



## TWO POEMS AND TWO PORTRAITS: “PORTRAIT D’UN FEMME” & “PORTRAIT OF A LADY”

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This paper engages with two poems “Portrait of a Lady” and “Portrait D’une Femme” by T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, two distinguished pioneers of modernist poetry. The aim of the paper is to examine the two poems which have strikingly similar titles, in terms of language, form, style and content and to offer an interpretation of the significance of the similarities and differences in the light of some of the critical writings of the two poets.

**Keywords:** Modernist poetry, T.S. Eliot, Ezra Pound, Portrait D’une Femme, Portrait of a Lady.

This paper aims to examine Ezra Pound’s “Portrait D’une Femme” (1912) and T.S. Eliot’s “Portrait of a Lady” (1915) in relation to these two poets’ comparable and contrasting portrayals of their subject within the framework of the poetics of modernist poetry and in the light of both poets’ critical writings. Since both titles suggest a portrait of a lady, readers might expect to read about the life story or at least to be presented with a general picture of a woman in both poems. However, as this paper discusses, these poems do not merely engage in a poetic construction of the female subject, but more importantly, display many common as well as clashing aspects with respect to form, style and content as undertaken by these two distinct poets. The paper initially gives a brief information about each poet’s style, and following this, the poems are studied from various perspectives with respect to style and content. Then, the similarities and differences between these two poems are evaluated in relation to the aspects of modernist poetry.

Regarded as one of the two most distinguished modernist poets, Ezra Pound (the other is T.S. Eliot) uses a French title for his poem “Portrait D’une Femme” (1912) which means the portrait of a lady in English. Considering the year when the poem was written and his other works; for example “Hugh Seluwy Mauberley” (1920) and “The Cantos” (1917-76), it is obvious that “Portrait D’une Femme” was written in the early period of Pound’s poetic career. The title is French, not an English one. However, the rest of the poem is in English. The reason why Pound used a title in French but not in his mother tongue, and the discrepancy between the language of the title and the language of the lines following the title have been explained by Peter Nicholls in his article “The Poetics of Modernism” in which Nicholls stated that “. . . Pound’s own sense of an ‘international tongue’ is more robustly public in its assumption that an authentically modern poetry will be both polyglot and allusive” (55). Drawing on Nicholls’s statement it could be argued that the French title of Pound’s poem is an indicator of his wide use of international languages as a modernist poet. Furthermore, Pound visited Paris many times on his journeys to Italy, and in 1921 he moved to Paris. In June 1926, Pound’s opera *Le Testament de Villon* was performed in Paris.

As Bevilacqua pointed out, “that Ezra Pound has a sophisticated knowledge of several European languages, especially French and Italian, is a well established fact. Accordingly, it should be assumed that he is well aware of the subtleties and nuances in the vocabularies of those languages” (294). Moreover,

Pound's poetic oeuvre is not limited to only European languages, but also translations of other languages like Provençal, Chinese, Japanese, languages not known by modern Westerns<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, the use of multinational language is not a sole attribution to Pound's poetry, we can see it in Eliot's and other modernist poets' poetry as well, since ancient languages seem to have been favoured by all modernist poets.

Most modernist poets used quotations especially from ancient Greek and Latin in the epigraph of their poems. For instance, the epigraph of *The Waste Land* is a Greek one, and there are also some German sentences in it. Therefore, it is a usual thing to see sentences and extracts from ancient Greek-Latin and other languages different from English in both Pound and Eliot's poetic tradition.

The second most striking point regarding "Portrait D'une Femme" is that it is not a long poem compared to Eliot's poem, since Pound's "view of poetry" as Nina argued, "would seem to exclude the long poem as a workable form"(1203). This also overlaps with *imagism's* essential technical principles such as their linguistic brevity and metaphoric condensation. Imagism consisted of Pound and his friends' own declarations, and it is also considered one of the important branches of modernist poetry. Regarding Imagism and how it came into existence, Pound stated the following:

In the spring or early summer of 1912, "H.D.", Richard Aldington and myself decided that we were agreed upon the three principles following:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.
3. As regarding rhythm: to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome (qtd in Kenner 56).

