

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Vol. 5. Issue.2., 2018 (April-June)

ISSN

INTERNATIONAL  
STANDARD  
SERIAL  
NUMBER  
INDIA

2395-2628(Print):2349-9451(online)

INTERTEXTUALITY IN T. S. ELIOT'S  
*THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK AND GERONTION: A CRITICAL STUDY*

PRODIP KUMAR ADHIKARI

Assistant Professor, Department of English, Islamic University, Kushtia-7003, Bangladesh  
E-mail: [prodipadhiary781@gmail.com](mailto:prodipadhiary781@gmail.com)



PRODIP KUMAR  
ADHIKARI

ABSTRACT

This essay entitled 'Intertextuality in T. S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and Gerontion: A Critical Study*' concentrates on Eliot's effortless integration of fragments from others' texts or genres. 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Gerontion', were published respectively in the years of 1917 and 1920, almost three decades before the very concept of intertextuality first comes into light. Yet the study shows how Eliot's wide spread borrowing of fragments, allusions, references bring about an innovating and revitalising effect in his creation. How his readers responded to his fragmentary writings is a key concern too. As a critical study, it perceives some of the domains from these two poems of Eliot. They are - the titles of his poems, the epigraphs, the themes, even the forms and styles of his poems that carry a close association to the very idea of intertextuality. This paper is based on content analysis. The original works of T. S. Eliot have been used here for primary sources. Different published reference books, journals, and online resources have been consulted and cited as the secondary sources. While acknowledging the sources, MLA Style Sheet 8th edition has been used. The sources used here are authentic and have been acknowledged properly to the best of my knowledge.

Introduction

Transmitting a moving inquisitiveness and inspiration to many of his audiences has been one of the common traits of the poetical works of T. S. Eliot. Innovative styles, techniques, and presentation etc., have been the pivotal elements behind these striking features; yet the most striking one in his poesy is his very methods of giving poetry a mosaic quality, an integration of the diverse fragments, that he accomplished organically. Eliot's exploration in almost every possible horizon of art, literature, history, tradition etc., and the apt transposition of the materials either picked up or chosen as his own texts have been very substantial in this process. The machinery, he has deployed for it, can aptly be ascertained to none other than "intertextuality". The term "intertextuality" coined by Julia Kristeva in 1966 signifies the interdependence of literary texts that have gone before them. Thus it may appear, for many readers, an intangible one compared to "allusions" recurrently used in almost all types of literary genre (Cuddon 454). The idea of "intertextuality" virtually appears almost three decades after Eliot has published his early modernist poetry; yet it carries a consistent connection to his creation. As M. H. Abram suggests, "allusion being a passing reference, without explicit identification, to a literary or historical person, place, or event or to another literary work or passage" it does not coincide with intertextuality (Abram 9). While extracting from others, Eliot never lets himself to be a blind

imitator. On the contrary, his extracts appear to be different and commence some new experiences which a mere allusion can never teach us. Julia Kristeva's observation is pertinent here as she implies it as a text not to be an isolated phenomenon but is made up of mosaic of quotations or a text absorbed and transformed of another (Cuddon 454). What Kristeva suggests here by intertextuality is an echoing of a text into another. It is not at all limited within the idea of allusion or influence and this is where the novelty of it lies. It is the shaping of a text's meaning by another text. We see that intertextuality can be apprehended in texts through an idea, an allusion, a quotation, referencing, translation, parody etc., which in turn can offer the pleasure of knowing the unknown for many. It becomes a source of exploring or examining something new and evolving. Intertextuality, therefore, can be an umbrella term that may well hold the manifestation of innovation and revitalisation interwoven in Eliot's poetry.

