Words of Shape and Shade:

Synaesthesia in the Poetry and Poetics of the Early Twentieth Century

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> I fell in love - that is the only expression I can think of - at once, and am still at the mercy of words…
> Out of them came the gusts and grunts and hiccups and heehaws of the common fun of the earth; and though what the words meant was, in its own way, often deliciously funny enough, so much funnier seemed to me, at that almost forgotten time, the shape and shade and size and noise of the words as they hummed, strummed, jigged and galloped along.
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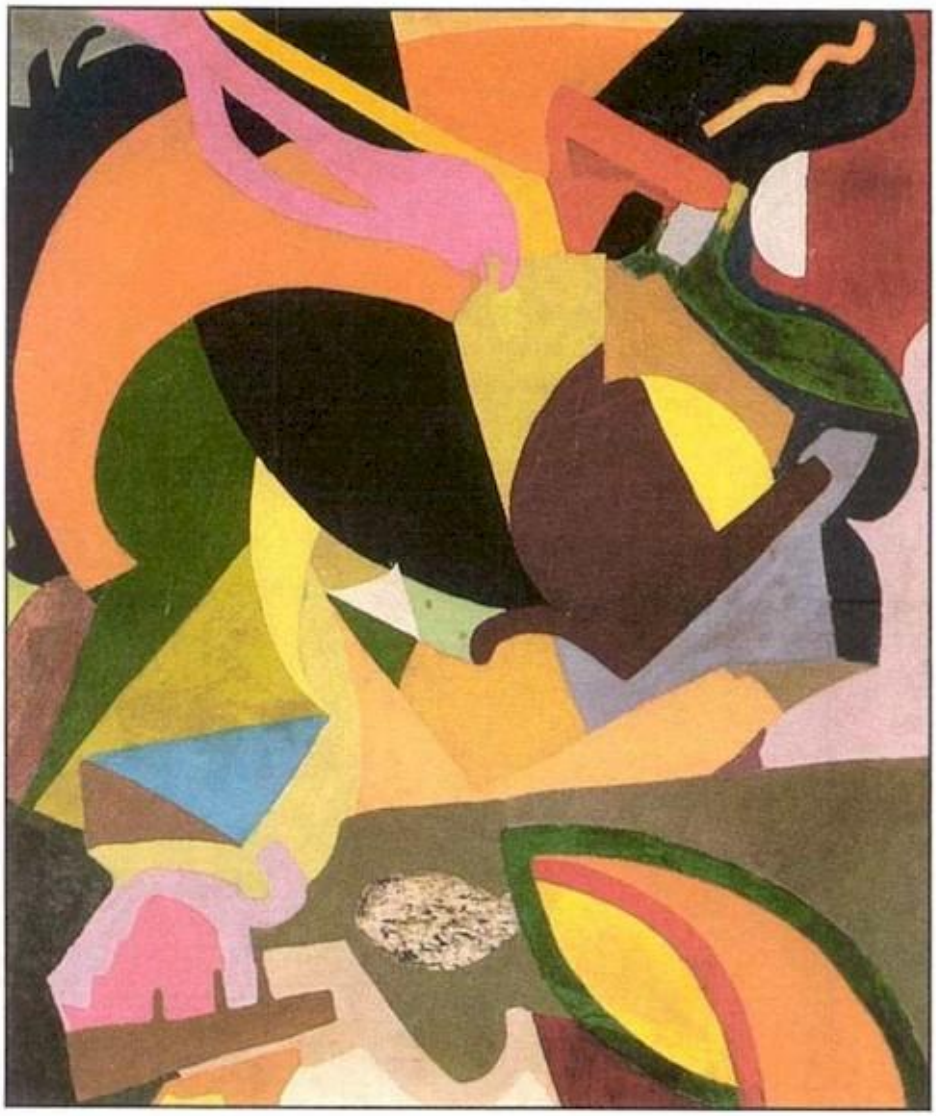
> - Dylan Thomas, "Notes on the Art of Poetry." *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*, Ed. Daniel Jones. (New York: New Directions Publishing, 2003).



E.E Cummings, *Noise Number 1*, 1919, Oil on Canvas.

ABSTRACT

Synaesthesia is a neurological condition defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as “the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body”. This thesis examines the link between poetic and synaesthetic concepts, establishing the relevance of synaesthetic metaphor, sensory imagery and sound symbolism to the British and American poetry – the major English language poetics – of the early twentieth century. Although synaesthesia as a diagnosed neurological condition is not overly common, recent research in the area suggests that humans have an inherent capacity for inter-sensory association, which begins in infancy when perception is thought to be synaesthetic in nature. The idea of a universal synaesthetic capacity is certainly not implausible; synaesthetic associations are an established element in language (metaphors such as 'sharp cheese' and 'warm colour' are widely accepted) and children and adults routinely match dark colours with lower musical tones, and lighter colours with higher tones. The poetic implications of synaesthesia lie in the nexus between sensory experience and its metaphorical representation through language. The focus on image and experience in twentieth century poetics arose from the search for a language that could be used as a means to express the complexity of the modern world, and synaesthetic metaphor played an integral part in this search.

The unique nature of the social environment in the early twentieth century, with its rapid and unprecedented industrial, technological and cultural change, encouraged a greater focus on the senses and perception. The poets whose work displays evidence of these concepts were not necessarily synaesthetes themselves, nor were they always consciously or deliberately applying synaesthetic theories to their work in the manner of some nineteenth century poets. Rather, in trying to process the chaotic sensory information elicited by the introduction of new technologies, the latent synaesthetic capacity of the brain was stimulated. For poets, whose manipulation of language relies implicitly on metaphor, the implications of this synaesthetic stimulation were greater.

This study includes detailed examinations of the work of those generally considered to be the major English language poets writing in the early twentieth century, exploring their individual use of synaesthetic metaphor and inter-sensory concepts, as well as the larger patterns that emerge. It suggests that a progression

emerges in the use of poetic synaesthesia which can be traced through the works of these prominent poets, regardless of poetic genre or style. This progression was characterised by a more traditional use of synaesthetic metaphor at the turn of the century which reflected nineteenth century theories of poetic synaesthesia; this can be seen in the work of W.B Yeats. It then moved to a more bodily focus in the works of Imagist poets such as Ezra Pound, H.D and Amy Lowell, where imagery was increasingly paired with tactile and gustatory synaesthetic impressions. The trend toward tactility was further strengthened during World War I when Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Isaac Rosenberg used synaesthetic metaphors which emphasised the curious sensory transferences of traumatic war experience.

After World War I, the use of synaesthesia in poetry increasingly exemplified the interdisciplinarity of the period, reflecting synaesthetic ideas from music and the visual arts. Poets such as T.S Eliot, E.E Cummings, William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens engaged with the movements of Impressionism, Cubism and Orphism/Synchromism, and the synaesthetic theories of F.T Marinetti and Wassily Kandinsky were similarly influential. From the 1930s, poets increasingly combined the sensory, tactile approach of the earlier Imagists with these visual and aural aesthetics; this duality can be seen in the works of W.H Auden, Theodore Roethke and Dylan Thomas. There was also an increased focus on conceptualised synaesthetic metaphors involving semantic and emotional elements, suggesting a form of 'ideasthesia'. From the mid-century on, the poetic inheritances left by earlier poets could be seen in the continuation of many of the dominant synaesthetic tropes by poets such as Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney.

This study aims to highlight the implicit relationship between synaesthesia and poetry and poetics, particularly through metaphor. It will show how synaesthetic metaphor was integral to the poetry of the early twentieth century, and how it can be used to provide an alternative basis for critical discussion of some of the most prominent poets of the period. The presence of synaesthesia in the poetry of this period was wide-ranging, pervasive and evident in the works of all the major poets writing at the time, and this thesis will offer a potential explanation for this hitherto unexplored and unexplained phenomenon.

Candidate's Declaration:

This thesis **does not contain** work that I have published, nor work under review for publication.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Synaesthesia is a neurological condition defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary* as "the production of a sense impression relating to one sense or part of the body by stimulation of another sense or part of the body". The word "synaesthesia"[1] comes from the Greek *syn* (union) and *aesthesis* (sensation), its literal meaning being a "joining of the senses". Individuals with synaesthesia may experience colour when they hear a sound, see letters and numbers in colour, or experience a tactile sensation when tasting a food, for example. There are a number of varieties of synaesthesia involving inter-sensory combinations, and others which incorporate conceptual or semantic elements such as graphemes, emotions and personification. These unusual perceptions are generally not in any way distressing or painful; in fact, synaesthetes are often unable to imagine life without them. As synaesthesia is neither a dangerous nor unpleasant experience for most synaesthetes, it has often been relegated to a position of low importance among medical and psychological researchers whose attention is more readily turned to those conditions requiring treatments and cures. Despite this, the study of synaesthesia has proved helpful to an understanding of the workings of our senses and our perception of the world.

Scientific interest in synaesthesia as a condition can be dated back to the early nineteenth century, when interest in psychology and psychoanalysis was beginning to increase due to a backlash against theological and mystical theories of human experience. Synaesthesia was initially regarded as a mere idiosyncrasy or hallucination on the part of the individual who claimed it. This view prevailed for many years, and it was only in the late twentieth century that research into the condition proved that synaesthesia was a genuine neurological abnormality through MRI imaging. Dr Richard Cytowic, one of the first researchers to bring the study of synaesthesia back into the public eye in the 1980s, described the condition as "an involuntary joining in which the real information of one sense is accompanied by a perception in another sense".[2] Cytowic's research outlined the main characteristics of synaesthetic perception and formulated a means of diagnosis, and his two seminal books on the condition,

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[1] I will take this opportunity to note that there are two commonly used spellings for the word (*synaesthesia* and *synesthesia*). I have chosen to use the former spelling as it highlights more directly the –*aesthesis* root of the word, relevant as a joint referent for both 'sensation' and 'aesthetics', with which my study is dually concerned.

[2] Richard Cytowic, *Synesthesia: A Union of the Senses*, (New York: Springer-Verlag, 1989) p. 1.

Synesthesia: A Union of the Senses and *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, provided modern synaesthesia researchers with the basis on which to build their theories. Today, synaesthesia research is experiencing a rapid growth in scientific interest, as well as increasing attention from other disciplines. The appeal of this condition with its intriguing sensory effects is such that it has attracted a lot of attention from the creative arts, especially in the areas of music, visual art and literature. Since the scientific study of synaesthesia was re-established in the 1980s, research into the significance of inter-sensory concepts within the arts has also experienced a revival. Following this trend, my research takes the condition of neurological synaesthesia as a starting-point in order to conduct a wide-ranging examination of synaesthetic concepts and synaesthetic metaphors in the poetry of the first half of the twentieth century, a period which was particularly conducive to synaesthetic ideas.

