From the Wasteland to the Wretched Land: A Comparative Study of J. S. Anand's and T.S. Eliot's Poetry

Roghayeh Farsi, Ph.D.
Neyshabur University

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Abstract

The interrelationship between modernism and postmodernism has always been a moot point, hence evasive. Many postmodern thinkers and theorists have viewed this issue from a wide variety of angles. While, for Jean-Françoise Lyotard, "postmodernism is modernism at its nascent", Linda Hutcheon and Ihab Hassan vote for an ironic and ambivalent relationship between these two. Some theorists dispense with the contextual aspects and accentuate solely the aesthetic traits; whereas some poststructuralists like Michel Foucault historicize and thereby politicize this controversial interrelationship at the cost of marginalizing the stylistic dimension.

The present paper compares T. S. Eliot's modernist colonial wasteland and J. S. Anand's postcolonial postmodernist wretched land portrait. This comparison aims at showing how the

spatiotemporal travelling of the wasteland vision backgrounds the inflicted plight of the wretched land.

The present study adopts a Lyotard-Hutcheonian methodology and detects a dialogic relationship between the two poets. It is argued that in "writing back to the empire", Anand portrays and laments the rise of the wretched land. The postmodern state of disbelief is the stretch of modernist doubt. This paper tracks a line of continuity in this comparative study. This paper takes Eliot's *Wasteland* as the colonial heritage bequeathed under the rubric of civilization to the postcolonial generation, depriving it of its spiritual being. Anand's poetry is the voice which laments this loss. The paper also pinpoints an ambivalent relationship between Anand and Eliot and thereby votes for the forked ironic tone which runs through the postcolonial portrait of the wretched land.

Key words: postcolonial, postmodernism, modernism, postmodernism

Interrelationship between Modernism and Postmodernism

The interrelationship of modernism and postmodernism has always been a controversial issue. The very roots of modernism could be traced back to the Renaissance and the prophetic hail of Francis Bacon to science and the experimental approach. But modernism as a purely cultural movement emerged gradually after the Industrial Revolution at the turn of the eighteenth century and flourished in the second half of the nineteenth century in the form of civilization and urbanization, hence modernity.

Modernism

Modernism as a nausea of the traditional and historical beliefs and notions was highly backed up by an intellectual background starred by thinkers as diverse as Sigmund Freud in psychology, Charles Darwin in biology, Carl Marx in economics, Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics, Albert Einstein in physics, and Friedrich Nietzsche in philosophy.

The resultant interpretation of the age from the theories of these thinkers led to a strong sense of fragmentation, disintegration, doubt, crisis of identity, helplessness and rootlessness. Thus the artistic and cultural landscape of the time became a canvass of different movements

such as Aestheticism, Dadaism, Futurism, Expressionism, Impressionism, and Surrealism. Social and political events during the forties, fifties and sixties gradually make the ahistorical and apolitical modernism irrelevant. It finds itself increasingly confronted by the new generation's cultural outlooks that are, unlike modernism, directly related to larger political and economic upheavals.

Modernism remains quite well calculatedly unrelated to social transition, political praxis and economic alternation, because the artist's rebelliousness is one of the mere formalities with no ideological or political overtones. Subsequently, modernism cannot be viewed as anything more than a mere cultural phenomenon that cannot run parallel to the political, economic and historical sea changes especially after the Second World War (1939-1945).

Postmodernism

The resultant change in the Western epistemology of the second half of the century is called "postmodernism", which has brought about drastic changes to the definition of being, identity and language. The dominant attitude in postmodernism is disbelief, which shares the same roots with the cultural catastrophe that has given rise to modernism. Besides, the mood of disbelief is the continuation of the prevalent uncertainty during the first half of the century, just as the accelerating growth of light technology is the effect of the heavy industry of the previous age. Hence, the relationship between these two isms is a paradoxical one.

Postmodernism involves both a continuation of the counter-traditional experiments of modernism, and simultaneously, it involves diverse attempts to break away from modernist forms which had inevitably become, in their turn, conventional. In Matei Calinescu's view, the notion of postmodernism suggests "the obsolescence or even the demise of modernism", and concurrently, "it is to a large extent dependent on both the time-consciousness . . . and the deep sense of crisis that brought modernism into being" (Garvin 168). Therefore, as Linda Hutcheon has pointed out, postmodernism's relation to modernism is typically contradictory: "It marks neither a simple and radical break from it nor a straightforward continuity with it: it is both and neither . . . [it is] a re-evaluation of and a dialogue with the past in the light of the present" (18-19).