According to Ira B. Nadel, Ezra Pound tried to make his poetry autonomous throughout his poetic life. In his article "Introduction Understanding Pound" Nadel stated that:

"throughout Pound's poetic career, he sought the objective presentation of material which he believed would stand on its own, without the need for symbolist, expressionistic or romantic attributes. In the *ABC of Reading* (1934), he outlined the essential properties of this method which relied on the direct examination of the object and the invention of a means to render it more concisely" (2).

This can be related to "Imagism's strict poetics of juxtaposed images, shorn of linguistic connective tissue, by promoting the poetic Image as 'that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time' "(Peppis 33). In line with this, it could be pointed out that the length of Pound's poems reflect only a moment of time. His poem entitled "In a Station of the Metro" in which he wrote "The apparition of these faces in the crowd : / Petals on a wet, black bough "(qtd in Peppis 33) exemplifies Pound's brevity. In this highly concise poem, Pound depicts people getting off the train and getting out of the station. Besides, via this very short poem Pound emphasizes the impersonality of poetry. There is no trace of the poet himself in this particular example.

Moreover, Pound emphasizes the importance of the moment and unnecessary of other elements (i.e.time, place, dialogues) in poetry. His depiction of the train station clearly displays Pound's poetic tendency, and Pound states in one of his letters that :

To me the short so-called dramatic lyric-at any rate the sort of thing I do-is the poetic part of drama, the rest of which (to me the prose part) is left to the reader's imagination or set in a short note. I catch the character I happen to be interested in at the moment of song, self-analysis, or sudden understanding or revelation. And the rest of the play would bore me and presumably the reader. I paint my man as I conceive him (qtd in Giannone 131).

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<sup>1</sup> See Baym, Nina, Robert S. Levine, and Arnold Krupat. *The Norton Anthology of American Literature: Volume B*. New York: W. W. Norton & Co, 2007.

Pound's words can be related to Eliot's "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921) in which Eliot asserted that "the poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning (2219). Therefore, in both Eliot's and Pound's poetry we should not look for a ordinary syntax, diction and rhythm. As Rainey argued, Pound particularly "tends to foreground the elements of diction and rhythm and to minimise that of syntax, whereas Eliot uses keeps all three in a complex and constantly shifting interaction" (93). Furthermore, according to Peter Nicholls particularly in Pound's *Cantos* "the verse accordingly became more 'indirect' as Pound cut rapidly between different items, leaving the reader to reckon with the resulting 'thing' without overt authorial guidance"(58) - a statement which might well be relevant to his "Portrait D'une Femme" . It is clear that in "Portrait D'une Femme" the reader is baffled with the first line of the poem: "Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea," (1). It starts with the zenith of the poem. Who is this lady and who are the people out of the lady mentioned as "our"? Why are Lady and her mind compared to Sargossa Sea? We do not know anything, and as it has been discussed above, the background is left blank to be filled by the reader's imagination. Further, successive time and places in Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" hints that the poem is a long narration and the tree parts seem consistent with each other in contrast to Pound's lack of narration and unity in his "Portrait D'une Femme".

Besides, Pound pays particular attention to ". . . musical and rhythmical aspects of verse . . ." (Stringer 542). His "Portrait D'une Femme" is written in iambic pentameter, yet there is no exact rhyme scheme between the end of each line which indicates that it is in blank verse. In M.H. Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, blank verse is explained as "consist[ing] of lines of iambic pentameter (five-stress iambic verse) which are unrhymed—hence the term 'blank'"(24). Although, line 14 contains fourteen, line 15 six, line 29 six and line 30 four syllables, the rhythm of iambic pentameter in "Portrait D'une Femme" is generally preserved. Furthermore, Pound's poem is written in a conversational style. This makes the lines move forward in a accurate and rhythmic way while any rhythmic form for Eliot's "Portrait of A Lady" cannot be discerned. In Eliot's poem, rhythmic pattern is not organized into a regular metrical form. According to Abrams's *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, "most free verse also has irregular line lengths, and either lacks rhyme or else uses it only sporadically. (Blank verse differs from unrhymed free verse in that it is metrically regular.)" (105). Therefore, Eliot's poem fits the definition of free verse rather than blank verse like many other modernist poems.