Metaphor is, in its most basic definition, "experiencing one thing in terms of another".[3] In her study of metaphor in poetic theory, Aileen Ward states that metaphor "is essential to poetry ... because the subject matter of poetry, the medium of poetic language, even the poet's purpose or view of the world all require it".[4] Poetic metaphor "must express the otherwise inexpressible",[5] conveying the poet's personal experience to the reader through the language of the senses, and this is where it overlaps with synaesthetic ideas. June Downey provided one of the first studies of literary synaesthesia in an essay from 1912, and she noted that "Reading the literature of synesthesia one is frequently impressed by the poetical value of many of the sense-analogies reported".[6] Poetry and synaesthesia have an intrinsic relationship, but there is a difference between clinical synaesthesia and poetic inter-sense analogies. For Downey, the division between "cases of true synesthesia, in which sensations of a given sensory quality regularly and uniformly arouse sensations of another sensory tone, and cases of so-called coloured thinking or the employment of sense analogies in a figurative or reflective way, has induced some confusion".[7] Downey examined the works of a number of nineteenth century English poets and concluded that, "while there

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[3] Richard Cytowic, *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993) p. 207.
[4] Aileen Ward, *The Unfurling of Entity: Metaphor in Poetic Theory*, (New York: Garland Publishing, 1987) p. 2.
[5] P. 463.
[6] June E Downey. "Literary Synaesthesia", *The Journal of Philosophy, Psychology and Scientific Methods*, Vol. 9, No 18, 1912, pp. 490-498.
[7] P. 490.

is very slight evidence that the chosen poets experienced true synesthesia, there is some justification in concluding that they enjoy, more than the ordinary reader, analogies between the senses".[8] The distinction between neurological synaesthesia and poetic synaesthesia (or synaesthesia as *condition* and synaesthesia as *concept*) is an important one, and my thesis will establish the links and the divergences between these. Since Downey's brief essay, there has been very little written on the use of synaesthetic concepts in poetry. Any comprehensive studies that exist focus on Romantic poets (such as Shelley[9]), or on the use of synaesthesia as a doctrine in French Symbolist poetry. There is only ever sporadic mention of synaesthesia as it relates to twentieth century poetry, and there has never been a broad, comprehensive study on the use of synaesthetic concepts in the works of poets from this period. What makes this interesting, then, is the fact that synaesthetic concepts can be found in practically all the poetry of the early twentieth century period, regardless of poetic style or intention. They also appear widely in the visual art and music fields, and there is evidence of extensive interdisciplinarity occurring in this period which is based in many respects on inter-sensory ideas. This thesis is an attempt to provide a conceivable answer as to why this might be, and by undertaking it I hope to further the interdisciplinary potential of synaesthesia research and provide new critical avenues for the study of modernism and early twentieth century poetry.

The poetry of the early twentieth century can loosely be defined as modernist, although that term needs to be understood as including a number of different styles. As a term it does, however, directly indicate the centrality of the changing modern world to the creative arts. From the late nineteenth century, innovation was occurring in all areas of society. Technology was proliferating at a rapid speed, resulting in a growth in industrialisation and urbanisation. At the same time, cultural trends were encouraging the rejection of traditional modes of expression, and the creative arts were increasingly characterised by experimentation and avant garde theory. The curious prolificacy of synaesthetic metaphor in British and American poetry of the early twentieth century was in many ways a response to the sensory changes elicited by modernisation. The examples of synaesthetic comparison, imagery and metaphor that can be found in the works of some of the most prominent poets of the early twentieth century appear too

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[8] P. 497.
[9] See Glen O'Malley's study *Shelley and Synesthesia* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

broadly and extensively to be the result of either coincidence or calculated design. Rather, they represent a change in the nature of perception and a greater sensory awareness arising in response to the cultural, social and industrial upheaval of the time. The idea of sensory correspondence was relevant to the period because it provided a means of integrating the fragmented sensory experiences incited by the changing world into a singular coherent view. Poets in the early twentieth century, attempting to translate their sensory experience into language, used synaesthetic metaphor as a means of expressing the complexity of the modern world and their anxiety for its changing direction.

My study into the synaesthetic significance of early twentieth century poetry has its roots in studies of the senses. In her 1975 book *The Five Senses: Studies in a Literary Tradition*, Louise Vinge examined the use of the senses as a literary and historical concept. She states, "To point out the existence of the five senses as a literary pattern or topos, a recurrent and useful scheme of expression, we need not adduce a complete survey of all instances ... A strong indication of the existence of this tradition is the fact that certain ideas and images recur frequently".[10] Vinge also asserts the importance of examining the scientific and medical fields in conjunction with the literary, for "several ideas and images originally came from treatises by philosophers ... and physicians ... therefore the history of the literary use of the pattern of the five senses must be supplemented with facts from the history of natural science and medicine".[11] The interdisciplinarity of sensory studies is important. As well as Vinge, researchers such as Constance Classen (*Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures*, 1993,[12] *Aroma: A Cultural History of Smell, 1994*[13] and *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch*, 2012[14]), David Howes (*Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, 2005[15]) and Mark Smith (*Sensory History*, 2008[16]) have looked at the anthropological, historical and cultural implications of the senses. Just as

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[10] Louise Vinge. *The Five Senses: Studies in a Literary Tradition* (Lund: CUK Gleerup, 1975). p. 11
[11] P. 12
[12] Constance Classen. *Worlds of Sense: Exploring the Senses in History and Across Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1993).
[13] Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Smiedt, *Aroma: A Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994).
[14] Constance Classen, *The Deepest Sense: A Cultural History of Touch* (Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 2012).
[15] David Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader* (Oxford: Berg, 2005).
[16] Smith, Mark. *Sensory History*. (Oxford: Berg, 2007).

scientific studies of synaesthesia have experienced recent growth, so have studies of sensory history and culture. My research lies at the convergence of these two areas, which suggests its relevance to current ideas on the intersection of perception and culture.

Vinge and Classen both look at the implications of theories and popular conceptions of the senses on the literary and socio-cultural environments of different periods. Vinge's study outlines the changing symbolism of the senses from classical to modern times. Philosophers in the classical period were interested in the functions of the sense organs and the relation of sensory perceptions to the soul and mind, and their theories on perception heavily influenced medieval thought on the subject. At this time the senses became highly symbolic, often associated with the elements of fire, water, air and earth. Vinge states that "this combining of senses and elements is connected to the microcosm idea - in being made out of the four elements, man corresponds to the universe".[17] These allegorical representations were then used to illustrate abstract human experiences, such as love, in the literature of the time. After medieval times, sense imagery started to become less allegorical and more abstract, and was often used as a means of moral comment related to ideas of reason, judgement and the human soul; this use of the senses came slightly closer to the concept of synaesthesia by proposing that each of the senses integrates to form a higher level of human function and understanding. In the Elizabethan period, the five senses were often employed in descriptions of love, and these were characterised by their dichotomies: the pleasurable, hedonistic qualities of the senses were portrayed either as a positive embodiment of sensual love and beauty, or as a morally reprehensible symbol of temptation or vice. By the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the senses were increasingly becoming a topic of investigation for philosophers and scientists seeking to understand the workings of the human mind and the relation between human perception and the physical environment. Philosophers such as Descartes examined the nature of reality and questioned whether physical objects were partly a percept of the human mind. They connected perception with knowledge and reason and suggested that "sensation [is] the source of all mental activity".[18] Vinge notes that while "we do not yet find proper 'synesthesia' in which sensations in two or more senses are described as qualitatively

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[17] Vinge, p. 50
[18] P. 137

identical ... with the motif of 'the concert' or 'the union' of the senses an important step towards that idea was certainly taken".[19]

Constance Classen outlines in *Worlds of Sense* that "Just as the enumeration of the senses has not been constant throughout Western history, neither has the ranking of the senses. The standard ranking, with sight occupying the highest position followed by hearing, smell, taste, then touch, was again given its authority by Aristotle".[20] This implicit ranking of the senses can be seen in much of the literature from Aristotle through to modern times, although occasionally this order was disrupted and particular senses were given more precedence than others by some scholars (such as hearing being regarded as the 'holiest' sense by Thomas Aquinas[21]). In general, however, the ranking has proved remarkably persistent. In fact, many scholars[22] now believe that the prioritisation of sight as the primary sense has become more and more ingrained, to the detriment of our other senses. The ranking of the senses has traditionally affected the way they were used within literature, with visual and aural descriptions being most widely used, and smell, taste and touch less so. Sight and sound are the senses to which the English language is most readily adapted; a great majority of linguistic imagery relates to these two senses. This is important to my study as I believe that the stimulation of synaesthetic modes of perception in the early twentieth century had a direct effect on the use of the 'lower' senses in literature. I will show how in the early twentieth century smell, taste and touch occur more widely and centrally than ever before, and demonstrate that despite the continuing predominance of the visual, there was a greater range of sensory interactions as a result of the implicitly synaesthetic modes of expression in the period.

i. Thesis Structure

This study arises out of my belief that an examination of synaesthesia and synaesthetic concepts in twentieth century poetry and poetics is particularly relevant to current sensory studies. In looking at a range of some of the most influential and diverse poets writing in the period from this angle I aim to provide a new, scientifically relevant

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[19] P. 165
[20] Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, p. 3.
[21] P. 3.
[22] Classen suggests the writings of George Simmel, Marshall McLuhan and Michel Foucault, among others, for discussions of the primacy of vision in modern twentieth century culture, pp. 5-6.

perspective on the field of modernist poetics, and take the field of synaesthesia research some way beyond its current boundaries. Initially, I would like to clarify my overall argument and the structure that this will take within the thesis. The primary claim that my thesis makes is that synaesthesia and synaesthetic concepts are crucial to the poetry of the early twentieth century, and that their pervasiveness can be explained by the idea of a universal synaesthetic capacity which was stimulated by the cultural, social and technological conditions of the period, and which was realised most strongly in poetry through synaesthetic metaphor. The structure of my chapters reflects this claim. In Chapter Two I will establish the background of synaesthesia as a scientific area of research, including a discussion of the most recent findings suggesting the idea of a universal synaesthetic capacity (arising from the possible synaesthetic nature of infantile perception) existing in synaesthetes and non-synaesthetes alike. I will also establish the background of synaesthesia as it applies to literature and poetry, in particular its use by the English Romantic and French Symbolist poets of the nineteenth century whose influence on twentieth century poetry and modernism is undeniable. This chapter will be integral in outlining the distinction between synaesthesia as condition and synaesthesia as concept. In Chapter Three I will examine different aspects of the early twentieth century period, including social and cultural change, technology, scientific and philosophical thought, non-literary art and culture, and the effects of war, place and tradition, and outline how each of these contributed to the increased conduciveness of synaesthesia as a poetic concept. These chapters will work as a contextual basis for my discussion of the use of synaesthetic metaphor in the works of individual poets.

In Chapters Four to Eight I will detail the use of synaesthesia in the works of different British and American poets over the first half of the twentieth century, and the inheritance that this left for poets writing mid-century and beyond. These chapters will establish how individual poets used synaesthetic concepts and synaesthetic metaphors within their poetry, including a consideration of the influence of specific movements in visual art, music and aesthetics which also dealt with synaesthetic ideas. They will also establish evidence of a number of central synaesthetic metaphors and show how these continued to occur in the works of poets separated by style, distance, intention and time, suggesting that these metaphors were not necessarily the result of coincidence or the application of specific synaesthetic theories. In undertaking this close examination, I will show how a pattern and progression in the use of synaesthesia and synaesthetic

metaphor emerged in the British and American poetry of the period, and discuss some of the dominant metaphors which characterise this progression.