### Literature Review

Helen Gardner (1950) in his *The Art of T. S. Eliot: Auditory Imagination* finds Eliot's subject-matter to be a universally recognised importance where his imaginative authority according to him stands original. It is Eliot who has added in English literature a sort of organic thought, predication, and insight. In addition he has induced an innovative style and trait in the core of the twentieth century poetry in English (Rahaman, 1984). Being an Anglo American poet, Eliot was privileged to be the first English-speaking poet of genius who was fully aware of the implications of the new situation in an urbanised changing world. As it is observed by G. M. Hyde (1991), modernist poetry was born in the city and with Baudelaire – especially with his discovery of man's predicaments in the metropolis. In this connection, Eliot's poetry however remains not far away from this reality (337). Taking cues from Baudelaire, Eliot through his satirical cast of mind, objective correlative, apt metaphor, irony and the urban imagery could artistically communicate his deepest observation of the contemporary social decay (Titus 1999). Therefore his use of quotations, allusions, references, his implication of a wide range of fact etc., are according to B. C. Southam (1994) so naturally drawn that sometimes they become the language of his poetry. Eliot's own assertion in *To Criticize the Critic* unveils his learning from Baudelaire, Jules Laforgue, Marlowe, Webster, Tournier, Middleton, Ford etc. overtly. That he was influenced by them is also assumed. Both of these events are however noteworthy since these help him greatly towards shaping his thoughts and bringing the mosaic quality in his writings. Eliot's acknowledgement to the Victorian poet Browning, Elizabethan playwrights, Shakespeare, Dante etc., further instigates the idea of his deployment of intertextuality. As regard Shakespeare, his humble honour goes beyond praising as he addressed Shakespeare to be a poet of "the supreme greatness, who can hardly influence, can only be imitated" (ed. Das, B and J. M. Mohanty 143). Manju Jain (2005) refers to Eliot's essay *To Criticize the Critic* and observes in *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot* that Dante Alighieri (c. 1265 – September 14, 1321), a great Italian poet could influence Eliot to a great extent. For Eliot Dante has been a great source as well as inspiration. Borrowing from Dante in Eliot is open and recurrent. In this study, Intertextuality therefore appears as a key concern which is to be explored and exposed with reference to Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Gerontion'.

### Methodology

This paper is a content based qualitative research. Both primary and secondary sources have been critically studied and analysed to meet the present research problem. Two selected poems of T. S. Eliot have been taken as the primary sources whereas his own essays, letters, reviews etc have been used as secondary sources. Other scholarly writings, published books, articles, journals etc., along with online materials comprise the secondary sources too. For evaluating and analysing both of the primary and secondary sources 'library based research technique' has been deployed by the researcher. Cite sourcing, in this essay, signifies MLA style sheet 8th edition. Sources have been acknowledged sincerely.

### Discussion

Eliot's poems have been distinguished as they portray something startling, inquisitive and at the same time ironical in nature. In doing this, the elements that he puts before us are unambiguously of his own. From his titles to his epilogues he maintains such a formulation that makes him inimitable. Nevertheless his akinness either to his predecessors or his contemporaries are characterised with some suggestive as well as enlightening effects.

While formulating an idea about the title of his poem or choosing his diction Eliot's inquisition is effortless. His materials have been drawn from a variety of sources. Different genres either from his contemporary fields of arts, literature, culture or of classical sources constitute the backdrop for them. The titles of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Gerontion' undoubtedly belong to Eliot's own creation; yet they get referred to Kipling's 'The Love Song of Har Dyal' for the first one and for 'Gerontion' his borrowing reminds us a Greek lexis *geron* which means *little old man* (Jain 43). It is pertinent to mention here that with 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' Eliot's personal connection is no less dominating. The name 'Prufrock' comes from Prufrock-Littau, a furniture wholesaler company which advertised in the first decade of the twentieth century in St. Louis, Missouri, where T. S. Eliot was born. With his subtle humour Eliot has combined this name with "J. Alfred", which somehow suggests the ironical tone of the poem to its readers. However, it cannot be a decisive resolution since the name 'Prufrock' has been composed of "prude" and "frock" and suggests verbal associations of prudence, primness, prudishness, prurience, and dandyism. But how far could it draw Eliot's attention until he was possessed by the title used by Kipling? Therefore Kipling's title might have been the ultimate motivation for his own poem (Jain 43). It is assumed that Eliot was inspired by the vernacular melancholic tone of the poem as depicted by Kipling. His attachment to the poem can well be comprehended as he included the poem in his 1941 collection *A Choice of Kipling's Verse*. Nevertheless his use of the title sustains ironical. His own assertion fittingly manifests that his poem would never be called a "love song", but for the title of Kipling he was stuck obstinately in his mind. Whatever the psychological sway he had to confront for it, his choice while extracting the title from Kipling happens to be very succinct as well as a pertinent one since the character he presented before his audiences gets best fitted here (*Kipling Journal*, Vol. XXVI. 9). Prufrock in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' has been such a prototype of the twentieth century European dandyism that unveils the emptiness of the souls being alienated due to a failure of communication with the others. Therefore, Eliot's choice comes out apt and decisive in all respects.