When Jean-Francoise Lyotard defines postmodernism as "incredulity towards metanarratives", he decentres like Derrida the bases of all human knowledge. Based on the Lyotardian definition of postmodernism, Diane Elam observes that postmodernism does not simply happen after modernism; rather it is "a series of problems present to modernism in its continuing infancy [. . .] postmodernity is a rewriting of modernity, which has already been active *within* modernity for a long time" (Malpas 9). Postmodernism is already part of that to which it is "post". This means that postmodernism need not necessarily come after modernism; in Lyotard's words, "Postmodernism thus understood is not modernism at its end but in the nascent state, and this state is constant" (44). Accordingly, Lyotard views postmodernism not as a historical period but rather as an aesthetic practice. In this sense, modernism and postmodernism become difficult to separate along straightforward historical lines. It can also be claimed that the many different modernist movements are artistic micronarratives which emerge out of the artists' incredulity towards the artistic metanarratives of the nineteenth century.

The Focus of This Paper – Theories of Ihab Hassan

Drawing on Hutcheon's and Lyotard's definitions of postmodernism, this paper vouches for a dialogic relationship between modernism and postmodernism. This dialogism brings to the fore the theories of Ihab Hassan who places postmodernism on the literary-critical agenda during the sixties and seventies. Like Lyotard and Hutcheon, he regards postmodernism as a significant revision of modernism. Hence, modernism does not cease suddenly so that postmodernism may begin; they instead coexist (Chabot 2). In their coexistence, modernism and postmodernism both provide competing visions of the contemporary predicament; thus the link between them is ambivalent. It is both "continuity and discontinuity"; it manifests "sameness and difference, unity and rupture, foliation and revolt" (qtd. in Maurya 17). In Hassan's view, it is likely that a particular work be informed by the one as by the other. Therefore, like the previous thinkers, he assigns the same paradoxical logic of both/neither to his ambivalent definition of postmodernism.

The Dialogical Relationship

The dialogical relationship between modernism and postmodernism further backs up their co-existence. Detected through a comparative study of T. S. Eliot's Euro-American context and J. S. Anand's Indian setting, this dialogism is given a postcolonial basis. Here, it is argued that Anand's poetry holds a re-evaluation of and a dialogue with Eliot's modernism. In this sense, Anand's poetry in a "writing-back-to-the-empire" strategy sets up a dialogue with T. S. Eliot.

This dialogism aims at showing the colonial wasteland has degenerated into what Anand, in an email, has called "the wretched land". T. S. Eliot's views in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" further confirm the dialogical lens adopted in this comparative study.

Eliot's View on the Reliance of the Artist

In his essay, Eliot refers to the historical sense and contends:

> It [Tradition] involves, in the first place, the historical sense . . . and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. . . .
>
> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison among the dead (114-15).

It could be argued that Eliot's notion of the reliance of the artist on the previous ones implicitly anticipates intertextuality and the Derridean view that each text is woven out of the contemporary and preceding texts. Intertextuality, an eminent feature of postmodern literature, is the conviction that "a text is a tissue of all other texts . . . every text, consciously or not, is penetrated with and composed of traces of other texts" (Thiher 90). This hypothesis implies that texts have no textual level, because they have neither beginning nor ending. Arguing that all literature becomes intertextual, that is, "[a]ll literary texts are rewoven from other texts which

precede or surround them", Vibha Maurya quotes Eagleton: "There is no such thing as literary 'originality,' no such thing as the 'first' literary work: all literature is intercontextual" (16).

Thematic Co-existence

Besides, the issue of simultaneity, accentuated by Eliot as the basis of tradition, implies the thematic co-existence which founds the dialogical relationship in this comparative study. However, it should be noted that Eliot's historical sense and the involved perception, when taken into the Indian context, cognates with itself a tradition marked by colonial encounter and the subsequent implications. Hence, the dialogical relationship between Eliot and Anand is a historicized and politicized one.