My discussion of poetic synaesthesia in the work of individual poets begins in Chapter Four with W.B Yeats, whose work exists as a poetic link between the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries and reflects, in its multifarious influences, the state of poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century. Yeats' use of synaesthetic metaphor belongs to what I will establish as the 'transitional' phase, involving traditional or common metaphors such as 'bitter-sweet' which he extended for more complex symbolic purposes. In Yeats' poetry we can see the influences of the French Symbolist poets and their legacy of synaesthetic ideas, and the first hints of the dominant poetic trope that synaesthesia would become over the course of the first half of the century. The first real flourish of synaesthesia and synaesthetic concepts in British and American modernist poetry occurred in the works of the Imagists, and I will examine this usage in relation to Ezra Pound, H.D (Hilda Doolittle) and Amy Lowell, as well as other poets identifying with the Imagist credo. It is here, I will suggest, that the next step in the progression of poetic synaesthesia occurred, and this is represented by the inherently bodily, tactile focus which characterises the Imagist use of synaesthetic metaphor. After the advent of World War I in 1914 this tactile focus was strengthened by the work of 'war poets', through their representation of the chaotic sensory experience of war and the unique synaesthetic transferences it elicited. Here, I will discuss the works of such poets as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Isaac Rosenberg, among other lesser known war poets, to show the significance of synaesthetic metaphor in the representation of these sensory effects.

I will then go on to discuss the importance of the interrelationship between the arts, specifically music, visual art, and literature, and how their converging focus was conducive to the use of synaesthetic forms of expression. In Chapter Five I will look at musical ideas in the work of T.S Eliot, the most prominent Modernist poet, and show how modernist music was related to the synaesthetic expression of visual imagery within his poems. Eliot's poetry had an enormous influence on the progression of modern poetry and poetics, so I have devoted a whole chapter to discussion of its implicit connection with synaesthetic ideas. In Chapter Six I will look at the close relationship between poetry and the visual arts, where synaesthetic ideas were being explored in Impressionism, Cubism, Futurism, Expressionism and the minor artistic

movements of Orphism and Synchromism. I will look at the effects of synaesthetic theories propagated by Marinetti and Kandinsky, and show how these were exemplified in poetry. I will also examine in detail the work of E.E Cummings, who represents most clearly the convergence of synaesthetic techniques in poetry and painting. In Chapter Seven I will extend this focus to the poetry of William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens to show how their specific interaction with artistic and synaesthetic theories of colour was combined with the influence of the Imagists and World War I poets. In these chapters I will establish how the progression of synaesthetic ideas began to move from a tactile, bodily focus earlier in the century, to a more aesthetic or conceptualised visual and aural focus. Yet this focus was, nevertheless, still characterised by strong sensory elements, particularly by taste and touch metaphors which worked to counteract the increasingly visuality of the modern world.

From the 1930s onwards poetic synaesthesia was split between sensory and conceptual styles, with many poets increasingly incorporating both. I will examine these in Chapter Eight. My discussion here will focus on three of the seminal poets of the 1930s: W.H Auden, Theodore Roethke and Dylan Thomas. Synaesthetic metaphors, common to almost all poetry from the early twentieth century period, were being used differently in this period among poets whose poetic focus, intentions, and inspirations were diverse. The progression that poetic synaesthesia took in this period exemplified these differences, while still highlighting the occurrence of dominant synaesthetic metaphors and the inheritance of earlier usages. The significance of these early synaesthetic metaphors was so great that they continued to be used well into the mid-century and beyond. In order to show these inheritances I will look briefly at mid-to-late twentieth century poetry from Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney, whose works still displayed many of the dominant synaesthetic tropes found in the work of earlier poets. Finally, in my conclusion I will examine the significance of recurring synaesthetic metaphors and note the implications of these for the study of twentieth century poetry and poetics. I will also demonstrate the importance of my examination to the field of synaesthesia research, particularly the furthering of its interdisciplinary potential, and highlight the wider implications and the avenues for future research that my thesis opens up.

ii. Parameters

Establishing parameters for this topic has not been an easy task; the interdisciplinary nature of my research means that a large amount of material from different disciplines needs to be effectively incorporated. Similarly, the twentieth century focus is naturally vast and could potentially incorporate an endless selection of poets. As a result certain decisions were required as to the structuring of the thesis and the establishment of its parameters. I believe I have chosen the most effective structure by focusing on a number of prominent poets in the period rather than concentrating on a limited selection, or trying to incorporate a larger cohort at the expense of detailed discussion. To justify my choice for the parameters and structure of my study, it is necessary to establish two important things.

Firstly, I must reiterate that my approach to this study is primarily a literary one. Although synaesthesia has been and is still for the most part a scientific area of research, significant inroads are being made into the consideration and application of it, as both a condition and a concept, within the Arts. Researchers such as Cretien Van Campen, Hugo Heyrman and Kevin T. Dann, among others, have encouraged the emergence of an Arts-based focus in the area, and interest in the artistic, musical and literary[23] aspects of synaesthesia seems to be increasing at a rapid rate. While synaesthesia has certainly been mentioned in association with twentieth century poetry and poetics, it has only sporadically appeared as anything more than a cursory line or paragraph. Any in-depth analysis of synaesthesia in poetry mostly pertains to nineteenth century Romantic poets or French Symbolists, and discussions of twentieth century poets are curiously devoid of any significant, comparative or wide-ranging exploration of the topic. Yet the incredible profusion of synaesthetic concepts across all forms and styles of poetry in the early twentieth century begs a comprehensive analysis and a potential explanation: this is what my thesis aims to provide.

With this in mind, my approach for examining the use of synaesthesia in the poetry of this period is based first and foremost on literary criticism and poetics. While an establishment of the scientific background of the topic is crucial to this approach, the

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[23] For one of the only published articles within the field of neuropsychology which looks at synaesthesia in literature, see Patricia Duffy and Julia Simner, "Synaesthesia in Fiction", *Cortex*, Vol. 46, 2010, pp. 277-278.

majority of my thesis relies on the application of these scientific ideas in a manner appropriate to the study of literature and poetics. Therefore, my use of the term "synaesthesia" should not be taken in the strictly scientific sense. When discussing the use of synaesthesia in poetry I am not referring specifically to the neurological condition of synaesthesia, although this obviously underpins my study. Rather, I have taken the condition of synaesthesia and, in consideration of the latest suggestions that its relevance goes beyond the identification of synaesthetes or non-synaesthetes, used it as a concept which can be applied to the discussion of non-scientific areas such as poetics. I should also make it clear that my study does not attempt to suggest that all poets who use synaesthetic concepts are synaesthetes or, alternatively, to provide some means of establishing which, if any, of the poets mentioned were in fact synaesthetic. While this may be a worthwhile pursuit at some point in the future, particularly in regards to the fact that synaesthesia may be more prevalent among those with 'creative' careers such as artists, poets, writers and musicians,[24] for the purpose of my study it is not directly relevant.

The second point concerns the scope of my study and the inevitable limitations that ensue from creating the necessary parameters. As my research, being centred on poets writing in approximately the first half of the twentieth century, is only loosely bound by temporal constraints, one of the central issues in undertaking it was to create parameters which allowed for a thorough and wide-ranging examination but did not stretch too far beyond the limits of a graduate thesis. These parameters were always going to be arbitrary to some extent, but I have attempted to make them as relevant and valid as possible by choosing poets who most clearly represent the period or the style in which they were writing. My decision to focus only on poetry from Britain and America enabled me to narrow my parameters and concentrate specifically on poets writing in English, who lived and worked in two of the places where modernist movements were flourishing most intensely. It also enabled me to incorporate the generally recognised major poets of the early twentieth century, including such figures as Yeats, Pound, Eliot, Stevens and Auden, as well as others whose poetry has ensured their recognition as part of the twentieth century canon. I made these choices in order to show that synaesthesia really was a wide-ranging phenomenon, one which occurred not simply in

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[24] V.S Ramachandran and E.M Hubbard, "Synaesthesia: A Window into Perception, Thought and Language", *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 8, No. 12, 2001, p. 5.

a few obscure poets but which is present in almost every poet of renown from the period. This evidence goes a long way toward establishing my theory that the use of synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphor was not an idiosyncratic choice or chance poetic technique, nor was it simply a momentary throwback to the influence of nineteenth century poets; rather, it was something that arose extensively and universally as a result of the convergence of cultural, technological and aesthetic influences during the period.

The result of these choices however, necessarily engenders certain limitations. There are undoubtedly poets whom I could have mentioned, or alternative philosophical, artistic or critical theories which have some relevance to my topic. Had I the space and time, I would happily have attempted to address all relevant poets, ideas and areas of discussion but the expansive nature of my topic, its interdisciplinary focus and its lack of distinct parameters prevented me from doing so. As a result, I have had to make specific choices as to poets, critics and sources, which inevitably entailed overlooking others. While I believe the choices I have made are the most relevant to my particular focus and intentions, there are numerous ways I could have taken this thesis and in my conclusion I will suggest some of these as a focus for future research.

In 1998, Constance Classen summed up the commonly held idea that the synaesthetic concepts of the nineteenth century had lost their relevance by the start of the twentieth century:

> The theory of a unity of the senses had lost much of its artistic and public favour by the end of the First World War. It was generally taken to be no more than a quaint holdover from *la belle époque*, hardly relevant to the changing social and intellectual climate of the new century. The fact that scientific studies had demonstrated that there was no agreement among synesthetes as to which colour corresponded to which musical note, and so on, seemed to emphasize the idiosyncratic, illusory nature of sensory correspondences. The spread of new technologies in sensory transmission and reproduction, such as the telephone, the phonograph, the radio and the movie camera, called attention to the divisibility of sensory reality, not to its unity. The ideal of sensory interplay, if not entirely forgotten, was nonetheless deemed to be out of date. The multisensory aesthetics of the late nineteenth century, consequently, provides us with a last glimpse at a shared vision of a world in which "sounds, fragrances and colours correspond".[25]

The aim of this thesis is to show that this was not the case at all, and in fact synaesthetic concepts were absolutely integral to early twentieth century ideas. The presence of synaesthesia in poetry was wide-ranging, pervasive and evident in the works of

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[25] Constance Classen. *The Colour of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination* (London: Routledge, 1998) pp. 112-113.

practically all the major poets writing at the time, and this thesis will offer a potential explanation for this hitherto unexplored and unexplained phenomenon.