As stated earlier, the impersonality of the poet is also emphasized by T.S. Eliot. In his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), Eliot compares the poet to a catalyst in that the poet has the role of emerging and diffusing of the feelings in the poem without leaving any traces of himself or herself. Besides, Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme" is a moment of a song, and no trace of the lady's personality, past or family can be observed. However, Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" is more detailed and on first looking into the poem it can be clearly observed that it is about four times longer than Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme". Some parts of it were written in the dialogue form; for instance the lady's speeches, thoughts and feelings are given in quotation marks: "You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends" (19). In the first part of the poem the personality of the lady is depicted, suggesting that she is well-read, and that she likes violins and the ariettes, and is fond of listening to Chopin: "So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul" (10). The reader also finds out that the lady also enjoys being among friends: "Without these friendships – life, what *cauchemar!*" (28). According to Richard J. Giannone what is important for other poets with respect to setting, time, personality, past, is not important for Pound. Hence, while Eliot's poem narrates a story, including time and setting, Pound's poem skips the sequence of the events, setting and time. So, the length of both poems strikes us at first glance. Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme" is much shorter and more elaborated than Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady". It starts with what might be regarded as the climax in which the lady is compared to the Sargasso Sea: "Your mind and you are our Sargasso Sea / London has swept about you this score years / And bright ships left you this or that in fee" (1-3). On the one hand, it can be assumed that the Sargasso Sea is the metaphor for the woman portrayed in the poem; on the other, it can imply an irony regarding the lady. It is known that Sargossa sea is famous for its seaweed and ship wrecks. It gathers insignificant things like a whirlpool. Thus, the first lines of the poem depict a woman who can be identified as an intellectual, and whose self

and mind are likened to the Sargasso Sea. This semblance might evoke the idea that her mind is as filthy as the Sargasso Sea. She stays in London for at least twenty years, and bright ships bring her goods. Here, the goods brought by the bright ships might imply her relations with the artists or intellectuals from her London life. She seems rich and lucky on the surface; however in reality she is miserable like the Sargasso Sea. Her storage consists only of waste things like gossips and oddments: "Ideas, old gossip, oddments of all things, / Strange spars of knowledge and dimmed wares of price" (4-5). "Strange spars" indicates that she has the ability to direct her intellect but it leads to nowhere. From "dimmed wares of price" it can be assumed that she has some stuff but they are worthless. Further, in the poem the lady is depicted as an alternative or default for those great minds since she is looked for only when somebody is absent: "Great minds have sought you-lacking someone. / You have been second always. Tragical?" (6-7). Thus, when the great minds visit this lady, something is given to them by the lady. So, the lady is not only receives from visitors but also gives something to them: "And now you pay one. Yes, you richly pay. / You are a person of some some interest, one comes to you / And takes strange gain away:" (13-15). However, what she gives to them or takes from them is not clear. The next lines tell us that the things that the lady gives to her visitors are vague things like "curious suggestions": "Trophies fished up; some curious suggestion" (16). What kind of facts and tales she tells them are not clearly revealed in the poem: "Fact that leads nowhere; and a tale or two, / Pregnant with mandrakes, or with something else" (17-18). However, one thing is certain, that is, all in all, they lead to nowhere. So, these things may be trivial like the things she gathers. They are both useful and trifle at the same time. That is a really vague and contradictory situation: "That might prove useful and yet never proves," (19). It can be inferred that someone is pregnant with mandrakes (via a magical agent) but she does not seem to give birth since it never works and is never useful. Besides, the words 'something else', as stated in line 18, are suggestive of a thing that never fits anywhere or finds any time to be situated: "That never fits a corner or shows use, / Or finds its hour upon the loom of days" (20-21).