Crisis of Identity

Living and writing in the kaleidoscopic context of modernism, T. S. Eliot best portrays the crisis of identity that modern man has been exposed to. "The publication of *The Waste Land* in late 1922," in Lawrence Rainey's words, "announced modernism's unprecedented triumph" (91). Keeping an eye on the traditional and classical figures, Eliot's portrait laments man's suspicion to himself, his identity and the sufferings he has been through. Eliot himself states, "I had expressed the 'disillusionment of a generation'" (112); whereas Gilbert Seldes argues,

> the theme is not a distaste for life, nor is it a disillusion, a romantic pessimism of any kind. It is specifically concerned with the idea of the Waste Land – that land *was* beautiful and now is not, that life had been rich, beautiful, assured, organized, lofty, and now is dragging itself out into a poverty-stricken, and disrupted and ugly tedium, without health, and with no consolation in morality (138-9).

Implicity

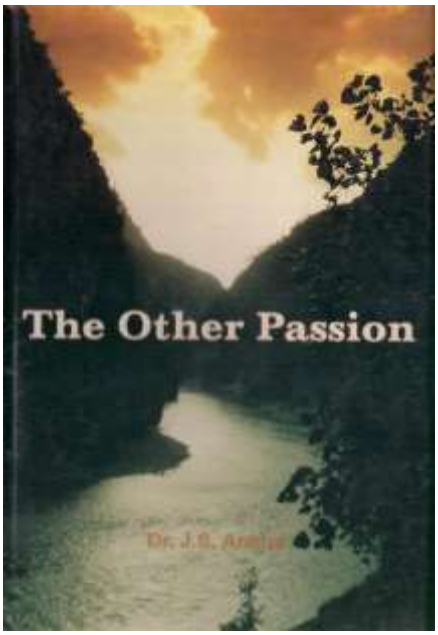
Although Seldes goes on to contend that Eliot's poem gives not a "romantic idealization of the past," he admits "there was an intensity of life, a germination and fruitfulness, which are now gone, and that even the creative imagination, even hallucination and vision have atrophied, so that water shall never again be struck from a rock in the desert" (139). The X-ray self-scrutiny that Eliot's poetry provides implicitly, especially through its heavy laden allusions, contrasts the

traditional man with the modernist one, commending the former and belittling the latter, hence a colonial wasteland.

A contemporary of Eliot, Herman Hesse writes on "The Waste Land", "It is possible the whole 'Downfall of Europe' will play itself out 'only' inwardly, 'only' in the souls of a generation, 'only' in changing the meaning of worn-out symbols, in the dis-valuation of spiritual values" (61). This comparative study extends the downfall of the colonial to the downfall of the colonized, having inherited "the dis-valuation of spiritual values" from the colonial.

Writing back to the Empire – Anand's Vision

Travelling cross-continentally, Eliot's wasteland vision has widely influenced many contemporary and succeeding poets from other lands who have chosen to write in English. India with a long history of colonialism has proved highly productive in writing back to the empire. Among them, one can refer to J. S. Anand whose poetry, in P. S. Ramana's view, is a mixture of his oriental vision carried through English imagery (11). While other poets concern themselves with other aspects of modernism, Anand lays his hands on the legacy of colonial modernism, the wasteland. Ramana argues, "the dominant concern of the poet is the spiritual barrenness of his worldly fellow beings" (12). Anand's poetic contribution to the tumults of the postmodern age consists of five books of poetry: Spare me, O Lucifer! (2000), Beyond Life! Beyond Death!! (2001), The Other Passion (2002), The Split Vision (2004), and Beyond Words (2013). Here there is an attempt to compare Eliot's "The Waste Land" (1922), "The Hollow Men" (1925), and "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" (1915) with select poems from Beyond Life! Beyond Death!!.



Man's Identity in Time and Space

Problematized by the modern means of communication and transportation, man's identity, defined in terms of time and space, has been the core of many modernist literary figures. Eliot has not remained immune to such changes. David Trotter most aptly quotes Hugh Kenner: "If Eliot is much else, he is undeniably his time's chief poet of the alarm clock, the furnished flat, the ubiquitous telephone, commuting crowds, the electric underground railway" (239). Trotter further observes, "Eliot *chose* . . . the 'disembodiment of perception by technique'. He did so, I shall argue, because he intended his poems to reveal what it felt like to (want to) behave automatically" (241). In the same light, Edmund Wilson refers to the speaker's spiritual fragmentation in "The Waste Land" and states,

> sometimes we feel that he is speaking not only for a personal distress, but for the starvation of a whole civilization–for people grinding at barren office-routine in the cells of gigantic cities, drying up their souls in eternal toil whose products never bring them profit, where their pleasures are so vulgar and so feeble that they are almost sadder than their pains (144-45).