The title, "Gerontion" in the poem 'Gerontion', further exemplifies Eliot's scholarly point of view on his subject matter, his persona and the cadence of his thoughts which in turns signal a demonstration of novelty. In addition, his attempts on placing things in its novelty not at all end up in an instant; putting it upon a vigour foothold has also been characterised with him. 'Gerontion' being a diminutive form of Greek word *geron*, has been aptly chosen for what the poet intends to expound. The title of the poem implies a parting away between the poet and his persona. The sense of alienation and separation still continues here. We find our poet contemplative as he endeavours revealing a contrast between the spiritual aridity of his protagonist and the passage of the soul from age through death and purgation into eternal life in John Newman's poem, 'The Dream of Gerontus' (Jain 43). Gerontion as a persona places himself in an indeterminate identity what becomes in common with the protagonist Prufrock in the poem 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'. Here both of the poems uphold almost an aligned mode of temperament. In line with the first one we discover the second one suggesting the second phase of Prufrock. As it appears in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' the protagonist Prufrock is none other than a middle aged person whereas Gerontion is the little old man. This 'little old man' however does not resist himself restraining the aridity or pruneness within here rather the very process of getting pruned and arid is ever on running and sees its culmination in 'Ash Wednesday'. Eliot's borrowings therefore decode a great underlying truth of our contemporary life and society. Beyond its denotative meaning of 'Gerontion', Eliot signs an ever extending horror of our modern metropolis life, as it sees our constant deformation and debasement in this capitalist hyper society. Prufrock's unsung love song and Gerontion's early aging can well determine our miscommunication with that of our past as well as our true self. Getting pruned due to the very incident of miscommunication in a metropolis hyper society thus substantiates Eliot's novelty of measuring life with this new scale.

Epigraphs from various sources have added another dimension to intertextuality in Eliot's poems. In Eliot, the uses of epigraphs are very frequent and suggestive. Being a literary quotation placed at the beginning of a book or other text, epigraph brings forth an added significance to the text following (Cuddon 296). A prevailing interdependence is overtly experienced by Eliot's readers when they come across an epigraph in his poems. The epigraphs however manifest Eliot's explicit borrowings from others; yet they are interposed in such a way that his audiences are at their wonder arrested to explore what they never thought.

Eliot's endeavours make his readers read what was not read before. It instigates a process for his audiences towards establishing a bridge between the acquainted ones and those who and what were unfamiliar and unknown. While doing this, Eliot however does never forget his own quality. His writings in no ways get away from the organic traits he always extends for us. His process of transposing the fragments not only rests in adding their linguistics values but also the abstract values of arresting the pleasure of knowing the unknown prevails everywhere. As a matter of fact, his technique poses such a prudent and tempting inquiry that a lasting affiliation is instilled between the readers and texts interposed. Eliot's opening in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' therefore is overt. His extract from Dante's *Inferno*, Canto XXVII, 61-66 finds itself fitting as well effective enough to express his motifs to his readers:

*S'io credessi che mia risposta fosse  
a persona che mai tornasse al mondo,  
questa fiamma staria senza piu scosse.  
ma per cio che giammai, di questa fondo  
non torno vivo d'infamia ti risondo.*

[That is, "If I thought my answer were to someone who would be/ no more stirrings of this flame. Since it is true/ that no one leaves these depths of misery / alive, from all that I have heard reported, / I answer you without fear of infamy (Palma 102). ]

