outside the work (the System), but also completes it. Specifically, according to Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, 'Romanticism, through literature in the fragment, forms the *exergue* of philosophical idealism'.<sup>18</sup>

There is already an irony implied in *The Waste Land* as Romantic fragment: that it is already implicated in philosophical idealism, something Eliot explicitly wished to maintain separately from poetry. This is crucial for a fuller understanding of *The Waste Land*: considered from the point of view of the System-subject it is the *exergue* of a philosophical idealism; its fragmentariness works enthymemically towards the completion of the fragment as system, while at the same time calling that system into play by virtue of its complete incompleteness. To think of the fragment is in many ways to think of laughter and for the German Romantics, this formulation developed under the rubric of *Witz*, meaning both laughter and sudden flash of knowledge. The fragmentary nature of *The Waste Land* imbues it with the qualities of *Witz*, as a sudden flash of knowledge (contrasted against the course of a whole civilisation, as Frye would have it) and as something which is akin to the more comic moments of revelation in the work. In this context, *Witz* is similar to the grotesque, particularly in the sense that the grotesque constitutes a sublime. One significance of the grotesque for the Romantics was its co-existence, if not coincidence, with theories of the sublime. Gillespie notes that the doubleness of our being which manifests itself from cradle to grave requires a dramatic art admitting both the 'sublime' and the 'grotesque' or negative sublime, in place of the now worn-out oversimplification of classical 'beauty'.<sup>19</sup> The 'negativity' of this other sublime is questionable, although understandable, given the often subterranean, marginal and at times, gleefully incoherent role assigned to the grotesque. The grotesque sublime only seems to stand in relation to the traditionally conceived sublime as negative because of considerations of decorum and seriousness and also, perhaps, because of its dangerous flexibility. The grotesque sublime represents an instant of



revelation and discovery, all the more awe-inspiring, if that is to be the touchstone, because it stands against a comparatively flat background. In fact, the *Witz*, or enthymemic irony of *The Waste Land* endows the work with a sublimity which is quite different from the kind of sublime which might characterise works more central to the tradition which Eliot eulogises.

I now want to engage in a close reading of *The Waste Land* which will examine the ironic implications of some of these features in relation to one of its central tropes, the nekylia or dialogue with the dead.

## V

The trope of the nekylia, or dialogue with the dead is introduced in *The Burial of the Dead* when the narrative voice identifies a crowd of dead souls flowing over London Bridge and addresses Stetson, he who was with him in the ships at Mylae. In the epic sense, the nekylia is intended to be a vehicle for the revelation of 'truth'. The seer is consulted and the future is revealed, often proleptically. In the Menippean tradition, however, the visit of the protagonist to hell parodies the epic tradition, realising the inherent corruption and ridiculousness of the world left behind. Examples of this include Book III of *Gulliver's Travels*, the Emperor Claudius' descent into hell in Seneca's *Apocolocyntosis* and Menippus' visit to hell and consultation with Tiresias in Lucian's *Menippus Goes to Hell*. The Menippean nekylia plays deliberately on the conflation of the realm of the dead with that of the living, and can be termed, after Bakhtin, a threshold dialogue in which contradictory sets of conventions are set into play in the act of interpretation.<sup>20</sup>

One feature of the nekylia is that the past is in dialogue with the present: in *The Waste Land*, for example, the experience of reading and constructing meaning has an inescapably historical basis. Thus, the apparently bizarre conjunction of different voices is a conservative strategy to ensure the preservation of culturally and historically determined meaning. Whatever the polysemic possibilities of this strategy, it is the context itself that is being preserved, the context of the literary work or the ideological artefact as the site (possibly the only site) where the dialogic evaluation and continuation of meaning can take place. Therefore, according to



its ostensible intention, the meaning of *The Waste Land* cannot easily be considered apart from its canonical place in twentieth-century art. While a consideration of the nature of *The Waste Land* as a Menippean satire problematises this intention, it is worth examining how this critical attitude rests on a fundamental assumption on the part of many critics that there is an unproblematic 'privileged perspective' in *The Waste Land* which makes an assessment of the work as a unified meditation on spiritual despair possible.