Modernized Man – The Hollow Men

Eliot provides a precise portrait of modernized man in his other poem, "The Hollow Men". In this poem, modernity-stricken men are spiritless beings who suffer a life of absurdity: "We are the hollow men / We are the stuffed men / Leaning together / Headpiece filled with straw." While for Eliot, modern man is nothing other than stuffed man, with not even lost souls, Anand views man only as a shadow which "sees, hears, feels nothing" (p. 15). For Eliot, modern man can still be referred to in the subject pronoun of "We", still in possession of voices, albeit "dried".

In Anand's vision, man is no longer a "he", but an "It" which "Moves as if in a dream, listens not what winds whisper" (p. 15). For Anand, man is an "it" with "fake souls" (p. 15). This view of man with a fake soul "sold" to him by a salesperson singles out Anand's portrait as a postmodern one since it is the postmodern perspective which deprives man of his claims over his being, his soul. The idea of "selling soul" implies the fracture of identity, the interpellation of subjectivity by different discourses of society, and the constructedness of identity, hence fake.

Foucault's View – Multiplicity of Channels

In this regard, one can refer to Michel Foucault and his theory of discourse. Decentring the monolithic structure of power, Foucault argues that power works through a multiplicity of sites and channels; thus micropolitics takes the place of macropolitics. The key instrument of power is knowledge which seeks to reform the individuals by defining and categorizing them as social subjects, hence surveillance and discipline. Knowledge itself is formulated by a certain discourse, a means through which power works by creating specific version(s) of meaning.

Weedon clarifies that in Foucault's work, discourse is a linguistic way of "constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and the relations between them" (108). A discourse is a particular use of language within a whole field that has roots in human practices, institutions and actions. Therefore, for Foucault such institutions as the family, the school, the church, law courts, etc., far from being innocent and neutral, function as sites of power. These centres, through the practices their discourses offer, interpellate (address) individuals and proffer them specific attitudes

towards "the physical body, psychic energy, the emotions and desires, as well as conscious subjectivity". In this way, power works through "consensual regulation of individuals" (112).

Foucault argues that discourses are not fixed and static; rather they are dynamic and in constant competition with one another for gaining the allegiance of individual agents. Weedon explains that the competing discourses create "a discursive field" in which various and contradictory definitions and social practices and institutions are at work (35). This discursive dynamism decentres the Cartesian liberal humanist view of the self as autonomous, stable and unified entity; instead, it regards identity as a constant process of becoming, for it is constructed by multiple and contradictory discourses in the society. This notion implies that not only the institutional centres are sites of constant discursive contests, but also the individuals whom they interpolate become both the sites and subjects of discursive struggle for constructing their identities (109).

Becoming and Unbecoming – Anand's Vision

Viewed in the light of Foucault's definition of discourse, Anand's notion of postmodern man in possession of "fake soul" is politicized. Anand implicitly puts under question the many subject positions and identities inflicted on the postmodern man. Accordingly, even when the Indian poet picks up the pronoun "we", unlike Eliot, he is well aware of the multiplied and imposed identities that this pronoun yokes into the text: "Once made, things set off / on the deadly course / of UNBECOMING" (p. 27). The incessant process of "unbecoming" , which most deftly gives the Foucaultian process of "becoming" a negative basis, is well dramatized in "The Unfocused" which applies most aptly to the postmodern notion of fractured body and mind: "The focus in gone. / The features've lost curves. / Eyes mingle with the nose / which tells not / where the mouth begins /. . . / Mind is a running despair. / Body, a lost channel. . ." (p. 31). Anand is so much perturbed by the colonizing hold of religio-social discourses that in "Mistaken Identities" he does away with all social institutions: "Does Death know you by your face? / Is there no measure for thee / except thy religion? / Does name matter in the final reckoning? /. . ./The face is meant to hide / Ideas as cloth does our body / So does religion our primitivity / and name, our reality" (pp. 39-40).