These words are spoken by Count Guido da Montefeltro (1223 – September 29, 1298), a fraudulent character who may himself be a victim of fraud, in Dante's *Inferno* xxvii, 61-66. In the eighth chasm of Hell, Dante sees the fate of some evil counselors who had misused their outstanding intelligence to deceive others. Guido himself has been punished here for his deceitful advice on earth to Pope Boniface VIII who persuaded him to offer advice for demolishing the pope's enemies – a broken promise of amnesty for the Colonna family—in exchange of the impossible absolution of this sin even before Guido commits it (*Inferno* xxvii : 85-111). Each sinner however is imprisoned in the flame of his consciousness and tormented by burning. When the sinners speak from the thieving flames the voice sounds from the tip, which trembles. Dante requests Guido to reveal his identity, 'so may thy name on earth maintain its front'. Guido does so only because he believes that Dante, too, will never return to earth.

Eliot here rightly has chosen the epigraph as his protagonist Prufrock in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' appears to be a damned one similar to Guido and finds no room for him. Prufrock is too imprisoned in the flame of his own consciousness; his tormented soul falls in an unspeakable misery as his intentions, his thoughts remain unexpressed. His insatiate libido, his inanity in communication, that is, his failure in conveying the overwhelming question to his intended one likens him to the sinner in Dante's *Inferno*. At this point both Guido and Prufrock consume the same fate, the same sorts of sufferings. Their inanity and void in communication shove them to the same hassle of nonexistence. Therefore the empathy that is roused as a consequent of this paralleling juxtaposition between Dante's sinner and Eliotean modern man Prufrock is not at all an alien proposition; rather this is a manifestation of a symbiosis of myth and modernity which in turns upholds a testimony of Eliotean novelty. The myth of Dante's Guido and the reality of our modern man Prufrock render the same crisis in their identity which has been a common flaw for all the people living in a metropolis reality. Borrowing from Dante thus shows Eliot's attempt to arouse in his readers' mind the memory of some Dantesque scene, which in turns determines a link between the medieval inferno and that of our modern life.

Likewise the epigraph of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' Eliot shows great skills while choosing the one for 'Gerontion':

Thou hast nor youth nor age  
But as it were an after dinner sleeps  
Dreaming of both.

This one is not at all an ancient one as that of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is. It is none other than Shakespeare (1564-1616) and his great creation *The Measure for Measure* (Act I, Scene I, lines: 34-36). Eliot's access to Shakespeare here seems to be deliberate but effortless. His extract from Shakespeare has been commensurate rightly since his persona Gerontion and Shakespeare's Claudio will soon accept almost the

same miserable fate. In Shakespeare's *The Measure for Measure* Claudio's misery is inevitable and ironical so as it is in the fate of Gerontion. The Duke, disguised as friar in *The Measure for Measure*, consoles Claudio, a young man on the verge of his being executed in Act III, scene I. The Duke teaches Claudio to be 'absolute for death' since death is inescapable whereas life is uncertain, transient and unreal. This apparent truth of Duke teaching however turns to nothing but a mere mockery to a person who is in a 'life in death condition'. Therefore this consolation is an absurd one; it is an irony to life indeed. What would be the meaning of the consolation the Duke offered to Claudio if he could rest no more? As matter of fact, consolation for consolation's sake is expounding a solid piece of verbosity which will result in nothing.

Eliot's extract for 'Gerontion' of course has been characterised with its meaning in depth. It may exemplify an ambivalent one which with its first approach may not offer an easy comprehension or understanding. Virtually his quotes probably do not address to Claudio; rather 'life itself' is the subject to be addressed here. Life in its true sense has neither youth nor age or even it has no doom at all. On the other hand, it is addressed to Eliot's persona Gerontion. It is an interior monologue of Gerontion who is speaking to himself. Eliot here is employing this very technique which was very frequent in many of Shakespeare's heroes. It functions as a mode of consoling and deceiving oneself, and thus becomes a tool of abdicating one's moral responsibility. It is a process of self-dramatisation and self-deception to evade reality (Jain 80-82). Eliot's borrowing from Shakespeare bears out very apt and pertinent since Gerontion's own life, which is caught between conscience and doubt, can believe in nothing, receives the same destiny- an unreal and futile one. His will gets paralysed; his relentless self fails to rest in his own surroundings. He is afraid of surrendering to passion and belief because both of the experiences are terrifying for him. As a matter of fact, Claudio and Gerontion are caught in the same nook of haplessness. Their consciousness is used up as their identity sets at stake. The very condition of being in a 'nor youth nor age' state or the 'reverie' they experience inevitably culminates their absurdity as human beings since they are destined to clutch their end of self desires and self interest.