CHAPTER TWO: THE NATURE OF SYNAESTHESIA

2.1 Synaesthesia as Condition

> When I listen to music I see coloured shapes ... shiny white isosceles triangles, like long sharp pieces of broken glass. Blue is a sharper colour and has lines and angles, green has curves, soft balls and discs ... I feel the space above my eyes is a big screen where all of this is playing. The shapes come, they move, they leave.
> – Synaesthete M.L.L, 1985[1]

There are some for whom listening to a piece of music elicits bolts of colour and pattern, or for whom tasting a certain flavour causes the feeling of shapes, as tactile as real objects, on their hands and fingertips. These curious experiences are not simply the product of an active imagination; they are synaesthetic perceptions. This chapter will look at the idea of synaesthesia as a neurological condition, including its definition and diagnosis, past scientific research and recent developments. It will then look at synaesthesia as a concept, including its relation to metaphor and its relevance to language, before concluding with an overview of synaesthetic concepts in the poetry of the nineteenth century and how these may have influenced twentieth century poets.

i. Synaesthesia Defined

Synaesthesia is defined by Cretien Van Campen, whose recent book on synaesthesia focuses on its creative and artistic aspects, as "a neurological phenomenon that occurs when a stimulus in one sense modality immediately evokes a sensation in another sense modality".[2] This is not simply a case of imagination or learned association; the accompanying perception is real and involuntary, often highly vivid and memorable and remains constant throughout the synaesthete's lifetime. Indeed, many synaesthetes report experiencing synaesthesia for as long as they can remember. Synaesthetes typically view their synaesthesia as an integral and essential part of their lives, and are often surprised to learn that their perception is unique. Some synaesthetes recall mentioning their synaesthesia as children and receiving ridicule or scepticism from those around them, causing them to keep it to themselves. Synaesthetic perceptions can take many forms. Coloured figures, whereby synaesthetes perceive

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[1] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 35.

[2] Cretien Van Campen. *The Hidden Sense: Synesthesia in Art and Science* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008) p. 1.

colour on reading, hearing or viewing digits, letters or names, including weekdays and months, are the most common.[3] Coloured hearing, or chromesthesia, is also fairly common; here, colours are perceived in conjunction with sounds, ranging from musical notes and chords to complex musical arrangements, voices and laughter or everyday noises. Other types of synaesthesia noted by researchers include touch-taste, colour-taste or grapheme-taste, coloured or shaped pain, colour-smell, number forms, grapheme-personification, and polymodal synaesthesia, where numerous perceptions may arise in different modalities at the same time. In addition to these, new research has uncovered the existence of other hitherto unknown forms such as mirror-touch synaesthesia,[4] where the sight of someone being touched elicits a mirror tactile sensation in the synaesthete, and swimming-style[5] synaesthesia, where the synaesthete experiences swimming styles as coloured.

In 1989, with his own preliminary studies of synaesthetes as a guide, Richard Cytowic proposed five main features of synaesthesia to be fulfilled in a diagnosis. These have continued to be used as the primary basis for diagnosis, and involve the following qualities:

1) Synaesthesia is involuntary but must be elicited. The synaesthetic reaction to a percept is not the result of thought or deliberation, it is "insuppressible and cannot be conjured up at will ... In most cases synesthesia does not interfere with everyday mental or physical activities ... the person cannot alter the synaesthetic percept". [6]

2) Synaesthesia is projected, "usually perceived outside the body rather than in the mind's eye".[7] This quality often causes confusion and misunderstanding between synaesthetes attempting to explain their perceptions to non-synaesthetes. They struggle to find words to adequately express themselves, and quotations from synaesthetes often contain mentions of auras, screens or a "sort of a translucent overlay with depth that I

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[3] Julia Simner et al. "Synaesthesia: The prevalence of atypical cross-modal experiences." *Perception*; Vol. 35, 2006, pp. 1024-1033.
[4] Michael J., Banissy, Roi Cohen Kadosh, Gerrit W. Maus, Vincent Walsh, and Jamie Ward. "Prevalence, characteristics and a neurological model of mirror-touch synaesthesia." *Experimental Brain Research*, Vol. 198, 2009, pp. 261 – 272.
[5] Danko Nikolić, Uta M. Juergens, Nicolas Rothen, Beat Meier, and Aleksandra Mroczko "Swimming-style Synesthesia." *Cortex*, Vol. 47, 2011, pp. 874-879.
[6] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 76.
[7] P. 76.

can see through ... kind of like a heat shimmer, only without the distortion".[8] More recent research has shown that synaesthetes can be either *projectors* (projecting the perception externally), or *associators* (associating the perception internally).[9]

3) Synaesthetic perceptions are durable, discrete and generic. A synaesthete will experience the same association from a particular percept each time that percept is presented to them; it will not generally change over time, or in accordance with age, place or context. Discreteness of a synaesthetic perception "means that given choices on a matching task, synaesthetes pick only one, or a few at most, whereas non-synesthetic control subjects pick diffusely over available selections".[10] In a more recent overview of synaesthesia from 2006, Mattingley and Ward questioned this criterion:

> in our opinion reliability over time should be considered as an associated characteristic of synaesthesia rather than an *a priori* defining one. Would we not consider a person to be a synaesthete if the colours he or she experienced for particular musical notes changed over time?[11]

4) Synaesthesia is memorable: the "parallel sensations are easily and vividly remembered, often in preference to the stimulus that triggered them ... There is a strong link between synaesthesia and photographic memory (technically called eidetic memory) or at least heightened memory (hyperemnesis). Many synesthetes use their synesthesia as a mnemonic aid".[12] Cytowic also notes the prevalence of excellent topographical and olfactory memory among synaesthetes, despite these being not necessarily related to the stimulus for synaesthesia.[13]

5) Synaesthesia is emotional and noëtic. There is often the presence of strong feelings or a 'eureka' moment accompanying synaesthetic perceptions, a noëtic quality that Cytowic defines as "knowledge that is experienced directly, an illumination that is accompanied by a feeling of certitude".[14] This accompanying quality leads most synaesthetes to regard their perceptions as pleasurable, and to state that they would feel displeasure and confusion if their synaesthesia ever disappeared.

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[8] P. 41.
[9] Mike J. Dixon, Daniel Smilek, and Philip Merikle. "Not all synaesthetes are created equal: Projector versus associator synaesthetes." *Cognitive, Affective & Behavioral Neuroscience*, Vol. 4, No 3, 2004. Pp. 335-343.
[10] *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 76.
[11] Jason B. Mattingley & Jamie Ward, "Synaesthesia: An Overview of Contemporary Findings and Controversies", *Cortex*, Vol. 42, 2006, p. 129-136.
[12] *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 76.
[13] *A Union of the Senses*, p. 55.
[14] *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 76.

With these diagnostic criteria, the existence of synaesthesia is much easier to confirm in a subject. However, a reliance on verbal explanations is problematic for many reasons: different levels of fluency and vocabulary may affect the subject's ability to accurately describe their experience, some subjects may be reluctant to discuss in detail their perceptions, and there is always a risk of subjects elaborating on, omitting from or altering their reports. Therefore, while research into synaesthesia has come a long way, a lot remains unanswered in terms of the experience itself and the mechanisms involved. Part of the reason for this is that the synaesthetic experience remains highly personal and there are many disparities even among synaesthetes of the same type. Cytowic found that "one of the most glaring problems in trying to fathom a mechanism for synesthesia was the lack of obvious agreement about the parallel sensations that synesthetes perceived ... 'Researchers' from earlier centuries had done little more than make lists of stimuli and synesthetic responses, followed by dismay that a pattern of correspondence was not obvious".[15] Current research, however, indicates that there may be many more agreements between individual synaesthetic perceptions than was previously thought, particularly for grapheme-colour synaesthetes.[16] The effect of synaesthesia on personality, intelligence and neurological development has also been considered. As most synaesthetes report experiencing their perceptions for as long as they can remember, it is reasonable to assume that in the formative years of life their synaesthesia must have exerted some influence on the development of sense of self, world view and perhaps even creativity. There is also the possibility of interference with learning, especially for those with synaesthesia involving words and numbers. Cytowic looked at a large range of synaesthetes in order to get a basic sense of any similarities and differences between personalities and intelligence. He found that "none of the present cases or any of the historical ones of which I am aware have demonstrated obvious psychopathology, or either mental dullness or genius".[17] Many synaesthetes studied have reported having a first-degree relative who is also synaesthetic,[18] which suggests an autosomal dominant mode of inheritance, and gives weight to the hypothesis that synaesthesia is a brain-based condition, inherited rather than learned.

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[15] *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 59.
[16] Julia Simner et. al. "Non-random associations of graphemes to colours in synaesthetic and non-synaesthetic populations". Cognitive Neuropsychology, Vol. 22, No. 8, 2005, pp. 1069-1085.
[17] P. 49.
[18] Kylie J Barnett et al. "Familial patterns and the origins of individual differences in synesthesia", *Cognition*, Vol. 106, 2008, pp. 871–893.

Although synaesthesia is a genuine neurological condition found in only a small number of people, there are a number of neurological states that bear some similarities to synaesthesia, and it is important to note these. Cytowic lists them as (1) LSD-induced synaesthesia (2) photographic memory (3) sensory deprivation (4) temporal lobe epilepsy (5) release hallucinations and (6) direct electrical stimulation of brain cortex.[19] All of these states have some basis for similarity with the condition of synaesthesia, and many of them can in fact elicit synaesthesia-like perceptions in non-synaesthetes. These states represent a means of comparison for similarities and differences to synaesthesia, and while this comparison may not provide a definitive answer about the mechanisms that may cause synaesthesia, they give us important clues for further research. These conditions also show that while synaesthesia in itself is usually a lifelong condition with a genetic basis, it can be induced in certain forms in non-synaesthetes, suggesting that perhaps the mechanism for synaesthesia exists in all of us but is only consistently activated in a few. Further evidence for this hypothesis lies in the research on synaesthesia related to evolutionary and developmental potential, which I will discuss shortly.

ii. Scientific Background

Scientific interest in synaesthesia as a condition can be dated back to the nineteenth century, or possibly even earlier according to Cytowic.[20] This view that synaesthetic perceptions were the result of metaphoric association, psychosis, hallucination or hysterics prevailed for many years, and encouraged public fascination with the concept of 'mixed senses' in the second half of the nineteenth century. Despite this interest from artistic and literary circles, synaesthesia lost favour among scientists and psychologists, and from the early twentieth century it fell into obscurity until the 1980s when Cytowic reintroduced the topic and scientific interest in the condition once again began to grow. The philosophical discussion of synaesthetic concepts has existed since the early days of Greek philosophy. Aristotle (from whom we take our modern Western idea of the 'five senses'), proposed that there was an underlying unity of the

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[19] *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 127.