Owners of Debauched Earth

"Questionings" is Anand's other poem in which the poet confesses: "We ARE the DEVASTATED LOT. / We OWN this DEBAUCHED EARTH! / We have inherited / the DESTINY of a RESTLESS RACE. / Racing from nowhere / perhaps to nowhere" (p. 17). Unlike Eliot, to whom destiny is linked with the three mythical spinster sisters, Fates, Anand views it as the undesired but inevitable legacy of "unbecoming" bequeathed, in the colonial encounter, to the postmodern postcolonial man throughout ages of inequality, violence, wrath, and doubt: "They come to me with strange questionings / Sad, despaired, undone / Why sits thou with a face so UNYOURS?" (p. 63). Here, Anand's play on the word "yours" and turning it into "unyours" can be regarded as a postcolonial strategy of destabilizing the colonial claim to power in language.

Revealing Resentment against Colonial Linguistic Legacy

Defamiliarizing the English language and capitalization of specific words within his poetry shows the postcolonial poet's resentments against the colonial linguistic legacy. The implications of "unyours" reiterate Anand's awareness of the fake identities inflicted on the postmodern man by his society. In this poem, Anand's earth is "debauched" and his race is "a restless" one wandering in the nowhere land. Similarly, Eliot cries out in "The Hollow Men": "This is the dead land / This is cactus land /. . ./ In this hollow valley". While Eliot generalizes, and thereby takes up a colonial gesture, his wasteland vision to all men, Anand's awareness of his "race" brings into the text a long history of colonization. In "Mistaken Identities" the speaker asks: "What makes you different? / Thy face? / Thy clothes? / Thy religion? / Thy name? / No. mistaken thou are / after mistaken identity" (p. 40).

Buddha's Good Luck – Historicization and Politicization

Anand's another poem, "Buddha's Good Luck", contrasts traditional wife with the postmodern ones: "Thank God! She didn't work in any office / whose cares clash'd with those of Rahul's, / and of Buddha's too. / Thank God! She was sleeping. / Really SLEEPING. / Not sleep-waking, like modern wives, / to catch husbands / red-handed in their thoughts / . . ./ Hadn't YASHODHARA BEEN sleeping / in perfect OBLIVION?" (pp. 55-6). The coveted state of

oblivion which is the context of the perfect spirit, Siddharatha, is assaulted and ruptured by the many discourses and interpellations of the modern–postmodern era.

Therefore, while for Eliot modern man breathes and suffers in apolitical context, Anand both historicizes and politicizes his race's plight. A postcolonial voice, Anand dialogizes with Eliot, through his simple images, about the morbid symptoms of civilization and urbanization and the subsequent loss of blissful oblivion. In "Monsters and the Mummy", Anand compares physical to spiritual monsters and laments his becoming a mummy. When he writes, "They kill others / not in body / but in spirit; / EVIL internalised; / fangs invisible / blood unseen / causing deaths / psychological / emotional and spiritual" (p. 41), he refers to the devastating and ravaging effects of the discourses to which man is exposed in his urbanized life. Thus the poet laments how modernity has penetrated man's life having deprived him of his spiritual life and mummified him:

> People who move / well in body / stout in build / from home in the morn / to home at night / SMILE not!/ LAUGH not! / PLAY not! / ENJOY not! / Switch on the TV / And RUSH to sleep /. . ./ See, See- / Poisoned dreams / lacerated hopes / bruised desires / all buried in this BODY; / this moving grave; / Come Egypt, Come Grecia, / Where stand thy mummies / in comparison to ME? (p. 42).