Eliot's imageries, his diverse forms and themes proclaim greater novelty too. Most of his imageries are natural, drawn from our day to day life. They have a greater effect of communicative values with our surrounding worlds. Similar to the imageries, the forms he follows and upholds in his poems are also very innovative and natural. Whatever he has put in his poems cannot be assumed as prefigured; rather they are chosen or picked up from a whole variety of sources exuberantly as if they were the part of our experiences. Nevertheless, one who goes through his writings will inevitably see the intensity of his synchronisation either of his imageries or forms. Eliot's own observation is worth mentioning here as he reveals through a personal letter to Paul Elmer More, on June 20, 1943, "I am not a systematic thinker, if needed I am not a thinker at all" (qtd in Haque 41). This is indeed a simplified assertion made by Eliot. Almost all the works of Eliot are knitted in such a way that makes a sense of being his original ones. Either the implicit or explicit borrowings, he presents before us, become an ultimate cause of quest and investigation. Eliot's use of allusions, references, imageries from a variety of sources not only proffers a source of inspiration but also produces a lasting effect upon his readers as well as the researchers of his works. Apart from the literary sources and the experiences of man's everyday life, he has used allusions, imageries or references which include the Biblical ones, teaching of the *Hindu Puran*, *Upanishad*, Buddhist's sayings, or even the scriptures from the Holy *Quran*. Resultantly, his attempts put forth what Stephen Coote (93-94) finds as a 'barren game of controversy' which includes one image from here in Jacobean plays and the other from a religious or historical source. Hence a process of continuous exploration while reading his writings is consistently necessitated.

The imageries arrested from his personal experiences are terse, yet tell us the predicaments of our modern urban life. The imagery of fog used in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is definitely an autobiographical one that he draws from his days in St Louis. Here he of course remembers the 'fog' blown from the factory chimneys across the Mississippi (Ackroyd 23). Another observation however reminds us Baudelaire's '*Ke Sept Vieillards*' (The Seven Old Man): ... One morning ... when (a background comparable to an actor's soul) a dirty yellow fog was flooding the whole of space, I was making my way...'. Eliot's dependency on Baudelaire thus cannot be ignored at all since Baudelaire's prototypal urban imageries have always been a source of imitation and inspiration to many. The curse of our urban life because of pollution is a predominating



incident here and Eliot's instant reflection to this catastrophe bears a strong testimony of his sensibility as well as responsibility towards his surroundings. The reality of the 19th century industrialised sordid urban life is not the only experience of the people whom Eliot was living with; rather it has emerged as a common experience for all the urban people around the world. Eliot's close association with his surrounding world, his concerns for the declining environment thus has rightly been expressed with this very image of 'yellow fog'. His sensibility to the declining environment can strikingly recover us from our callousness to our surroundings and thus save us from an impending destruction. A sense of revitalised thoughts signifying the harmony of the world is necessitated when Eliot recalls his own town. Thus his imageries contribute a lot for our revitalised thoughts towards reviving a harmonious existence in the world.

Poetry of Eliot always abounds in multifaceted allusions. As an implicit reference to another work of literature or art, to a person or an event, an allusion shares some experiences with the writer (Cuddon 29). While talking about Eliot's allusions the first thing that comes to our mind is his sharing of the everyday experiences with us. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' his archetypal modern man, uncovers man's frustration and inanity in a materialist routine bound society. With our awe we see that the lines 23-27 of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock': And indeed there will be time, / ... There will be time, there will be time/ To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet; / get referred to the first line from the poem 'To His Coy Mistress' by Andrew Marvell (March 31, 1621 – August 16, 1678): 'Had we but world enough and time' which Marvell drew from the words of the preacher in Ecclesiastes iii. 1-8:

1.     There is a time for everything,  
        and a season for every activity under the heavens:
2.     a time to be born and a time to die,  
        a time to plant and a time to uproot,
3.     a time to kill and a time to heal,  
        a time to tear down and a time to build,
4.     a time to weep and a time to laugh,  
        a time to mourn and a time to dance,
5.     a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,  
        a time to embrace and a time to refrain from embracing,
6.     a time to search and a time to give up,  
        a time to keep and a time to throw away,
7.     a time to tear and a time to mend,  
        a time to be silent and a time to speak,
8.     a time to love and a time to hate,  
        a time for war and a time for peace.