[20] Richard E. Cytowic. "Synaesthesia: phenomenology and neuropsychology - a review of current knowledge." In S. Baron-Cohen and J. Harrison (eds.) *Synaesthesia: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (Oxford, England: Blackwell, 2008), p. 20.

senses known as a *sensus communis*, an area of the psyche through which the different human senses were integrated to produce a shared sense: in essence, "a central cognitive function that integrates and monitors the delivery of the other distinct senses, as when a shape is both seen and felt".[21] Aristotle discussed the significance of *common sensibles*, qualities which are not perceived by only one particular sense (colour as a quality perceived only by sight, for example) but are common to several senses:

> By common sensibles are meant motion, rest, number, figure, size: for such qualities are not the special objects of any single sense but are common to all ... of the two classes of sensible directly perceived it is the objects special to the different senses which are properly perceptible: and it is to these that the essential character of each sense is naturally adapted.[22]

While Aristotle realised that there are qualities perceived simultaneously by different senses, he did not attribute them to another unknown sense but rather to an integration of the senses. The importance of Aristotelian theory to the study of synaesthesia has been noted by twentieth century researchers. Cytowic stated that "all recent theories of synesthesia have invoked Aristotelian common sense as a mediator of connotative meaning and therefore as a rudimentary mediator of synesthesia".[23] Examination of the relation between colour and sound also occurred in Greek philosophy. Cretien Van Campen notes, "The interest in synesthesia is at least as old as Greek philosophy. One of the questions that the classic philosophers asked was whether colour (chroia, what we now call timbre) in music was a physical quality that could be quantified".[24]

Ideas about the link between music and colour have been explored throughout the centuries; in the seventeenth century Isaac Newton suggested that there were common frequencies between pitch and colour. Van Campen notes how he "attempted to link sound oscillations to their respective light waves. According to Newton, the distribution of white light in a spectrum of colours is analogous to the musical distribution of tones in an octave".[25] Jamie Ward, outlining the origins of synaesthesia research in his book *The Frog Who Croaked Blue: Synesthesia and the Mixing of the Senses*, suggests that in contrast to Newton, Goethe's *Theory of Colours* "argued that many aspects of colour could not be explained by the physics of light" and that "we

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[21] *The Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).
[22] R.D Hicks (ed.) *Aristotle, De Anima: Translation, Introduction and Notes*, (Cambridge University Press, London, 1965) p. 77.
[23] *A Union of the Senses*, p. 71.
[24] Van Campen, p. 45.
[25] P. 46.

could understand colour through biology rather than physics".[26] These ideas partly inspired the 1812 dissertation of George Sachs, an albino doctor whose work represents the first medical account of synaesthesia.[27] Around the mid-nineteenth century, scientific interest in the condition began to grow and a number of medical and scientific researchers started to take note of the condition. One of these early examinations of synaesthesia was provided by Francis Galton, cousin of Charles Darwin, in *Inquiries into Human Faculty and Its Development* (1883). Galton was looking at the instincts and faculties of human nature when he came across the phenomenon of number forms and colour associations in certain people, and he noted, "The instantaneous association of colour with sound characterises a small percentage of adults, and it appears to be rather common, though in an ill-developed degree, among children".[28] Though he suggested that these arose as a form of mental imagery, Galton nonetheless provided a thorough and interesting account of individuals displaying what can now be seen as types of synaesthesia, and his text remains an important early source in synaesthesia research. Despite the existence of earlier examples of synaesthesia in medical history and research, there was a vast period in the twentieth century when, as Mattingley and Ward declare, "investigators failed to define an objective framework within which to characterise the phenomenon, and so interest in the topic waned".[29] Cytowic attributes this to the development of neurology and the "powerful tendency to dismiss behavioural and intellectual abnormalities as having anything to do with the brain",[30] and Ward suggests that "Although studies of the brain continued apace throughout the twentieth century, the study of the mind (in psychology) took a rather different turn ... interest in synesthesia was incompatible with this approach [as] psychology had become the 'science of the mind' ... The fact that synesthetes claim to have very different ways of experiencing the world was considered irrelevant or trivial".[31]

One of the first works to herald the arrival of synaesthesia back into scientific knowledge in the latter half of the twentieth century was a study of eidetic memory by the Russian Professor A. R Luria in *The Mind of a Mnemonist* (1968). Luria's book

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[26] Jamie Ward, *The Frog Who Croaked Blue: Synesthesia and the Mixing of the Senses* (East Sussex: Routledge, 2008) p. 12.
[27] P. 2.
[28] Sir Frances Galton, *Inquiries Into Human Faculty and Its Development*, (New York: AMS Press, 1973 (1883)), p. 107.
[29] Mattingley and Ward, p. 129.
[30] *A Union of the Senses*, p. 7.
[31] Ward, *The Frog Who Croaked Blue*, pp. 15-16.

examines the case of a man, S (whose real name was Solomon Shereshevskii) and his extraordinary faculty of memory. The interesting thing about this study was the subject's accompanying synaesthesia, which both facilitated and hindered his cognitive abilities. Luria outlines this: "I suggested that S possessed a marked degree of synaesthesia ... (and) these synaesthetic reactions could be traced back to a very early age".[32] When presented with tones of different amplitude, S stated the different reactions that he experienced, such as "a brown strip against a dark background that had red, tongue-like edges ... [a] sense of taste ... like that of sweet and sour borscht, a sensation that gripped his entire tongue" or "something like fireworks tinged with a pink-red hue ... feels rough and unpleasant, and it has an ugly taste ... you could hurt your hand on this".[33]

From these examples it is clear that Shereshevskii had an unusually intense form of multi-modal synaesthesia, whereby stimulation of one sense would produce stimulation in all the other senses. An interesting aspect of this study is the remarkable effect that Shereshevskii's synaesthesia had on his thought processes, memory and everyday life. Luria was interested in looking at personality and the psychological significance of unusual abilities rather than ascertaining a cause or a mechanism to explain them. He suggested that "a person whose conscious awareness is such that a sound becomes fused with a sense of colour; for whom each fleeting impression engenders a vivid, inextinguishable image; for whom words have quite different meanings than they do for us - such a person cannot mature in the same way others do, nor will his inner world, his life history tend to be like others".[34] Modern accounts of synaesthesia also note these limitations but emphasise that their effects are much less significant; Cytowic suggests that most synaesthetes "are of normal or superior intelligence ... [but in some cases] their cognitive skills are uneven ... the most common complaints are poor mathematical aptitude despite a good memory for numbers; a poor sense of direction; and difficulty with certain types of abstractions".[35] While he didn't provide any answers as to the condition of synaesthesia, Luria's study is still important to research into the condition, particularly research into the personality, mental functions and effects that the condition has on the lives of those who possess it.

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[32] A. R. Luria, *The Mind of a Mnemonist* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1968) pp. 21-22.
[33] P. 23.
[34] P. 151.
[35] Cytowic, *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 191.

iii. Universal Synaesthetic Capacity and Neonatal Synaesthesia

When Cytowic reintroduced the topic of synaesthesia to neuropsychology in the 1980s, he was initially shunned. As he acknowledged in *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*,

> I would have assumed that the charming strangeness of synesthesia ... would have made the knowledge of their existence more common ... yet I found just the opposite. Synesthesia's respectable two-hundred-year history in the annals of medicine and psychology had been virtually erased. Even odder, I thought, was the hostility and doubt it evoked in those to whom I had mentioned it.[36]

Cytowic found it strange that his colleagues were reluctant to acknowledge the existence of synaesthesia as a neurological condition, instead explaining it away variously as "a hallucination, like hearing voices ... a temporal lobe seizure ... it can't be real without physical signs".[37] However he persevered in his interest, and eventually succeeded in bringing the study of synaesthesia back to modern science. Since Cytowic's negative reception in the 1980s, scientific research into synaesthesia has grown exponentially and there are now researchers from a number of different countries working in the area. A hint of the scepticism that so baffled Cytowic remains,[38] but a number of different theories have been posited since then to explain synaesthetic perception. As a result, we are now much closer to finding out what the neurological and genetic basis for the condition is, and how prevalent it is among the population. Ramachandran and Hubbard noted in their 2001 study that

> Estimates of the prevalence of synaesthesia vary dramatically. Cytowic (1989;1997) estimates that it occurs in 1 in 20,000 people, while Galton (1880) placed the prevalence at 1 in 20. More recent, systematic, studies have estimated that synaesthesia occurs in 1 in 2,000 people (Baron-Cohen *et al*., 1996). Our own results indicate that the prevalence may be even greater, perhaps as much as 1 in 200 (Ramachandran *et al*., unpublished observations) [...] Baron-Cohen *et al*. (1996) conducted a more formal survey to determine the familiality of synaesthesia. They found that synaesthesia is more common in females than males (6:1) and that approximately one-third of their respondents had known family members who were also synaesthetic.[39]

More recent studies, such as the 2006 paper "Synesthesia: The prevalence of atypical cross-modal experiences", have reassessed some of these claims:

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[36] P. 36.
[37] P. 34.
[38] Ramachandran and Hubbard noted in their 2001 study that they had frequently encountered explanations, both in literature and in conversation with colleagues, which suggested that synaesthetes are 'crazy', remembering childhood memories, engaging in metaphorical association, or have been/are on drugs. Ramachandran and Hubbard, "Synesthesia: A Window into Perception, Thought and Language", p. 4.
[39] P. 6.

> We show that (a) the prevalence of synaesthesia is 88 times higher than previously assumed, (b) the most common variant is coloured days, (c) the most studied variant (grapheme-colour synaesthesia) previously believed most common is prevalent at 1%, and (d) there is no strong asymmetry in the distribution of synaesthesia across the sexes. Hence, we suggest that female biases reported earlier likely arose from (or were exaggerated by) sex differences in self-disclosure.[40]

An explanation of the current state of research into the specific neurological basis for synaesthesia would be too wide-ranging and technical for this literary study to go into. There are generally two groups of thought on the subject, one which involves synaesthesia as a result of abnormal brain function and the other as a result of abnormal brain structure. A number of researchers have proposed theories as to the possible mechanisms involved but there is, as yet, no definitive individual theory. Sagiv and Ward (2006) sum up the possibilities:

> All contemporary accounts of synesthesia propose that there is some anomalous connectivity or cross-activation between different regions of the brain. Aside from this broad consensus, there is disagreement about: the nature of the connectivity between regions (e.g., horizontal vs. Feedback connections); whether or not the pathways implicated in synesthesia are present in the normal population or whether synesthetes have some privileged pathways; and differences in how anomalous connectivity could be instantiated at the neural level (e.g., literal increases in white matter connections, or neurochemical differences). [41]

MRI images have helped to establish the areas of the brain involved in synaesthetic perception, and have established the cross-activation that occurs between different brain regions. While progress for answers about the neural basis of the condition is being made all the time there is undoubtedly a long way to go, particularly as new forms of synaesthesia are still being discovered.[42]

The broad nature of synaesthetic perception and the widening range of synaesthetic perceptions being discovered or proposed by researchers has inevitably elicited questions about the relation of synaesthesia to normal, non-synaesthetic perceptual processing. Ward and Sagiv's 2006 study "Cross-modal Interactions: Lessons from Synesthesia" notes,

> Although the condition has been traditionally viewed as an anomaly (e.g., breakdown in modularity), it seems that at least some of the mechanisms underlying synesthesia do reflect universal cross-modal mechanisms.[43]

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[40] Simner et al, p. 1024.
[41] Sagiv and Ward, p. 261.
[42] See for example Nikolić et al. "Swimming-style Synesthesia".
[43] Jamie Ward and Noam Sagiv. "Cross-modal Interactions: Lessons from Synesthesia". In Macknik Martinez-Conde, Martinez, Alonso & Tse (eds.) *Visual Perception Part 2, Progress in Brain Research Series*, Vol. 155, (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 2006) pp. 259-271.