Moreover, in the poem also she is portrayed as someone not only practical but also patient: "Oh, you are patient, I have seen you sit / Hours, where something might have floated up." (11-12). The lady both dramatically and ironically supposes herself in a new, bright and wonderful stuff but in reality they are tarnished and gaudy idols, ambergris and inlays: "The tarnished, gaudy, wonderful old work; / Idols and ambergris and rare inlays," (22-23). The persona screams that "These are your riches, your great store; and yet" (24). The brighter things that the bright ships bring her or the things that she stores like a whirlpool are nothing but the shipwrecks consisting of sodden woods and floats: "For all this sea-board of deciduous things, / Strange woods half sodden, and new brighter stuff: / In the slow float of differing light and deep," (25-27). All she has is shipwrecks, and they are all her treasure literally and ironically. This is her character and so her fate "No! there is nothing! In the whole and all, / Nothing that's quite your own. / Yet this you." (28-30). To sum up, she gathers only the intellectual debris of bright ships (sophisticated people) and serves herself to them as waste storage like Sargasso sea. Like the sea, she has the depth (intellectually) but she wastes it like seaweed on Sargasso sea.

Eliot in his "Tradition and the Individual Talent" states that "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality (2212). It is clear that Eliot, himself is the defender of the notion of impersonality of the poet in poetry. Regarding Eliot's emphasis on the impersonality on the poet, Daiches pointed out that "the poet kept himself completely out of sight in all these poems and wrote dramatically, expressing himself through the very characters whose lives he considered so barren (Daiches 116). Hence, Eliot used in his poetry the voice of a dramatic monologue to narrate the poem or as in Daiches's words, "through the very characters whose lives he considered so barren". According to Daiches "there was thus not a trace of romantic Weltschmerz in Eliot; there was no passion, no indignation, no self-indulgence of any kind. The poet himself, like James Joyce's artist, remained "aloof, indifferent, paring his finger nails" (116). In line with this, interestingly the young man in Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" is a character who is really dull, insensitive and indecisive especially in the third part of the poem in which he says: "Not knowing what to feel or if I understand / Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon..." (119-120). The young man's views are expressed in the form of dramatic monologue. This type of narration is also employed in Pound's poem

“Portrait D’une Femme”, since the lady is depicted through the narrator’s statements, and there are no statements of the lady in her own voice as it is in Eliot’s poem. Besides, contrary to Eliot’s dialogic narration, Pound’s poem is not in a dialogue form. Nonetheless, the impersonality of the poet is highlighted in both poems.

Hugh Witemeyer, in *Modernism and the Transatlantic Connection* asserts that Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot were influenced by Henry James, an American expatriate who, like Pound and Eliot, lived in Europe for many years. According to Witemeyer, James in his fiction:

. . . often explored what he called the “international theme”: the clash of European and American values, the allure and the terror of culture shock, and the challenges to personal identity of prolonged residence abroad. Eliot addresses these Jamesian issues in many of the poems that he published between 1915 and 1922. Indeed, “Portrait of a Lady” (1915) explicitly acknowledges Eliot’s indebtedness by taking its title from one of James’s best-known novels” (12).