The allusion Eliot installs in his 'love song' may literally evoke a controversy when it is compared to its source, the preacher's speech in Ecclesiastes iii. 1-8. He might have been very affirmative in suggesting man's patience for everything whereas Eliot's protagonists are highly pessimistic. Eliot's personas seem to be fossilised, they get obsessed with a Hamletean procrastination which results in a void of interaction and inanity. 'To roll it towards some overwhelming question', (line: 92, The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock), also alludes to 'Let us roll all our strength, and all / Our sweetness, up into one ball', from Marvell's 'To His Coy Mistress'. Again, the phrase 'the works and days' in the 29th line of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' suggests a contrasting effect with the ancient to our present day. The phrase has been alluded to the title of a poem by the Greek poet Hesiod (8th BC). The poem promotes honest labour and contains maxims and instructions on agriculture. There is a mock-heroic contrast between the worlds of the present, suggested by the title of the poem and the over refined society in where the modern man Prufrock resides in. The irony that we notice here is that Prufrock's days are full of revision of decisions. That is, his days are full of indecisions which result in procrastinations. Therefore he demonstrates days of inactions and inanity whereas Hesiod is propagating days of honest labour and action. Hesiod can uphold man's dignity through his actions and achievements which are far away from the reach of Prufrock who is deceiving himself with false hopes and aspirations.

Borrowings from the Elizabethan and Jacobean playwrights set a benchmark effect in Eliot's creation. References or texts from Shakespeare have indeed been a recurrent phenomenon in Eliot's works (Southam 5). The phrase 'a dying fall' in line 55 and the lines 73-74: I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas./ in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' are of Shakespeare plays. The phrase 'a dying fall', recalls us the *Twelfth Night*, Act I, scene i whereas the lines mentioned allude to the *Hamlet*, Act II, scene ii.

Biblical references in Eliot again transport an illuminating and revitalising effect in the thoughts of his readers whose spiritual aridity causes a lot of their predicaments in a mechanised world. The references from the Biblical sources in 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Gerontion' are pertinent and aptly chosen to connect our present humiliating condition. "But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed," (line 81 of The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock) goes parallel to Samuel I, 12; XII, 22; lines 82-43: Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald ) brought in upon a platter , / I am no prophet – and here's no great matter ;/ are drawn from Mark VI, 17-19, and Mathew XIV, 3-11. The allusion of Lazarus in lines 94-95 are taken either from John XI, 1-44 or Luke XVI, 19-31. There is no denying the fact that almost all of these references exemplify man's constraints. These apparent constraints however have both a terminating and transposing reaction. When man's spiritual aridity is terminated, obviously a sense of transposition occurs from his existing experience to an upcoming innocence. The allusions "I am no prophet," or of "Lazarus," may signify the speaker's transposing from a not awakening state of thoughts to an awakening state where he can distinguish between the both. Therefore Eliot's biblical allusions can bring a distillation in his readers' thoughts which unambiguously uphold a sharing value between the author and his audience.