If one were to see the fragmentary nature of the poem as representative of a unitary, if disintegrating consciousness which contains its many voices, then that 'consciousness' exists, metaphorically speaking, above the voices it supposedly contains: a kind of catascopia that is a characteristic of the menippea. This 'consciousness' must therefore exceed those voices and utterances which constitutes it in a kind of transcendence, while at the same time it must be manifest in the context of each voice in a kind of immanence, a curious contradiction which is often overlooked. This 'aboveness' that can never be fully achieved, while working against interpretations of *The Waste Land* as meditation, aligns Eliot with the Menippean tradition, particularly in terms of a comparison with Lucian. Branham writes of Lucian that

*the search for a privileged perspective, or, as one critic put it, the desire to 'get out in order to look in', is a central preoccupation of Lucian's work. His affinity for fantastic journeys and authorial figures who stand on the edge of society or above it, its critics and observers, manifests this tendency.*<sup>21</sup>

These same aspects are evident in *The Waste Land* in the figures of Tiresias, the Fisher King and other figures, and read in its Menippean context, the preoccupation with a privileged perspective of outsidership or aboveness also involves a satire upon that very notion of a privileged perspective or catascopia.

## VI

The *nekylia* as a topos of dialogue with the dead is usually read in terms of its normative satirical value – that death is the great equaliser, the place where Achilles has ringworm<sup>22</sup> or where Claudius is Caligula's



scribe.<sup>23</sup> There is, however, another characteristic of such dialogues with the dead which illustrates two basic impulses in language: the will to utterance and the will to silence. I term the latter 'surdity', drawing on its Latin root *surdus*, meaning deaf and indistinct, while also nodding towards the sense of surd as an irrational quantity. The two impulses in language are not entirely at odds with each other: at its 'utter' extreme, the utterance becomes a kind of cacophony in which the will to silence, or surdity reasserts itself. Similarly, the surdic realm, while including silence, also includes extraverbal aspects of the utterance, the nonsensical and irrational, and is also, in the main, a signifying presence, but at a different level to that of the utterance. One can imagine the signifying aspect of language as a kind of struggle between utterance and surdity, a struggle between two impulses which can never be entirely separated or differentiated from each other, but in which one seeks mastery over the other. In the context of the nekylia, the empire of death brings to the fore the surdic impulse in language. Jacques Lacan locates the meaning the subject has for itself and for others in terms of an essential relation between death and surdity: when we wish to attain in the subject what was before the serial articulations of the Word, and what is primordial to the birth of symbols, we find it in death, from which his existence takes on all the meaning it has. It is in effect as a desire for death that he affirms himself for others; if he identifies himself with the other, it is by fixing him solidly in the metamorphosis of his essential image, and no being is ever evoked by him except among the shadows of death.<sup>24</sup>

These connections have a manifold importance: it is no coincidence that Lacan chooses to frame the chapter from which this passage is taken, 'Interpretation and Temporality', with the same epigraph from Petronius which begins *The Waste Land* and closes the chapter with the Sanskrit which closes the poetic part of *The Waste Land*. Both works (or only the one work, *The Waste Land*, if that is what Lacan intended) exhibit the same 'other' utterances that frame them. Both are also rich in the surdity and playfulness of the silence of death, be it voices of the dead interanimating each other in the intertextual parody of Homer, as with the *Satyricon*, or of 'traditio', as with Eliot. 'The Burial of the Dead' is, therefore, actually





a disinterment of the dead, an opening gesture of a work obsessed, as with all Modernism, with the desire to engage the dead, the past, in a very present dialogue, to provoke that which has no voice to utterance. The opening gambit of *The Waste Land* establishes a dialogical relationship between past and present. The enjambment of the first seven lines sets up a rhythmic cadence which isolates verbs of generation, cultivation, movement or nutrition from the objects to which they are linked: images of deadness, forgetfulness, dullness, cruelty and death. The effect of this, however, varies according to how it is read. As far as the melancholy, meditative tone of parts of the poem is concerned, this dialogic relation is one in which past death and present unhappiness can only co-exist in a state of melancholy resignation.