Further, according to Matthew Peters, Eliot took Henry James as a literary model at a time when he was in his early poetic career. Peters further asserts that despite the obvious similarity in the title of these works, it is not James’s novel *Portrait of a Lady* but *The Bostonians* which might have possibly influenced Eliot’s poem, as Peters argues, “was not included in the New York Edition, but this does not make it less likely that Eliot had read the novel by 1910. (Indeed, the Boston setting of much of the action of *The Bostonians* might have lent the novel a particular interest for Eliot, who was at this time studying at Harvard.)”(489). In James’s *The Bostonians*, Basil Ransom is a young man who lives in the South, and works as a lawyer there. One day, he meets his widowed cousin, Mrs Luna who lives in New York but who has spent some years in Europe. She invites Ransom, and they meet up for some time. Nevertheless, he has to resist Mrs Luna’s sexual attacks in these meetings. Matthew Peters suggests that as it is in *The Bostonians*, in Eliot’s “Portrait of a Lady”, the unnamed young man resists the old Lady’s attacks who has been to Europe. Peters suggests that “in both Eliot’s poem and James’s novel the friendships between the woman and the younger man are characterized by their inequality—by the way in which the man senses the woman’s quiet desperation in her efforts to perpetuate the relation and to make it more intimate” (490). Peters further points out that both in *The Bostonians* and “Portrait of a Lady”, the young men are conscious of their inability to respond to the ladies’ wish and eventually ladies realise that their friendship will end disappointingly. So, “in ‘Portrait’ the unnamed woman, reflecting on the way her hopes for the relation were mistaken, remarks that ‘our beginnings never know our ends!’ (1.97)” (490).

In the first part of Eliot’s “Portrait of a Lady” we are given the exact time and place. It is one afternoon in December, and we are in the Lady’s room. However, like Pound’s “Portrait D’une Femme” the poet skips the background of the people in the poem. According to Derek Roper, “we know nothing of what happens between these meetings. We know the lady only through her speeches: we have no other way of telling her feelings, expectations, or intentions. We do not know what her visitor says, nor are we told explicitly what he thinks of the lady, or of himself”(42). The speaker is a young man, and he does not like the atmosphere of the room, saying: “And four wax candles in the darkened room/An atmosphere of Juliet’s tomb” (4-6). Yet, at this point there is something vague: are the lady and young man in the lady’s dining room or in a concert room which is stated in line 13? This vagueness can partly be attributed to Eliot’s writing style. In his “The Metaphysical Poets” (1921), Eliot asserted that the modern time is chaotic and difficult, and the results of this situation have complex and various effects on society. Therefore, “the poet”, as in Eliot’s words, “must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning” (1104).

In the poem they are at the concert room, under four rings of light which is as stated above like a tomb. Here, there is an allusion to the death of Shakespeare’s Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* in which Romeo, who is unaware of the scheme, kills himself in Juliet’s tomb over her body. Thus, the young man in Eliot’s poem sees the concert room like Juliet’s tomb. Following this, the narration continues in a

dialogue form, and the lady's speeches are given in quotation marks: "I have saved saved this afternoon for you" (3). Throughout the poem, various modern styles enhanced via the use of allusions could be observed.

In the first part of the poem time, place and the subject of the meetings are arranged by the Lady who is portrayed as "Prepared for all the things to be said, or left unsaid." (7). The lady and young man are situated at a concert room listening to Chopin. However, the tone of the violins are attenuated and there is the sound of the cornets coming from the remote. They are weak just as the mood of young man: "Among velleities and carefully caught regrets / Through attenuated tones of violins / Mingled with remote cornets" (15-17). According to Derek Roper, ". . . for a friend and guest his attitude is surprisingly critical. He feels distaste for the mannerisms of the pianist they have been hearing (8-9)" (45). Further, it is not clear how many times they met and how they arranged going out for a piano recital together before the concert.

The lady puts emphasis on the notion of friendship, and knows how valuable her friends are in her life consisting of all trivial things: "You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends,"(19). Besides, she pays particular attention to young man's friendship and asks him to notice how blank her life is saying, "For indeed I do not love it ... you knew? You are not blind!"(22). From the exclamation "You are not blind! ", it could be understood that the lady approaches the young man. Besides, she laments for her solitude and young man's ignorance of their friendship since she supposes that he is very naive and inexperienced. Then, the lady envies the young man that he is so lucky to have a friend like her who is experienced and who shares everything with her friends "How keen you are! / To find a friend who has these qualities, / Who has, and gives" (23-25). Following this, the lady bursts out saying, "Without these friends—life, what cauchemar!" (28). She perhaps harrasses the young man implicitly, and under the pressure of the lady's verbal attacks, winding of violins, among cracked cornets and ariettes in his brain, he feels a drum is playing in his head "tom-tom", as he says: "Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins / Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own," (32-33). The young man is so stuck by the stale air inside that he wishes to abandon there and go out. Then, he wants to breath tobacco smoke and get tranced with the life outside which means fresh air and freedom for him:

Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance,  
Admire the monuments,  
Discuss the late events,  
Correct our watches by the public clocks.  
Then sit for half an hour and drink our bocks." (36-40).

The second part of Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" starts with a time reference. It is April and lilacs bloom implying the regeneration of nature in spring. It can be argued that there is an irony between nature and the lady. Nature regenerates every year and is fertile. Yet, the lady is old, and she is near the end of her life: "Of one about to reach her journey's end." (67). The irony is that although she is aware of the obstacles of her situation, she wants to pretend to retain the young man's interest in her as much as possible. In other words, she does not want to lose young man's friendship.

Although the lady has lilacs in her hands, she is in an uneasy mood: "Slowly twisting the lilacs stalks" (46), and feels sorry for the young man who is not aware of his potential, and she is upset with the fact that time and his youth pass so quickly, saying: "Ah, my friend, you do not know, you do not know / What life is, you who hold it in your hands / You let it flow from you, you let it flow," (44-47). Besides, the lady reproaches the young man because of his ignorance and his dull smile, saying "And youth is cruel, and has no remorse / And smiles at situations which it cannot see." (48-49). However, the young man now pretends to be ignorant of the lady's discontentment with him, and continues smiling and drinking tea. Upon the young man's unreserved attitude, the lady gets increasingly upset, and is ready to attack the young man again. At this point in the poem, there is an allusion to Matthew Arnold's poem, "The Buried Life". As Roper suggested, "its main themes are the difficulty of locating one's deepest emotional self, and finding someone with whom that self can communicate" (Roper 49). Thus, the

friendship between the lady and the young man represents the inability to reveal the emotions. Although she says that she sometimes recalls and realizes her pathetic situation, she pretends to disregard it and enjoy the life as a young person. However, we feel that the young man is disturbed by the tone of the lady's words and the broken violin metaphorically: "The voice returns like the insistent out-of-tune / Of a broken violin on an August afternoon:" (56-57). Then, the lady begins to attack the young man directly, though she is aware that there is a gulf between her and him "Sure that across the gulf you reach your hand" (60). She seems to be sure about his understanding and sharing of her feelings. According to Derek Roper, the gulf as a metaphor reminds of another Matthew Arnold's poem - " 'To Marguerite – Continued' which compares human beings to islands: once joined, perhaps, and longing to be joined again, but now separated by 'The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea'"(50-51). This allusion to Arnold's implies that a big thunder is about to take place.