Besides 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock', 'Gerontion' is no less signifying in its spiritual sharing. The beginning two lines in the 'Gerontion': Here I am an old man in dry mouth, / Being read to be a boy, waiting for rain. / goes in line with: Here he sits, in a dry month, / Being read to by a country boy, longing for rain./ from A. C. Benson's Biography of *Edward Fitzgerald* ( Benson 142). The metaphorical house: My house is a decayed house, (line, 7) in the 'Gerontion' appears to be a closely associated one to our contemporary life. Eliot has rightly drawn it from *The Dream of Gerontius* by J. H. Newman (1801-90). It does not necessarily connote Gerontion's dwelling place; rather it is a metaphor for the post-War Europe and for human body of the dying man which is called 'the mason of soul'. Along with other fragments, through the Biblical references, imageries, allusion etc., Eliot's machinery towards unveiling man's constraints and transferring process of illumination in thoughts remains constant. When in 'Gerontion' we come across the lines 17 – 20: Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'/ The word within a word, unable to speak a word, / Swaddled with darkness./ we see his dynamism in demonstrating a strong Biblical connection. He has alluded several passages from the Gospels and Lancelot Andrews' (1555-1626) commentary on them in Works, I. 204, Mathew 12: 38: 'Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to [Christ], 'Master we would see a sign from you, as a proof of His divinity. John 1:1, 14: "In the beginning was the World and the World was with God, the World was God ... And the World became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth."

Delineating the everyday life rooted in an urban milieu is a common feature in Eliot. His characters are found living in towns or in the outskirts of towns or in a metropolis. The city dwellers' common joys, achievements, sorrows, sufferings etc., have been the dominating subject matter of his poetry. Since the 19th and 20th century urban life in most of the cases exhibit the darker experiences of man, his poems are not at all free from the sordid and nightmarish reality of people. We see that the entire environment of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is based on the late nineteenth century Boston society which was laden with delicacy and subtlety, the malaise and neuroses of its dwellers. This is unarguably a hyper-critical urban reality that Eliot adapts from the French poet Baudelaire. Many of his urban images, choice of dictions reflect Baudelaire's direct or indirect bearing upon him. Eliot's own assertion in *To Criticise the Critic* can rightly be cited here:

I think that from Baudelaire I learned first, a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet written in language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of juxtaposition of the matter of fact and the fantastic. From him, as from Laforgue, I learned that sort of material that I had, the sort of experience that an adolescent had had, in an industrial city in

America, could be material of poetry, and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded hitherto as the impossible, the sterile, and intractably unpoetic (T. S. Eliot 126).

Eliot is highly owed to Elizabethan Plays and Laforgue for his unique 'form' he has adapted. Jules Laforgue (16 August 1860 – 20 August 1887), a Franco-Uruguayan poet, often referred to as a 'symbolist poet,' has highly been influential in shaping his forms and symbols too. Eliot is very clear and deliberate in acknowledging it. The 'form' with what he began to write, in 1904 or 1909, was directly drawn from the study of Laforgue and those of the Elizabethan playwrights. So far as Eliot started from an exact point, it was exclusively and emphatically the poetry of Laforgue. The latter Elizabethan dramatists had a less immediate and less intense effect, and their influence is not positively apparent until 'Gerontion', which was written about ten years after the initial encounter with Laforgue (Unger 10). Whatever skills and capacity he has attained and adapted in this regard however shows his original temperament. To him this very attempt appears as a "barren game of controversy" that is, exploring and investigating in nature which could hardly be handled with sustained, exact, and closely knit argument and reasoning". Eliot's own assertion in his "letters to Paul Elmer More, on June 20, 1943," well testifies his approach towards the very 'forms' and 'symbol' inevitably (Haque 41). His borrowings are thus very much conspicuous since these are neither imitated from their sources blindly nor are they knitted irrationally. His attempts are based more on his organic sense than his skills and reasoning. Therefore, his forms are clearly possessing those qualities which widen open the potentialities of a further change in this arena from the conventional trends.

In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Gerontion' Eliot's use of monologue, dramatic monologue and *verse libre* are highly technical and pertinent. Since his protagonists are mostly found reticent, his choice of these devices is sensible. These however expose his characters sequentially. Since an active interaction remains absent here, a functioning or effective communication occurs indirectly. In this process Eliot not only revives the very technique of dramatic monologue in his poems but also promotes it to its perfection. Here again he is sharing from Jules Laforgue from whom he formulates the distinctive nature of his dramatic monologues. His dependence on Robert Browning (7 May, 1812 –12 December, 1889), an English poet and playwrights of the Victorian age, could well strengthen the formulation that Eliot already approached from Laforgue. In addition, Eliot's interaction with Browning accelerates his inquiries; brings proliferation in his choices of subject matter and use in irony; distills his art of characterisation, choosing the social commentary, placing the dark humour, bringing the variants in vocabulary or syntax etc. For a further condensation and intensification of the very form of "dramatic monologue," a tie between Eliot and Davidson is no less significant. It is not at all an exaggeration in stating that likewise Laforgue, Browning etc., the Scottish poet, playwright and novelist John Davidson (11 April, 1857– 23March, 1909) could effectively move Eliot's insight in this regard. Apart from the "dramatic monologue," Eliot's deployment of "interior monologue" and "*verse-libre*" further magnitudes his association with Laforgue and the representative figures of the "symbolist movement." It is Laforgue from whom Eliot masters the art of sardonic dramatisation of the most serious ideas as irrational and ridiculous that results in a comic relief of the painful emotions in a hyper society (Jain 11).