This examination of universal cross-modal mechanisms has led to a greater focus on the neonatal and developmental aspects of synaesthesia. Out of these studies has risen a suggestion that there could potentially be a latent capacity for synaesthetic perception in all of us, synaesthete and non-synaesthete alike. In his 2008 book *The Hidden Sense*, Van Campen suggests that most people have the capacity to tap into a form of synaesthetic perception by becoming aware of the multi-sensory nature of normal perception. He says that although "it may sound strange to hear that you can become aware of a neurological condition that seems fixed and hard-wired ... the brain is flexible and will develop multi-sensory connections that are meaningful ... Synesthesia is hidden in your senses. You will have to go looking for it to consciously experience it".[44] The possibility that synaesthetic perception may be an inherent ability in all people, but only conscious to some, is backed up by the observation that while most people do not experience synaesthesia outright they still understand and identify very closely with it. Since the reestablishment of synaesthesia research in the 1980s, a number of experiments[45] have shown that non-synaesthetes routinely and instinctively match stimuli from opposing senses, such as pitch and lightness/darkness, in reliable ways. As Ward notes, "This suggests that everyone has access to the same underlying rule of multisensory association even if it accessed in different ways: synesthetes literally see their visual experiences to music but people who lack synesthesia must infer it".[46]

This idea of universal synaesthetic capacity is linked to recent studies which suggest that we are all born with a form of synaesthetic perception, but most of us lose this conscious perception as we grow up. Van Campen explains the idea that infants "perceive all their sensory impressions as a single whole ... Babies do not differentiate between light, sound, taste, smell or other impressions",[47] which means that their experiences must be somewhat similar to those of a synaesthete. However, as they grow their senses begin to develop separately and "a great number of connections between sense modalities in the brain are eliminated so that specific connections within sense

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[44] Van Campen, p. 160.
[45] For the earliest of these, see the studies of Lawrence Marks: Lawrence E. Marks, "Bright Sneezes and Dark Coughs, Loud Sunlight and Soft Moonlight." *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance*, Vol. 8, 1982, pp. 177-193; and Lawrence E. Marks. "On Colored-hearing Synesthesia: Cross-modal Translations of Sensory Dimensions." *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol, 82, No 3, 1975, pp. 303-331.
[46] Ward, *The Frog Who Croaked Blue*, p. 76.
[47] Van Campen, p. 29.

modalities can develop".[48] Research on the developmental qualities of synaesthesia[49] has posited that infantile perception may indeed be synaesthetic in nature. Daphne Maurer and Catherine Mondloch summarised this in "Neonatal Synesthesia: A Re-Evaluation":

> In the world of the newborn, Daphne and Charles Maurer (1988) proposed that the normal newborn is synesthetic. They argued that "the newborn does not keep sensations separate from one another", but rather "mixes sights, sounds, feelings and smells into a sensual bouillabaisse" in which "sights have sounds, feelings have tastes" and smells can make the baby feel dizzy... According to the neonatal synaesthesia model, newborns fail to differentiate input from different senses- either because of connections between cortical areas that are pruned or inhibited later in development or because of the multimodal limbic system being more mature than the cortex.[50]

The suggestion that we are all born synaesthetic but that most of us lose the capacity as our senses become increasingly differentiated certainly lends support to the idea of universal synaesthetic capacity. Interesting developments in the idea of universal synaesthetic capacity have also been made in recent years in relation to brain plasticity. Paul Bach-y-Rita and Stephen W. Kercel reviewed the potentiality of brain plasticity for sensory substitution in 2003, writing that

> Brain plasticity can be defined as 'the adaptive capacities of the central nervous system – its ability to modify its own structural organization and functioning'. It permits an adaptive (or a maladaptive) response to functional demand. Mechanisms of brain plasticity include neurochemical, synaptic, receptor, and neuronal structural changes ... Sensory substitution can occur across sensory systems, such as touch-to-sight, or within a sensory system such as touch-to-touch ... Research up to the present has led to the demonstration of reliable prototypical devices that use sensory substitution to restore lost sensory function.[51]

The implications of these sensory substitution devices, which can convert visuals into sound, or tactile perceptions into visuals to enable blind or vision-impaired people to 'see' through their other senses, are also relevant to the study of synaesthesia. The brain's ability to create new inter-sensory links opens up a range of possibilities for future studies of the brain mechanisms involved in sensory and synaesthetic perception. For example, studies have shown that visual deprivation in non-synaesthetes can cause

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[48] Pp. 31-32.

[49] See Daphne Maurer and Catherine J. Mondloch. "Neonatal Synesthesia: A Re-Evaluation." In Robertson, C. L. & N. Sagiv (eds.), *Synesthesia: Perspectives from Cognitive Neuroscience*. Oxford: University Press, 2005.
Also see studies such as Daphne Maurer. "Neonatal synaesthesia: implications for the processing of speech and faces." In S. Baron-Cohen and J. Harrison (Eds.), *Synaesthesia: Classic and Contemporary Readings.* Oxford, England: Blackwell, 1997, Pp. 224-242,
and Ferrine Spector and Daphne Maurer. "Synesthesia: a new approach to understanding the development of perception." *Developmental Psychology*, Vol. 45 No. 1, 2009, pp. 175-189.

[50] Maurer & Mondloch, pp. 193-207.

[51] Paul Bach-y-Rita and Stephen Kercel, "Sensory Substitution and the Human-Machine Interface", *Trends in Cognitive Sciences,* Vol.7, No.12, 2003, pp. 541-546.

activation of the visual cortex in response to stimulation of another sense.[52] While the implications of the idea that we all have an underlying capacity for synaesthetic perception are wide-ranging, particularly for neurological and psychological studies of perception, research into this area is still only just beginning. However, it could go some way to explaining the recent trend toward interdisciplinary research into synaesthesia, of which this study is a part.

iv. Synaesthesia and Creativity

Lawrence E. Marks recognised in his 1978 book *The Unity of the Senses: Interrelations among the Modalities*, another seminal early study which helped to bring synaesthesia back into the public eye, that there is a

> universal synesthetic capacity to appreciate the closeness and richness of similarities among the visual, auditory, and other sensory qualities, a capacity that is strongly aroused in particular by powerful sensory-esthetic experiences. It is little wonder then that descriptions and expressions of sensory correspondence appear, occasionally even as doctrine, in the arts and in literature as well as in science.[53]

Recent studies have looked at the possible implications of these links. Ramachandran and Hubbard's 2001 study *Synesthesia: A Window into Perception, Thought and Language* suggests:

> Synesthesia is purported to be more common in artists, poets and novelists ... It has often been suggested that concepts are represented in brain maps in the same way that percepts (like colours or faces) are ... If so, we can think of metaphors as involving cross-activation of conceptual maps in a manner analogous to cross-activation of perceptual maps in synesthesia. If this idea is correct then it might explain the higher incidence of synesthesia in artists and poets.[54]

A 2008 study by Ward et al finds that, alternatively,

> people with synaesthesia are more likely to be engaged in the creative arts (e.g. music, visual art) and they score higher on some, but not all, measures of creativity. However, we suggest that there is no direct link between these two observations. The level of engagement of synaesthetes in art may be related directly to their unusual experiences.[55]

In both cases, the higher incidence of synaesthetes within creative industries is undisputed, and there have been a number of high profile artist, musicians and writers

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[52] L.B. Merabet et al. "Rapid and Reversible Recruitment of Early Visual Cortex for Touch", *PLoS ONE*, Vol. 3, No. 8, 2008, pp. 1-12.
[53] Lawrence E. Marks, *The Unity of the Senses: Interrelations among the Modalities*, (New York: Academic Press, 1978), p. 8.
[54] Ramachandran & Hubbard, p. 17.
[55] Jamie Ward, Daisy Thompson-Lake, Roxanne Ely and Flora Kaminski. "Synaesthesia, creativity and art: What is the link?" *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 99, 2008, pp. 127–141, p. 139.

who have been identified as synaesthetes. For nearly as long as there has been scientific attention paid to synaesthesia, there has been interest in literary and artistic circles. Among the prominent musicians and artists commonly identified as synaesthetes are Alexander Scriabin, Nikolai-Rimsky-Korsakov, Olivier Messiaen, Jean Sibelius, Franz Liszt, Michael Torke, Edvard Munch, Wassily Kandinsky and David Hockney. Some studies[56] have directly addressed the synaesthete status of some of these individuals, while other studies have concluded that some of them may have been using synaesthesia as a technique rather than being a synaesthete themselves.[57] A definitive retrospective diagnosis of synaesthesia is very difficult to prove unless the subject has directly acknowledged it themselves, so in many cases the distinction between true synaesthetes and pseudo-synaesthetes is hazy.

In literature, one of the most well known synaesthetes was Russian novelist and poet Vladimir Nabokov (1899-1977), who discusses his synaesthesia (and that of his mother) in his memoirs *Speak, Memory:*

> On top of all this I present a fine case of coloured hearing. Perhaps "hearing" is not quite accurate, since the colour sensation seems to be produced by the very act of my orally forming a given letter while I imagine its outline. The long *a* of the English alphabet (and it is this alphabet I have in mind farther on unless otherwise stated) has for me the tint of weathered wood, but a French *a* evokes polished ebony. This black group includes hard *g* (vulcanized rubber) and *r* (a sooty rag being ripped). Oatmeal *n*, noodle-limp *l*, and the ivory backed hand mirror of *o* take care of the whites ... The confessions of a synaesthete must sound tedious and pretentious to those who are protected from such leakings and drafts by more solid walls than mine are.[58]

While Nabokov's synaesthesia did not seem to influence his works to a great extent,[59] he did use it as an attribute in some of his fictional characters, suggesting that while he viewed his own synaesthesia as an interesting and unusual quirk of the mind, he was less interested in exploring the aspects of synaesthetic metaphor than other non-synaesthetic writers perhaps were. There are other famous literary personages to whom synaesthesia has been attributed, but whether they were truly synaesthetic is impossible

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[56] See for example, Amy Ione and Christopher Tyler, "Was Kandinsky a synesthete?" *Journal of the History of the Neurosciences*; vol. 1, No 2, 2003, pp. 223-226, and B. M. Galeyev and I. L. Vanechkina, "Was Scriabin a Synesthete?" *Leonardo*, Vol. 34, No. 4, 2001, pp. 357-361.

[57] Sean A Day, "A Comparison of True-Synesthete and Pseudo-Synesthete Composers." In Bulat M. Galeyev, (ed.) *ПРОМЕТЕЙ – 2000: О СУДЬБЕ СВЕТОМУЗЫКИ НА РУБЕЖЕ ВЕКОВ* (*Prometheus - 2000: On the Destiny of Light-Music at the Border of Centuries*) (Kazan': Izdatel'stvo "Fen", 2000) pp. 77-80.