The Theme of Paralysis

Common to both poets is the theme of paralysis. Eliot views man as "Shape without form, shade / without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture / without motion" ("The Hollow Men"). The same notion of paralysis runs through Anand's poetry where man is described as a shadow which "Sleeps while driving. / Drugged to the bone" (p. 15). Eliot views modernist man as "empty men" whose head is filled with straw; whereas for Anand, men are "an entire race / of perfectly polluted, rotten / and poison'd SUB-BEINGS!" (p. 17). Anand's description shows how man is degraded throughout the course of history; men are no longer human beings, but sub-beings. While for Eliot, man is no longer in possession of his soul, his beliefs, his identity, Anand's description deprives man of his very being, degraded to a sub-being. Eliot suffers from the conditions that have turned man into a hollow man; by contrast, Anand complains of the

heritage of modernity which has so profoundly inflicted man that, for him, it seems to have roots in history, hence the myth of Adam and Eve, and the Biblical story of the Fall:

> I'm not ADAM / YOU are not EVE/ This earth too is not EDEN/ Yes, I'm less than Adam / You're less than Eve / and this earth, less than EDEN./ The forbidden juice is on the rampage / to satanize us / and our sweet EARTH (p. 17).

The paralyzed speaker in "The Waste Land" cries out: ". . . I could not / Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither / Living nor dead, and I knew nothing, / Looking into the heart of light, the silence. / Oed und leer das Meer" (p. 923). Similarly, Anand's "The Eternal Fashion Show" portrays men as "The figures on move around, / look, see, whisper / talk, gesture and gyrate / like models on the ramp / as if in a trance / propelled by some invisible hand / impelled by some unknown wish, / A PROCESSION of bodies embodying souls / is on the move /. . ./ Bodies move, Men move, / Coverings glow; / Souls languish deep below" (pp. 18-19).

Portraits of Men – Metaphorizing the Paralysis

The theme of paralysis is best metaphorized in stone imagery that Eliot and Anand both ascribe to their portraits of man. Where "The Hollow Men" speaks of the dead land, it reads "This is the cactus land / Here the stone images / Are raised, here they receive / The supplication of a dead man's / hand . . ./ Trembling with tenderness / Lips that would kiss / Form prayers to broke stone". Likewise, in "The Wasteland", the speaker complains: "What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow / Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man, / You cannot say, or guess, for you know only / A heap of broken images . . . / . . ./ There is shadow under this red rock" (p. 923). The stone image also runs through Anand's description of postmodern man "From this legged statue / who has stolen footful paths? / Is this body / reduced to a lie? / . . ./ Headless, it works / Footless, it moves. / To where? Who knows? And Why?/. . ./ Can this head / stop this wiry structure / from moving?" (p. 24). Speaking of man as a "moving grave" is Anand's way of referring to the paralytic condition of his era. In "The Titanic" the speaker desperately laments: "Bury this heart / and all its desires / in the stony silence of the body. / Carry this moving grave away" (p. 48). Elsewhere, he addresses love: "LOVE, you've turned this body / into a graveyard of / unrequited desires" (p. 50). This complaint implies the ineffectiveness of love on the

postmodern man, hence his spiritual paralysis. Most often, Anand's speaker refers to himself as a corpse, which is another stone vision of the postmodern man: "With bleeding sores I am living, / with a bleeding heart I'll die, / Dead for me, dead for them, / a corpse alive, amove, asigh" (p. 52). The same imagery is furthered when the speaker, seeing himself a "moving grave", comes to the conclusion that he is more dead than ancient mummies (p. 42).

Sense of Hesitation, Confusion and Timidity

The other manifestations of paralysis in Eliot's poetry are the strong sense of hesitation, confusion, and timidity that have stricken modernist man. The sense of hesitation, doubt and uncertainty is best concretized in the repetition of phrases and sentences which run through the body of his poetry. Such questions as "So how should I presume?" or "Do I dare?" which recur in "Prufrock" show the speaker's mental and spiritual paralysis as well. The same sense of indecision runs through "The Wasteland", where the speaker repetitively asks: "What shall we do tomorrow? / What shall we ever do?'" (p. 927). In "The Monsters and the Mummy" Anand cries out: "You call me a COWARD. / I HAD a mind / And the mind HAD ideas / IDEAS of romance, / ideality / unreality / The fountain-head of these VISIONS was trapped; / EVIL poisoned the sources of romance" (p. 42).

Evil

By "EVIL" Anand means the psychological, mental and spiritual monsters which abound in the modernity-ridden society, hence a gesture towards the modernist Eliot. A strong sense of cowardliness runs through Eliot's poetry where the speaker's timidity is well expressed in such lines as: "There will be time, there will be time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet /. . ./ And time yet for a hundred indecisions /. . ./ To wonder, 'Do I dare?' and 'Do I dare?' /. . ./Do I dare / Disturb the universe? / In a minute there is time / For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse" (p. 915). This sense of uncertainty and timidity reach the point that the speaker does not know what to do with himself, his body, hence the question: "Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach? " (p. 917). This question backgrounded by the comparison that the speaker draws between himself and Hamlet pinpoints the inferiority of modern man: "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be; / Am an attendant lord . . ./. .