While it can be argued that this melancholy tonality characterises what is essentially a spiritual meditation upon despair and decay, such tonality gestures towards an important post-Romantic position of the relation between system and subject, a fundamental tonality attached to the system which Baudrillard finds in Adorno and Benjamin.<sup>25</sup> With the apparent disappearance of meaning comes an overreaching desire to recuperate meaning in the form of the system, or in Eliot's case, that of tradition. The anatomisation of melancholy in *The Waste Land* has, therefore, far wider implications than mere 'expression'. Eliot frequently uses various fragments to plaintive effect. His use of Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' and Day's 'Parliament of Bees' is a case in point. The first use of 'To His Coy Mistress' – 'But at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear' (ll. 185-6) – is a modulation of the original 'But at my back I alwaies hear / Times winged Charriot hurrying near' (ll.21-2)<sup>26</sup> – and seems to be in perfect harmony with Eliot's own pronouncement in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in which works comprising that 'Tradition' form an 'ideal order among themselves'.<sup>27</sup> The line following the slight modification of the original quote modulates the *carpe diem* theme to a somewhat more carnivalesque evocation of mortality that Bakhtin ascribes to the grotesque.<sup>28</sup> The line from Marvell can be considered as an utterance which is completed by Eliot's own line, or utterance which follows. Its theme is modified



enthymemically – the reader is encouraged by the context, or situation of the poem's surrounding lines to pursue a reading of melancholy beauty – even the preceding lines from Spenser's 'Prothalamion' have an elegiac tone not wholly present in the original nuptial song.<sup>29</sup>

A consequence, or affect of the modulation of the traditional utterance to an 'original' continuation of that utterance can be seen as metonymic of Eliot's notion of the 'ideal order' of tradition modified by the addition of new works to that tradition.<sup>30</sup>

There is, however, a double logic or an ironic aspect evident in such readings. Eliot's notion of works in tradition 'forming an ideal order among themselves' is analogous to Saussurean 'structure' – that meaning is differential and that 'structure' has an 'abstract objective' ideality.<sup>31</sup> There is therefore the contradictory logic of Eliot's use of Marvell in this instance constituting, on the one hand, a melancholic reification of part of an ideal structure, a poignant parole of the weighty and solemn *langue* of tradition. On the other hand, there is also the logic of structure, a *difference* – the modification of an 'original' utterance into something new has at its heart the play of signification, its difference and deferral. The 'meaning of a work' in terms of its relation to the 'ideal order' that forms tradition involves a seemingly ludic play which can only be fixed in the moment of utterance, or fixed by an enthymemic reading which passes over the trace of this ludism and 'discovers' an elegiac meditation on post-industrial society.

To put it another way, a twentieth-century work which consists of a *mélange* of fragments exhibits a kind of enthymemic unruliness characteristic of carnival; but this is not the medieval carnival of Bakhtin, nor is it 'directly carnivalised', but rather it is a manifestation of carnival understood as a pervasive principle in post-Enlightenment culture. If Eliot's well known formulation of the seventeenth-century 'dissociation of sensibility' has any currency, then so too does Bakhtin's observation that since the Enlightenment the great folk-carnivalistic trunk has split into many branches,<sup>32</sup> implying that carnival laughter no longer has an affirming quality but instead has a diffuse, ironic character typical of what Bakhtin terms the 'subjective grotesque' or Romanticism.<sup>33</sup> In such



a culture, the condition of fragmentariness can only be addressed in those very same terms of laughter and doubt, leading to the kind of radical doubt that pervades cultural, political and theological absolutes. Eliot's work and, to a certain extent Modernism in general, are predicated upon the saturation of language with this kind of subdued laughter and with the resurgence of the *menippea* as an appropriate vessel for many late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theoretical and artistic texts.