The lady desires to reach out for his feelings as a normal friend or, as it could be assumed at the beginning, as an intimate friendship. At this point, she condemns him due to his selfishness and senselessness towards others and particularly towards her. She says: "You are invulnerable, you have no Achilles' heel. / You will go on, and when you have prevailed / You can say: at this point many a one has failed" (61-63). She reproaches the young man saying that he is even stronger than Achilles, although he is ignorant of her and her feelings. Following this the climax of the poem occurs - the lady is so desperate that she violently cries out " But what have I, but what have I, my friend, / To give you, what can you receive from me? / Only the friendship and the sympathy" (64-66). She feels so desolate that she confesses that she has nothing to give and share with him except friendship and sympathy. The lady's pathos is violent because she is approaching the end of her life, "reach[ing]her journey's end." (67). Obviously, this is also the climax of the poem. Then, the pathos will ever go on till nothing changes in her life. She will go on serving tea to friends, as she says: "I shall sit here, serving tea to friends ...." (68). The young man's response is as much callous as the lady's pathos. He just takes his hat and slips out of the room in order not to make any amends, saying: "I take my hat: how can I make a cowardly amends / For what she has said to me?" (69-70). Here, the young man uses the adverb "cowardly" because he does not want to respond to the lady in any way that could invoke something other than friendship since from the beginning of their friendship he has not shown any indication of returning the lady's feelings towards him. The young man states that he will be out as he was doing before, sitting in the park, reading the news on the papers. He will keep self-assured and ignorant of the lady, as he says: "I keep my countenance, / I remain self-possessed" (77-78). However, he claims that he will remember the lady and her friendship only when he hears a street piano. Yet, he will be out all the time, playing an old and tired song and when he smells hyacinths from a garden: "Except when a street-piano, mechanical and tired / Reiterates some worn-out common song / With the smell of hyacinths across the garden" (79-81). It seems cruel but according to the young man it is law of the jungle. Then, he will only ask himself why he has not taken the road that others always take for themselves. He could have responded the lady's feelings and taken the advantage of the day, but he has not done so and is not likely to do so.

The third and last part of Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" starts with a time reference like the previous parts. It is an October night and the young man is visiting the lady again, but this time in contrast to the previous ones he is tired and reluctant to climb the stairs of the lady's house. It is one of the most difficult things for him and perhaps because of the amends that he has not fulfilled since their last meeting, he says: "I mount the stairs and turn the handle of the door / And feel as if I had mounted on my hands and knees" (86-87). Here, the lady reveals that the young man is taking a journey, but the time and place of it are not specified. However, the lady expects him to write to her while he is abroad, saying: "Perhaps you can write to me." (93). When the young man says that he was expecting this request from her, the lady asks the youngman to answer her most desired and anxious question: "Why we have not developed into friends." (98). She also resents that their relationship, or friendship has never been stable. At this point, the young man sees his shade on the glass, and it is not a clear and bright one. It is clear that his courage is faint like his shade on the glass because of the lady's hard verbal attacks in the previous lines. The lady continues to question their relationship, the one she herself imagined. They could have become intimate friends but they did not. Regarding the lady's attitude, Derek Roper states that "she has faced the fact that

they will probably remain no more than acquaintances. She now takes the dominant role, no longer pleading for his friendship . . ." (53). Accepting defeat, the lady recommends the young man to write letters to her, and tells him that she will be serving tea to friends as expected usually from him and her. Following this, the young man feels the urge to find an outlet since his courage has been shuttered under the pressure of the lady's verbal attacks. He is willing to do anything and take any shape to get away and reach the trance in the end:

And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find expression ... dance, dance  
Like a dancing bear,  
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape.  
Let us take the air, in a tobacco trance--"(109-113).

At that point, the young man surprisingly imagines how she will correspond with the lady if she dies suddenly one afternoon, saying: "Well! and what if she should die some afternoon," (114). Derek Roper states for this point that Eliot's line echoes the symbolist poet Jules Laforgue and the young man who "reflects that her dying would make no difference: he would still be reproached by her memory, still not know what to feel about it" (54). In other words, although the young man seems resolute about his wish of her death, in fact he seems rather confused with the possible effects of it :

Doubtful, for quite a while  
Not knowing what to feel or if I understand  
Or whether wise or foolish, tardy or too soon ...  
Would she not have the advantage, after all?" (118-121).

From the last three lines of the poem it can be inferred that the portrait of the young man who was strong, resolute and charming in the first part of the poem has totally altered at the end of the poem. He is now short of courage and self-confidence. He understates himself more than the lady, even is not able to smile: "And should I have the right to smile?" (124).

Before starting to evaluate the similarities and differences of these two poems, it should be noted that both Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme" and Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady" correspond to their poetic declarations, and both Pound and Eliot did this deliberately and scientifically. As far as their poetic declarations are concerned Pound's (and his friends Hilda Doolittle and Richard Aldington's) imagist ideas published in *Poetry* in March 1913<sup>2</sup> and his article "The Serious Artist" (1913), and Eliot's "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919) and "The Metaphysical Poets" (1921) offered a frame for this study.