./At times, indeed, almost ridiculous-- / Almost, at times, the Fool" (p. 917). Similarly, comparing himself to Buddha, Anand's speaker confesses his inferiority to Buddha or even his follower: "But I am not Buddha / nor am I a man, his follower" (p. 69). This reminds one of the lover in Eliot's "Prufrock". Yielding to a governing sense of absurdity and helplessness, he confesses: "I am no prophet – and here's no great matter" (p. 916). Finding himself unable to be away from his beloved, the lover in Anand's poem says: "The middle path is not for me / The wisdom of Buddha / is not for me / It is for those who decide / to stand apart and love" (p. 70).

Anand's "The Dead and the Undone" closes by such lines: "Dear, I came here not to live a life / I was only a guest at sorrow's hermitage / Served with desserts sweet / I dared not resent. / SORROW was inscribed on the gate / Yet I chose to enter this hut / And here I AM/ pining, pining, pining with despair. / A wreck beyond repair" (p. 64). The same sense of timidity rules over the lover in "Craving for Death" where he, quite aware and cautious of the binding norms of the society, desires his death as the only way to reconcile with his beloved. The lover thus says: "But when I close my shutters, / no bricks build any walls, / no floors remain to be crossed / no people around to be avoided / no taboos to be respected. / Yes, when I shut my eyes / all around I see / You You and Nothing but YOU./ That is what makes me think of DEATH / Which alone could ensure / thy company eternal" (p. 67).

Sense of Inferiority

The lover in "Prufrock" is stricken by a strong sense of inferiority. Walking on the beach and well aware of his aging, he admits: "I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. / I do not think that they will sing to me" (p. 917). This portrait of modern man is fear-ridden: "I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker, / And I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat, and snicker, / And in short, I was afraid" (p. 916). Overwhelmed by absurdity, he reflects: "Would it have been worth while / To have bitten off the matter with a smile, / To have squeezed the universe into a ball / To roll it toward some overwhelming question, / To say: 'I am Lazarus; come from the dead, / Come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all'" (p. 916). Reiterating the vision of modern man as hollow, the speaker in "The Wasteland" asks: "I think we are in the rats' alley/ where the dead men lost their bones /. . ./ 'Do / You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember / Nothing?' /. . ./ 'Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your

head?'" (p. 927). The same point is raised in Anand's "The Eternal Fashion Show": "'Where's thy SOUL?' I enquire. / 'SLEEPING' / Who shall it wake?' / 'DEATH'" (p. 19). Elsewhere, Anand reflects: "Confusions above / plough / nothing but confusions below. / A shady head / has written / with shady feet / a shady story / of a body / in confusions cast / in delusions lost / moving away away away / from itself" (p. 24).

Eliot's Empty Men in Anand's Land

In Anand's land, Eliot's empty men, with headpiece filled with straw, and dried voices change to sub-beings who, in Ramana's words, "have nothing valuable to sell, not even their souls, unlike Faustus, because even their souls are fake" (2002: 12). Eliot's impotent, timid, and sterile lovers turn into those wretched lovers who desperately turn down the destructive love. In "The Cuckoo's Complaint" the lover laments his destruction by the power of a love which feeds on his body and soul instead of nourishing him:

> Is it how people who're loved are? / Swollen eyes / Aching limbs / Languishing soul / Starved lips / A CARAVAN OF CARES / on a rocky terrain! /. . ./ LOVE! Are you married to despair? /. . ./ LOVE, you've turned this body / into a graveyard of / unrequited desires / TANTALIZE me not. / Let ZERO to ZERO return. / BALLOONS of Dreams! Burst! BURN! (pp. 49-50).

The zero point which the lover prefers is actually the sheer absurdity into which the inhabitants of the wretched land sink. In a Lyotard-Hutcheonian terminology, Anand's imagery, symbols, mythical and literary allusions re-evaluate and rewrite the history of modernism and show how his wretched land arises out of the ashes of the European wasteland.