[58] Vladimir Nabokov. *Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1947) pp. 34-35.

[59] In fact, some studies have suggested that true synaesthetes are less likely to use their synaesthesia within their art, as the idiosyncrasy of the perceptions involved can be difficult to translate to a wider audience. See Sean Day, p. 80.

to ascertain. Van Campen suggests William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, James Joyce and Dylan Thomas[60], and other reports add Edgar Allen Poe, Arthur Rimbaud, Charles Baudelaire, Emily Dickinson, Edith Sitwell and Algernon Charles Swinburne to that list. As I have noted, it is very difficult to distinguish, without an autobiographical record such as Nabokov's, whether the synaesthesia of these famous writers is true neurological synaesthesia or simply an adoption of synaesthetic concepts.

2.2 Synaesthesia as Concept

The difficulty of such diagnoses stems from the fact that synaesthesia is very closely associated with literary and artistic concepts. Cytowic drew attention to the close relationship between scientific and artistic interest: "Synesthesia seems first to have interested the artist, then the philosopher, then the psychologist, but no one was very successful in making much real sense out of it".[61] The creative faculties involved in painting, literature or music are inherently concerned with the expression of the artist's own sensory experiences in a way which enables others to appreciate them. The use of a sensory interrelationship is thereby natural; in attempting to express his own experience the artist turns to the language of senses. The link between synaesthesia and the arts exists in most art forms, but as a concept is perhaps most closely related to literature. Literary synaesthesia was described by Glenn O'Malley in his 1957 article on the subject as "a writer's use of the 'metaphor of the senses' or of expressions and concepts related to it ... literary synesthesia may imply a sort of introspection into basic processes of experience, a mirroring or echoing of the mind and the senses to themselves in the act of apprehending phenomena".[62] The close relationship between synaesthesia and language means there is a fine line between true synaesthetic visions and metaphoric synaesthetic concepts. This distinction is integral to my study. Thus, before examining the use of inter-sense analogy in poetry it is important to discuss the idea of synaesthesia as a 'concept' and how this differs from the idea of synaesthesia as 'condition', particularly considering the semantic aspects of this condition and the inherent link between synaesthesia and language.

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[60] Van Campen, p. 92.
[61] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 128.
[62] O'Malley, Glenn "Literary Synesthesia", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 15, No 4, 1957, pp.391-411.

i. Ideasthesia: Conceptual Synaesthesia

The question of whether synaesthesia is a sensory or a semantic phenomenon, highlighted by the discovery of the prevalence of grapheme-based synaesthesias, has led to discussion of possible distinctions between 'high' and 'low' synaesthesia, where high synaesthesia involves a semantic component and low synaesthesia involves purely sensory components. In turn, this has led some researchers to propose that the term 'ideasthesia' might be more suited as a description of the conceptual aspects of the condition. Danko Nikolic and Uta Juergens write in their 2012 paper "Ideasthesia: Conceptual Processes Assign Similar Colours to Similar Shapes" that,

> a widely accepted explanation of the origin of synaesthesia is still lacking. Initially, it was thought that it was a 'low-level' phenomenon of 'crossed senses', and the evidence seemed to have supported this view. In particular, the evidence suggested that the concurrents have true perceptual quality. Later, however, new evidence indicated that synaesthetic *inducers* have a semantic, rather than perceptual, nature. These two sets of results need not contradict each other. Instead, both levels can be incorporated into a view in which a conceptual inducer associates a perceptual concurrent. This phenomenon can be described as ideasthesia, "sensing ideas".[63]

The extension of the field to include consideration of conceptual elements makes sense considering the conceptual root of things such as graphemes, number-forms and personalities, all of which occur frequently in synaesthetic perception. Current thought about the nature of the condition takes this into account, as Julia Simner notes in her 2012 article "Defining Synaesthesia":

> Any forward-looking definition would incorporate the very wide range of synaesthesiae attested to date, in which both inducers and concurrents can apparently constitute either low-level perceptual, or higher-order cognitive constructs, and it should be based on a plausible neurological mechanism.[64]

Synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphors as I am looking at them (poetically rather than scientifically) also necessarily include a conceptual element, although much poetic synaesthesia involves metaphors which still align very closely with the sense-to-sense transfer that traditional synaesthesia implies. However as these are always language constructions in poetry rather than direct sense impressions, my study will always pertain to some element of conceptualisation. These conceptual elements and the suggestion of ideasthesia as a form (or an extension) of synaesthesia are implicitly

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[63] Uta Maria Juergens and Danko Nikolic. "Ideasthesia: Conceptual Processes Assign Similar Colours to Similar Shapes", *Translational Neuroscience*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2012, pp. 22-27.
[64] Julia Simner. "Defining synaesthesia." *British Journal of Psychology*, Vol. 103, 2012, p. 6.

related to language and metaphor. Cytowic devoted a chapter of his book *A Union of the Senses* to the links between synaesthesia and language. As he stated, originally it was

> assumed or surmised that the connection between a stimulus and the parallel synaesthetic sense [was] brought about by a linguistic-based cross-modal association ... I believe this claim is erroneous ... It is easy for those of us who lack the gift of coloured hearing or some other type of synaesthesia to dismiss the synaesthete's descriptions as a mere literary contrivance, the result of either a limited vocabulary or else a voluble one that fails to set conceptual limits. Enough examples have been given, I think, for the careful reader to conclude otherwise.[65]

While claims that clinical synaesthesia is only a language-based association have been conclusively dismissed, Cytowic does not fail to recognise the importance of language in the discussion of synaesthesia and its related concepts: "the development of speech itself depends on the ability to form stable intermodal associations readily".[66] This idea is particularly relevant to my study; while it relies on a distinction between synaesthesia as 'condition' and synaesthesia as 'concept', it also highlights the close associations and inherent exchanges which occur between the two. Synaesthesia as a concept is, perhaps, most closely allied with metaphor.

ii. Synaesthetic Metaphor and Sound Symbolism

As I noted in the Introduction, metaphor is a primary link between synaesthesia and literature due to its "sensuous function ... that of delighting the senses by presenting objects to the imagination for contemplation".[67] Cytowic recognised that "everyday language and actions are permeated with metaphoric concepts that are based in physical experience".[68] This inherent use of metaphor in everyday life can be seen in language involving abstract concepts. Where there is a lack of objective definition we turn to metaphor to explain our experience of the concept and liken it to something more concrete; inter-sense metaphors simply enhance our capability to do this. A large number of inter-sense metaphors have been incorporated into ordinary speech, becoming so commonplace that their link to synaesthetic concepts is not even readily obvious. Terms such as 'loud colour', 'bitter cold' and 'sharp cheese' are synaesthetic in their origin, associating the properties of two different senses, yet they are so readily accepted as legitimate descriptive terms that we hardly think about the anomalous

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[65] *A Union of the Senses*, p. 177.
[66] P. 183.
[67] Aileen Ward, p. 467.
[68] *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*, p. 206.

pairing. Metaphoric terms like these are important to language for, as Van Campen says, they "help us to understand, organize and speak about experiences that are not well understood or easy to describe".[69] The difference between synaesthetic metaphors and true synaesthesia is that "synaesthetic perceptions are not verbal but experiential ... [they] are not like having a theory or something ... Synaesthesia is a way of perceiving and not a way of conceiving".[70] So while non-synaesthetes may comment on the sharpness of the cheese, or the bitterness of the cold, and understand that they are making a constructed comparison in order to explain an experience, synaesthetes actually experience a sharp sensation when eating cheese, or a bitter taste when feeling cold; for them it is not a construction or an explanation, it is a perceptual reality.

Van Campen, exploring the relationship between metaphor and synaesthesia, suggests it is "the difference between understanding and perception"[71] which distinguishes the two, whereby synaesthetic theories and concepts are adaptable and relative but synaesthetic perceptions are absolute. This idea is being increasingly blurred by research into universal synaesthetic capacity and the semantic elements of ideasthesia, which draws inherent links between the perceptual and conceptual elements of synaesthesia. Van Campen suggests that an examination of the literary use of synaesthetic concepts and a comparison of the use of synaesthetic metaphor with real synaesthetic perception would be advantageous in defining this difference. This is partly what my study aims to provide, although I will not generally attempt to distinguish whether the use of synaesthetic metaphor is a symptom of true neurological synaesthesia or not, as this is most often speculative. In fact, the wide-ranging use of these metaphors suggests that they are more likely not to stem from true synaesthesia, but rather from stimulation of the universal synaesthetic capacity.

As Lawrence Marks stated, "the path from similarity to analogy to metaphor has its origin in the phenomena of the senses - in sensory processes, in sensory experiences, in perceptions of objects and events".[72] Language is inextricably linked to the senses: to enable expression of an experience, there must first be a perception by which that experience is created, so "the expansion of knowledge is in large measure the

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[69] Van Campen, p. 91.
[70] P. 91.
[71] P. 92.
[72] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 190.

proliferation of metaphors".[73] Marks discussed the significance of the doctrine of the unity of the senses within literature (indeed, within language itself), concentrating not only on the importance of metaphor, simile and analogy but on the very elements of language. He stated,

> If the unity of the senses is, as I have tried to show, pervasive and profound, then we should not be surprised – indeed we might well expect – to discover its threads running through the very fabric of human thought, revealing themselves in the articulate web of images, ideas and human concepts that go into cognitive activity. And most important, perhaps, cognitive activity is language.[74]

This idea was quite ahead of its time, suggesting as it does that human cognitive activity has implicit synaesthetic implications which can be seen manifested in language. The higher elements of language, such as comprehension and coherent expression, can be associated with inter-sense unity, and so too can the more basic element of sound. The manifestation of this idea can be seen in the linguistic study of sound symbolism, which suggests that "the words of a language may bear some intrinsic, that is non-arbitrary, relation to their meanings".[75] Distinguishing this from mere onomatopoeia (words such as '*hiss*' or '*buzz*' which imitate sounds) Marks instead refers to "sound symbolism [which] is attained when meaning expressed by sound reflects some non-acoustical property of nature".[76] This, Marks argues, is most accurately represented in literature, especially poetry. Poetic techniques, such as alliteration, rhyme and assonance are the vehicles of sound symbolism, and are often utilised by poets to bestow a required nuance of meaning to the poem without impacting on its comprehension. Using sound as a poetic vehicle for the expression of emotion, tone and perception is implicitly synaesthetic.

iii. Synaesthesia in Literature

> "And all the people saw the thunderings, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw it, they moved, and stood far off."
> (Exodus 20:18)

These lines from the King James Bible show that synaesthetic concepts have existed in writing for a long time. Indeed, as the concept of unity between the senses has existed for many hundreds of years, it is natural to expect that there would be evidence of the

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[73] P. 189.
[74] P. 193.
[75] P. 195.
[76] P. 196.

creative literary usage of this concept prior to the nineteenth century. In fact, synaesthetic metaphor does occur in works before the nineteenth century, although it was not prolific and it tended to reflect a more conceptualised, technical use. This can be seen in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, when synaesthetic metaphor was often used for a specific literary purpose. Marks notes that William Shakespeare (1564-1616) used a form of synaesthetic metaphor in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*: "I see a voice: now will I to the chink, / To spy an I can hear my Thisby's face" (Act V Scene I), and he suggests that this synaesthetic transference is used in order to express a "derangement of the senses", by which the character is rendered "humorous and ridiculous".[77] Similarly, when Shakespeare mentions "crimson shame, and anger ashie pale"[78] in *Venus and Adonis* he was perhaps simply describing in poetic language the physical skin-changes elicited by strong emotion. Still, the synaesthetic linking of "red shame" and "pale anger" sounds uncannily similar to the descriptions of modern synaesthetes,[79] and the synaesthetic relationship between colour and emotion is entrenched within the English language; consider the widespread acceptance of the descriptions "he is seeing red" or "she is green with envy". It is quite likely that Shakespeare used these metaphors for a specific, technical purpose.