In what appears to be a second reference to Marvell, the *carpe diem* motif appears again, slightly modified by the bringing of Sweeney to Mrs Porter and her daughter and then finally completed by the last line from Verlaine's 'Parsifal'. Thus, the combination of 'But at my back I always hear' from Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress' and the lines from John Day's 'Parliament of Bees': 'When of the sudden, listening, you shall hear, / A noise of horns and hunting, which shall bring Actaeon to Diana in the spring, / Where all shall see her naked skin' become: 'But at my back from time to time I hear / The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring. / O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter / And on her daughter / They wash their feet in soda water / *Et O ces voix d'enfants, chantant dans la coupole!*' The lines from Marvell and Day combine to form a grotesque whole, an opalised fragment of the 'ideal order' that is fitted with the concupiscent images of Sweeney, Mrs. Porter and her daughter in the sensual moonlight. Again, a reading of melancholy meditation can proceed enthymemically from intimations of mortality, from one poetic voice to another, to a debased present in which the heroic Actaeon is replaced by a vulgar Sweeney, the chaste Diana now presumably the madam Mrs. Porter. The folly of trying to overcome the vicissitudes of sexual temptation is adumbrated with Verlaine's ironic ending to 'Parsifal' ('And, O those children's voices singing in the dome!') in which one temptation is replaced by another. Again, the integrity of the voice of a meditative consciousness is maintained, passing with ease among the fragments of that 'ideal order'.

But any enthymemic reading opens the possibility of completing the inferential syllogism in different ways. In this case there is a theme of displacement. Past is displaced into present, the vaginas of Mrs. Porter



and her daughter (which were washed with soapy water in the original First World War Australian soldiers' ballad)<sup>34</sup> are displaced into feet and genital desire itself is displaced into vocalic desire. More significantly even, the utterance, beginning as a hedgehog (or echidna) of 'ideal orderliness' ambles into a playful displacement that emphasises the 'slum naturalism'<sup>35</sup> of the present, and swerves further into the relative surdity of an alien tongue. There is, therefore, a series of enthymemic displacements analogous to the 'true humour' of which Branham writes. In short, this enthymemic displacement can be characterised as a movement from utterance to surdity, in which the 'utter' meaning of tradition becomes, through the very nature of that 'ideal order', a surdic resistance to a unitary meaning, such as a reading of *The Waste Land* solely as a meditation.

This aspect of *The Waste Land* is present on a structural level. The work as a whole is framed by a general movement from declarative utterance, or 'utter' meaning where the themes seem to coincide with the words that are actually there in the opening lines of the poem, to the final surdity of the Sanskrit ending:

*I sat upon the shore  
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me  
Shall I at least set my lands in order ?  
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down  
Poi s'ascose nel foco che gli affina  
Quando fiam uti chelidon – O swallow swallow  
Le Prince d'Aquitaine a` la tour abolie  
These fragments I have shored against my ruins  
Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.  
Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata.  
Shantih shantih shantih (ll.423-33)*

The tendency of utterances to resolve themselves into states of surdity does not just result in another kind of unified position, as Nänny would have it, with *The Waste Land* having a 'strongly ludic character demand[ing] an active participation in [its] carnivalesque games'.<sup>36</sup> In fact the work is both, simultaneously entrenching the 'ideal order' as a manifest utterance while also subverting that order as it swerves continually into a surdic realm of playful semiosis.<sup>37</sup>



I remarked earlier that Volosinov's translation of the Greek enthymema into Russian rendered it as meaning 'under-mindedness', suggesting a relation to the lower material bodily stratum that Bakhtin identifies in *Rabelais and His World*. This 'under-mindedness' is well described in Bakhtin's work on Rabelais in which he characterises the entirety of Rabelais's world as being charged with a 'downward movement [that] animates all his images, all the leading episodes, all the metaphors and comparisons'.<sup>38</sup> Yet the 'under-mindedness' of *The Waste Land* is not something that sits neatly beneath the utterance / surdity relation of Eliot's engagement with his 'ideal order', but complements it and is implicated in it to the extent that desire as representation and desire as under-mindedness are manifested in a vast reticulated structure.