Incapability to Receive Message of Salvation

In the absurdity-ridden society, Eliot in the final part of "The Wasteland" portrays the modern man's incapability to take the message of salvation in terms of oriental wisdom when the thunder peals and delivers the message; thus salvation remains problematical: "Then spoke the thunder: Da / Datta: What have we given?" (p. 936). Eliot's allusions to Buddha's sermons of fire and his reliance on Hindu metaphysics at the end of his long poem show his attempt to

revive the modern man's lost soul. This could be interpreted as the poet's note of subdued hope or at least determination to end up the chaotic order in the final lines of the poem.

Almost a century later, Anand, himself arising out of a Buddhist context, responds back to Eliot and in his poetic dialogue shows the failure of the modernist colonial endeavor, hence the postmodern man cries: "I disown Buddha / I disown wisdom" (p. 70). In the last poem of *Beyond Life! Beyond Death!!* Anand hits the final deathblow to spirituality, announcing: "No Christ can rescue Adam's army / besieged by knowledge, pride and lust / Prophets come, prophets go / Leaving the darkness denser below" (p. 72). Therefore, for this spiritual seeker of the postcolonial context, the essential questions remain unanswered: "What wants the Creator? We know not. / What plans has He? We know not. / Who comes? Who goes? We know not. / Why this rot? We know not" (p. 70). Thus the frustrated postcolonial poet leaves the scene himself bewildered by such issues.

No Hope in Man's Salvation

Unlike Eliot, Anand sees no hope in man's salvation; this desperation has been the legacy of modernism to his postmodern generation. Envisaged postcolonially, Anand blames the system of thought and civilization for depriving man of his spiritual being. In "The Marathon of Eternity", the speaker both historicizes and eternalizes the spiritual loss: "Ways behind, ways ahead / are littered with / hopeful bones of the dead. / lust carries lust / from dust to dust. / Ghosts of the dead / follow hosts of the living / who turn into ghosts / for the hosts forthcoming. /. . ./ Pain follows pain / Beyond Life! Beyond Death!!" (p. 27). In these lines, only the bones of the dead are hopeful; and what is of significance is that these bones litter both man's past, "ways behind", and man's future, "ways ahead". Here, the desperate man is portrayed as being less than the dead, their bones, and the ghosts; this view of man's history turns it into a nightmare from which mankind is yet to awake.

To Conclude

This detailed thematic comparison between Eliot and Anand traces the postmodern plight back to the colonial modern predicament. Anand holds a dialogue with the modern poet and in this dialogism he laments the colonial legacy to his generation. This comparative study shows

how modernist wasteland vision is further stretched into the postmodern era in the form of a wretched land. Anand, a disciple of Buddha, finds himself and Buddha's teachings ineffective in detotalizing the octopus-like hold of (post)modernity on man's spirituality. This dialogic relationship between Anand and Eliot and Anand's gesture towards the wasteland vision gives the Indian poet a global context. For P. S. Ramana, many of Anand's poems "bear a closer stylistic and formal relationship to these [canonized English] privileged works than to any of the ancient or contemporary native Indian poetic traditions" (11). Contra responsive to this reading, the present comparative study foregrounds Anand's awareness of the colonial "tradition", in Eliot's definition of the term. The politico-historical sense and the resultant perception in his poetic dialogue with such a colonial canonical figure as Eliot takes the Indian poet beyond his provincial borders and accords him a global dimension. The wretched land, which Anand portrays and of which he complains, is shown to be an inevitable extension of the colonial wasteland. Anand's land is quite properly called by himself the "wretched land" bearing with itself into the text Franz Fanon's postcolonial masterpiece, The Wretched of the Earth (1961).

In Anand's dialogue with Eliot, there lies an ambivalent relationship between his wretched land and Eliot's wasteland. Anand's wretched land challenges the wasteland and at the same time, being the heir, depends upon the European vision which it interrogates; hence ambivalence runs over the relation between the two. This ambivalence accords Anand's perspective a forked ironic tone which puts under question both the colonial wasteland and the postcolonial wretched land.

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Roghayeh Farsi, Ph.D.
Neyshabur University
Neyshabur, Khorasan Razavi
Iran
rofarsi2013@gmail.com