Written by two major canonised modernist poets both poems pose some difficulty in terms of the use of language. The difficulty of the poems also complies with Eliot's explanation in his "The Metaphysical Poets" in which he stated that "poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be *difficult*"(2219). Thus, both poems are difficult, chaotic and complex reflecting the complexities of the century they were written in. The cause of this kind of style in their poetry of both poets (as well as in the poetry of most modernist poets) is the idea that "our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. Therefore, according to Eliot in his "The Metaphysical Poets", the poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning"(2219). While making their poems difficult, these poets tended to skip the background of the characters in their poems using dramatic monologues and persona in their poems for the sake of impersonality of the poetry<sup>3</sup>. Hence, for both "Portrait D'une Femme" and "Portrait of a Lady" it is hardly possible to trace anything about the identity of the ladies. So, the reader is prompted to guess the ladies'

<sup>2</sup> See for details Kenner, Hugh. *The Poetry of Ezra Pound*.

<sup>3</sup> See Eliot, T.S.. *Tradition and the Individual Talent*.



identities for whom the poems were written. The allusions throughout the poems are also highly implicit - in Pound's poem the lady is metaphorically Sargossa sea and in Eliot's poem the lady invites her friends for a tea party.

Further, in both poems there is no exact rhyming at the end of lines. So, they are written in vers libre<sup>4</sup> since "modernist poets, who wanted to abandon the artificial and ornamental in verse, argued that free verse enabled them to write poetry whose rhythms were closer to the patterns of speech" (Beasley 26). Also in Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme" the lines are in iambic pentameter but unrhymed. Therefore, it complies with Lawrence Rainey's statement in which he points out that ". . . Pound tends to foreground the elements of diction and rhythm and to minimise that of syntax, whereas Eliot keeps all three in a complex and constantly shifting interaction" (93). Besides, in Pound's poem it is clear that some words are used just only for the sake of rhythm. Moreover, use of wares and price in line five is a repetitive diction since wares are commodities that are naturally worthy of price by themselves.

In Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme" we see the direct use of object itself, here the object is the lady herself in accordance with his declarations on *Imagism*. Besides, despite its brevity, Pound's use of metaphors and diction strikes the reader. It is such a dense poem that it criticizes the lady without abundance of unnecessary words and phrases. Furthermore, Pound's use of metaphors, for instance Sargossa Sea, mandrakes, dimmed wares, idols, ambergris and inlays make the poem richer and more witty. Also, in Eliot's poem allusions and their roles in constructing the meaning of the poem strikes our attention. For instance, the epigraph from Christopher Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* may refer that the reader will confront with a hard situation in the poem. Secondly, an allusion to Juliet's tomb in Shakespeare's *Rome and Juliet* in line 6 may create a gloomy atmosphere for the lady's room. Further, 'My burried life' in line 53 is an allusion to Matthew Arnold's poem "My burried Life", an allusion which, according to Derek Roper, refers to Freud's theory of the unconscious. The difficulty of revealing "one's deepest emotional self" (49) may be fairly relevant to the relationship between the lady and the young man. The next allusion is to Achilles's heel in line 61. As it is known, although Achilles is an invincible warrior, he has only one weak point, that is his heel. In the poem, the Lady glorifies the young man, saying him that you are superior than Achielles since you have not got a weak heel. Here, there is an adverse symbolism for Achielles, since Achilles in Greek mythology is generally admired by his greatness and strength discounting his weak point.

To conclude, both T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound are the two major and canonized poets of British and American modernist poetry. Through a comparative study of Pound's "Portrait D'une Femme" and Eliot's "Portrait of a Lady", this essay argued that each poem represents its poet's idiosyncratic poetic tendencies as well as the characteristics of modernist poetry, despite the fact that both poems are produced in the early literary career of these poets.

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