Most critics of *The Waste Land* have noted the prevalence of images of sexual dysfunction or impotence, often reading such images as either metaphorical of a Puritan temperament or as an index of post-industrial sterility. But the motif of impotence, cuckoldry, emasculation or sexual dysfunction is a common Menippean topos: Tristram (and Uncle Toby) in *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy*, Leopold Bloom in *Ulysses*, Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children* and Encolpius in the *Satyricon* are but a few examples. This is an impossibly diverse topos but I would suggest that there is a common Menippean relation between these images of sexual dysfunction and an attitude towards representation. In *The Waste Land* the link between sexual desire and the desire to utter is made explicit early in the work, in 'The Burial of the Dead' with the speechlessness that accompanies the apparition of the hyacinth girl. Similarly, the desire to provoke the dead to utterance is as much a desire to provoke desire itself. This finds its most violent expression in the figure of Philomel, 'by the barbarous king/ So rudely forced', raped and then her tongue cut out. The treatment of this scene, with sexual desire reduced to horrible mutilation is also a swerving from the utterances of the dead to a state of surdity:

'Jug Jug' to dirty ears.  
And other withered stumps of time  
Were told upon the walls.... (ll. 103-5)



Here, History itself is rendered impotent. The feminine, implicitly identified with 'the usual adolescent course'<sup>39</sup> of Romanticism is mutilated and left only with a surd, yet vulgar babble. Yet it is precisely the utterance of the dead which Eliot wishes to enact, setting his 'ideal order' into a grand play of seriousness only to have his ironic distance to the present slip into a surd semiosis that undermines the very theoretical foundations upon which his project is grounded. The desire to break with a past, and yet preserve that moment of rupture in a never-ending nekyia constitutes the central paradox of those late Romantic menippea that lie on the cusp of a departure from the Romantic era, as is the case with three works central to Modernism: Eliot's *The Waste Land*, Ezra Pound's *The Cantos* and James Joyce's *Ulysses*. In the case of *The Waste Land*, the nekyia is infused with a very particular sensibility: a sexual melancholia, a ludic evocation of desire and a sober displacement of that desire into relative surdity. Ultimately, perhaps, it is the ludic quality of *The Waste Land* which secures it as a central part of Eliot's legacy.

## Notes

- 1 Max Nännny, 'The Waste Land: A Menippean Satire?' *English Studies: A Journal of English Language and Literature*, 66.6 (1985), 526 – 535.
- 2 Nännny, *art. cit.*, 526.
- 3 T.S. Eliot, 'The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound' ed. Valerie Eliot (Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, 1971).
- 4 In John Soldo, 'T.S. Eliot and the Classics: The Influence of Petronius', *The Markham Review*, Winter (1982), 38.
- 5 V. N. Volosinov, *Freudianism: A Critical Sketch* trans. I. R. Titunik, eds I.R. Titunik and Neal H. Bruss. (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1976), p.100.
- 6 Walter J. Ong, *Romance and Technology: Studies in the Interaction of Expression and Culture* (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1971), p.12.
- 7 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Bakhtin School Papers – Russian Poetics in Translation Volume 10* ed. Ann Shukman (RPT Publications, Colchester, 1983), p.12. Shukman notes that 'The Russian word here translated as implies is *podrazumevaemoe*, lit. (under-mind-ed)'.  
8 Robert Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1989), p.54.
- 9 Joel C. Relihan, *Ancient Menippean Satire* (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 1993), p.36.
- 10 Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1957), p. 61.
- 11 Harold Bloom, *The Ringers in the Tower: Studies in the Romantic Tradition* (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1973), pp.187-8.
- 12 Eugenia M. Gunner, *T.S. Eliot's Romantic Dilemma: Tradition's Anti-Traditional Elements* (Garland, New York, 1985), p.41
- 13 Frederick Garber, 'Sterne: Arabesques and Fictionality' in Garber ed. *Romantic Irony* (Akadémiai