## Conclusion

Diverse titles, inquisitive epigraphs, allusions, references, dictions, forms, styles, ideas etc., what constitute the very essence of his poems have also constituted the very essence of intertextuality here. All these elements have artistically been handled and deployed in his works. His choice of the titles for the poems discussed, the epigraphs installed in his creation, the variety of themes incorporated and presented before us, even the forms renovated from his predecessors etc., signify a strong testimony in favour of our claim. Towards bringing novelty in his creation, revitalising his readers' knowledge and taste for reading poetry etc., Eliot's attempts are thus very distilled and persuasive. In a war-struck sterile world, he does not confine his readers in mere rumination of the romantic cult that could let people escape from the sheer reality of life. He revives the ancient resources, the glorious achievements of human race. He places the contrasting juxtaposition of our present predicaments. And this is how his eventual attempts instigate us confronting the burden laden heavenly upon us. In the process of integration of the fragments from a whole variety of genres, Eliot's attempts remain indisputably unbiased, natural, thoughts provoking and of course unifying. They



become not at all a mere cataloguing; rather they pledge a refreshing and revitalizing effect for all of us. Therefore a glaring association of intertextuality substantiates his works indisputably.

#### Work Cited

##### Primary Source

Eliot, T. S. *The Complete Poems & Plays*. London: England: Faber and Faber (Paperback Edition.), 2004.

##### Secondary Sources

Eliot, T. S. "The Unfading Genius of Rudyard Kipling", *Kipling Journal*, Vol. XXVI. No. 129 March 1959, p. 9. (<http://www.kiplingjournal.com/textfiles/KJ129.txt>). Retrieved on December 10, 2017.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle, 1999.

Ackroyd, Peter. *T. S. Eliot: A Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1984.

Ahsanul, Haque. *Eliot on Eliot*. Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 1993.

Alighieri, Dante. *Inferno*. Translated by Michael Palma. Edited by Giuseppe Mazzotta. New York: A Norton Critical Edition, 2008.

Benson, A. C. *Edward Fitzgerald*. New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1905.

Coote, Stephen. *T.S. Eliot: The Waste Land*. England: Penguin Books, 1985.

Cuddon, J. A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. 3rd ed. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

Eliot, T. S. *Selected Essays*. London: Faber and Faber, 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_. "To Criticise the Critic", *Literary Criticism: A Reading*. Edited by Das. B & J. M. Mohanty. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Gardner, Helen. *The Art of T. S. Eliot: Auditory Imagination*. 3rd Impression. London: The Cresset Press, 1950.

Haque, Ahsanul. *Eliot on Eliot*. Dhaka: University of Dhaka, 1993.

Hyde, G. M. "The Poetry of City", *Modernism: 1890-1930*. Edited by Bradbury Malcolm and James McFarlane. London: Penguin Books, 1991.

Jain, Manju. *A Critical Reading of the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Rahman, Siddiquir. *T. S. Eliot: From the Context of Past and Present*. Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 1984.

Shakespeare William. *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare*. New Delhi: Oxford & IBH Publishing Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1980.

Southam, B. C. *A Guide to the Selected Poems of T. S. Eliot*. 6th Ed., London: A Harvest Original, 1994.

Titus, T. K. *A Critical Study of T. S. Eliot's Works*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers and Distributors, 1999.

Unger, Leonard. *T. S. Eliot: Moment and Pattern*. Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis, 1966.