- Kiadó, Budapest, 1988), p. 38
- 14 Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Literary Absolute: The Theory of Literature in German Romanticism* trans. Philip Barnard and Cheryl Lester (State University of New York Press, Albany, 1988), p.42
- 15 Friedrich Schlegel, *Athenaeum*, fragment 206, cited in Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *op. cit.*, p.43
- 16 Lacoue-Labarthe and Nancy, *op. cit.*, p.34
- 17 *Ibid.*, p.44
- 18 *Ibid.*, p. 45
- 19 Gerald Gillespie, 'Romantic Irony and the Grotesque' in Garber ed. *Romantic Irony*, p. 336
- 20 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* trans and ed. Caryl Emerson (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1984), p. 116.
- 21 Robert Bracht Branham, *Unruly Eloquence: Lucian and the Comedy of Traditions* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1989), p. 23
- 22 See Rabelais, *Gargantua and Pantagruel* trans. J. M. Cohen (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1955), p. 266ff for a more extensive list
- 23 Seneca, 'The Apocolocyntosis', in *The Satyricon and The Apocolocyntosis* trans. J.P. Sullivan (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1977), p. 233
- 24 Jacques Lacan, *The Language of the Self* trans. Anthony Wilden (Dell, New York, 1968), p.85
- 25 Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* trans. Sheila Glaser (University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor, 1994), p.162
- 26 Andrew Marvell, *The Poems and Letters of Andrew Marvell*. Vol. 1 Poems ed. H. M. Margoliouth. [2 Vols.]. (The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1927)
- 27 T.S. Eliot, *Selected Prose*. ed. John Hayward (Penguin, Harmondsworth, 1953), p.23
- 28 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* trans. He'le'ne Iswolsky (Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1984), p. 50
- 29 W. Alexander Allison et. al. eds. *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*. 3rd edn (W. W. Norton and Company, New York, 1983). p.146n. When Spenser writes: 'When I whom sullein care, Through discontent of my long fruitlesse stay In Princes Court, and expectation vayne Of idle hopes, which still doe fly away, Like empty shaddowes, did afflict my brayne' (ll. 5-9) the elegiac tone seems a strategic choice, lamenting the loss through death of his patron Leicester and looking forward to patronage from the ascendant Essex.
- 30 See Hugh Kenner, 'The Invisible Poet' in *T.S. Eliot: 'The Waste Land': A Casebook*, eds C. B. Cox and A. P. Hinchcliffe (Macmillan, London, 1968), pp.168-99.
- 31 V.N. Volosinov, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* trans. Ladislav Matejka and I. R. Titunik (Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1993), pp.52-61.
- 32 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, *op. cit.*, p.131. Bakhtin also refers to the 'disintegration of popular laughter' in *Rabelais and His World*, *op. cit.*, p.120.
- 33 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, *op. cit.*, pp.36-37.
- 34 James Torrens, 'The Hidden Years of *The Waste Land* Manuscript', in *Critical Essays on T.S. Eliot's 'The Waste Land'* Lois A. Cuddy and David H. Hirsch eds (G.K. Hall and Co., Boston, 1991), p. 61 records that Eliot's manuscript of early poems was in a grey cloth hard-cover book inscribed 'Gallipolli' with a date of 1915. Grover Smith records in his study on the sources of Eliot's poetry that according to Robert Payne, the song was originally an eighteenth-century streetsong. According to Smith, 'Several versions of "Mrs Porter" were current during World War I. C.M. Bowra states that the song was sung by Australian soldiers at Gallipolli in 1915, but he follows a red herring in alleging that Mrs. Porter herself "seems to have kept a bawdy-house in Cairo". Although her reputation is still green in Australia, she is a mystery even there.... Actually the words are well known "down under": "O the moon shines bright on Mrs. Porter And on her daughter, For she's a snorter. O they wash their feet in soapy water, And so they oughta, To



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- keep them clean." Payne's text omits the feet: "The moon shines bright on Mrs. Porter And on her daughter: She washes out her – in soda water, And so she oughta, To keep it clean.'" Grover Smith. *T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meaning* 2nd ed (Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1974), p.86; p.327n. The first version cited by Smith was provided by Brian Elliott of Adelaide who, coincidentally enough, was one of the key figures in the Ern Malley Affair.
- 35 Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, *op. cit.*, p.115. Bakhtin identifies the topos of 'slum naturalism' as an important aspect of both menippean satire and the development of the novel.
- 36 Nanny, *op. cit.*, p. 535
- 37 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (Athlone Press, London, 1988) *passim*.
- 38 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, *op. cit.*, p. 370
- 39 Eliot, *Selected Prose*, *op. cit.*, p. 49