Similarly, the English Metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century frequently used the technique of *discordia concors*, unusual or incongruous metaphorical comparisons whereby they attempted to portray the resemblances in things apparently unlike. This technique also contained inherent similarities to that of literary synaesthesia. John Donne's (1572-1631) poetry shows occasional evidence of simple synaesthetic metaphors such as "A loud perfume, which at my entrance cryed / Even at thy fathers nose"[80] ("The Perfume"), or more conceptual ones such as in the lines "As soules unbodied, bodies uncloth'd must bee / To taste whole joyes"[81] ("To his Mistris Going to Bed"). In "The Mower against Gardens" Andrew Marvell (1621-1678) also

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[77] P. 222.
[78] William Shakespeare, *Venus and Adonis*, from J.C Maxwell (ed.). *William Shakespeare The Poems* (London: Cambridge U.P, 1969) p. 7.
[79] Consider "Sometimes I see the colour and react emotionally; others it may be reversed – I get an emotion and then see this colour" (synaesthete BB) and "People say that anger is red, but I see purple. If I'm really upset at my kids and I'm yelling at them, there will be a purple background behind them" (synaesthete DS). From Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 50, p. 34.
[80] John Donne, *The Elegies and The Songs and Sonnets* Ed. Helen Gardner (Oxford: Clarendon, 1965), p. 8.
[81] P. 15.

uses smell metaphors with visual inferences such as "With strange perfumes he did the Roses taint. / And Flow'rs themselves were taught to paint"[82] and conceptual ideas such as "a wild and fragrant innocence"[83], as well as emotion-colour metaphors: "No white nor red was ever seen / So am'rous as this lovely green"[84] in "The Garden". Once again, these poets tended to rely on quite conceptualised synaesthetic transfers and their use of them often played a specific function within their poetry. So while synaesthetic concepts existed in early literature, they were not as pervasive or wide-ranging as later uses.

The use of synaesthesia as a poetic technique did not arise solely in the English literary tradition. There are a number of examples of synaesthesia in the works of the early Japanese haiku poets, particularly Matsuo Basho (1644-1694). In his article on "Basho and the Poetics of 'Haiku'", Makoto Ueda outlines the principle aesthetic guidelines of haiku poetry. Among them is the synaesthetic concept of union between the senses which, for the poets, represented a "mode by which man comes to recognise the interrelatedness of all things; it is a principle of assimilation and integrity, as against the method of natural science which is analysis and dissociation".[85] Basho's poetry contains numerous examples of synaesthesia, implying correspondences between sound and colour ("As evening has come / On the sea, wild ducks cry / Is faintly white"), colour and odour ("Their fragrance / Is whiter than peach blossoms: / The daffodils"), and sound and odour ("The wind fragrantly / Sounds, as if to adore / The pines and the cedars").[86] Such an explicit use of synaesthetic imagery as a specific poetic manifesto seems only to be rivalled by the French Symbolists of the nineteenth century. Ueda highlights the differences separating the two by ascertaining that,

> [The] French Symbolists try to unite two disparate objects and create the beauty of artifice; their beauty is the perfume of "amber, musk, benjamin and incense"- strong, sensual, artificial, sophisticated, often decadent and even abnormal. The beauty springing out of Basho's "correspondence" is like the fragrance of chrysanthemum or orchid- faint, natural, simple, primitive, and never extravagant or shocking.[87]

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[82] H.R Woudhuysen (ed.) *The Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse* (London: Penguin, 1993) p. 472
[83] P. 473.
[84] P. 474.
[85] Makoto Ueda, "Basho and the Poetics of Haiku", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 21, No. 4, 1963, p. 431.
[86] P. 429.
[87] P. 429.

The works of the haiku poets have subsequently been cited as influences on later poets, and undoubtedly had some impact on the use of synaesthesia in the works of such poets as Ezra Pound. Similarly, writers such as Shakespeare and Donne had an undeniable influence on the poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The influence of these earlier poets can be seen through the continuation of the conceptualisation of synaesthetic metaphors involving emotion, beauty or philosophical ideas, and the aligning of these with perceptions of smell, colour, or music, which seem to be the most common of the earlier literary synaesthetic transfers.

2.3 Synaesthesia and the Nineteenth Century

Although the concept of synaesthetic unity had existed for many hundreds of years and appeared occasionally in literature, it was not until the nineteenth century that it became a topic of intense interest in both science and the arts. While the neurological significance of synaesthesia was only beginning to be explored at this stage, its related concepts were adopted wholeheartedly by those in the music, art and literary spheres. The dichotomous nature of repression and progression which characterised much of the nineteenth century undoubtedly had an effect on the artistic expression of the time. Synaesthetic concepts represented a new avenue of thought for those looking to discard the shackles of tradition and express their personal vision. In literature, poets tended to use these concepts as stylistic devices in the tradition of earlier Renaissance and Enlightenment writers, and they were most commonly adopted by the English Romantic poets and the French Symbolist poets.

i. Romanticism, Nature and the Self

The Romantic period is typically identified as lasting approximately from 1785-1830, but the classification of a selection of English poets from this period as 'Romantic Poets' did not occur until half a century after the poets themselves were writing. This broad grouping somewhat belies the diversity of style and technique found between the poets generally known as Romantic, of whom the most famous are generally listed as

Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, Keats and, occasionally, Blake.[88] Many of these poets sought to discard the poetic conventions of the previous century and create a new form of expression based primarily on the internal feelings of the poet rather than the external objects he was conveying. They also shared a cultural background characterised by the turbulent French Revolution and the English Industrial Revolution. Abrams, Greenblatt and Stillinge's *Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period* states that

> Many writers ... [felt] that there was something distinctive about their time – not a shared doctrine or literary quality, but a pervasive intellectual and imaginative climate, which some of them called "the spirit of the age". They had the sense that (as Keats said in one of his sonnets) "Great spirits now on earth are sojourning" and that there was evidence of a release of energy, experimental boldness, and creative power that marks a literary renaissance.[89]

The feeling of a creative revolution and a collaborative pushing of the boundaries of tradition seems to pervade much of the work of the time. Synaesthetic concepts represented a broadening of the mind and the senses, a break from traditional expression and a realisation of the close links between the creative arts and science, which appealed to many artistic temperaments. One of the primary manifestations of the Romantic use of synaesthesia was through the expression of the sublime qualities of nature. 'Sublime' is defined by the *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* as "a Latin-derived word meaning literally "(on) high, lofty, elevated" ... a thing of the spirit, a spark that leaps from the soul of the writer".[90] Perhaps partly arising as a reaction to the encroaching industrial revolution, the concept of sublimity in nature was adopted as a subject by many Romantic poets. The power of nature and its connection to the human soul was integral to the idea of sublimity:

> Romantic poems habitually endow the landscape with human life, passion, and expressiveness. In part such descriptions represent the poetic equivalent of the metaphysical concept of nature, which had developed in deliberate revolt against the worldviews of the scientific philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries ... for many Romantic poets it was a matter of immediate experience to respond to the outer universe as a living entity that participates in the feelings of the observer.[91]

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[88] M. H Abrams, Stephen Greenblatt & Jack Stillinge (eds.) *The Norton Anthology of English Literature: The Romantic Period*, Volume 2a, Seventh Edition (London: W.W Norton & Co, 2000) p. 5.
[89] P. 5.
[90] Alex Preminger (ed.) *Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics*, Enlarged Edition (London: Macmillan Press, 1974) p. 819.
[91] *Norton Anthology of the Romantic Period*, p. 10.

This tendency was very often expressed through synaesthetic metaphor: it was only through all the senses in unity that the beauty and mystery of nature could truly be experienced.

Percy Bysshe Shelley's (1792-1822) poetry is a prime example of the Romantic tendency to use synaesthesia as a poetic technique for emphasising the sublime aspects of nature. Glenn O'Malley's 1964 book *Shelley and Synaesthesia* investigated the poet's broad use of inter-sense analogy, and stated that "Shelley characteristically associates synaesthetic imagery with certain of his favourite subjects and themes, with symbolic patterns, and even with the ordonnance of entire poems ... he makes synaesthesia subserve elaborate, subtle aesthetic designs".[92] Lawrence Marks also examined the poet's habit of creating multiple sensory correspondences in his poems:

> The quintessential synaesthetic image in Shelley's poetry plunges the reader into a melange of sensations, where ingredients from several senses blend into an effective batter; '*And every motion, odour, beam and tone / With that deep music is in Unison*' (Epipsychidion) ... The problem is, when everything corresponds, nothing corresponds. To say that anything corresponds is to acknowledge that something else does not.[93]

Marks suggests that the "wholly diffuse and unspecified sensory interactions" which characterise Shelley's poetry are evidence of his purely technical approach: "The more vague the metaphor, the more its effectiveness must rely on intrinsic correspondences. To communicate metaphorical meaning, reader and poet must share common ground, must agree – even if only implicitly – on the rules governing analogy across senses".[94] The vagueness in Shelley's use of synaesthetic concepts has led to the suggestion that Shelley himself was not synaesthetic, but was simply adopting concepts of inter-sensory analogy as a means of poetic technique.[95]

Shelley frequently used synaesthetic metaphors in the description of nature and the sublime. His poem "Mont Blanc" describes the "many-coloured, many-voiced vale" where,

> The chainless winds still come and ever came
> To drink their odours, and their mighty swinging
> To hear – an old and solemn harmony;

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[92] O'Malley, *Shelley and Synaesthesia*, p. 4.
[93] Marks, The Unity of the Senses, p. 237.
[94] P. 238.
[95] Downey, "Literary Synaesthesia". Downey's study declares that "Shelley's poetry shows that he makes use of odour terms in a peculiar way ... sometimes light and music are blended in his similes ... Usually, however, his comparisons are too deliberate to evidence any confusion ... The many forms suggested by Shelley's odour-similes suggest that this conversion is literary, not spontaneous", pp. 491-492.

> Thine earthly rainbows stretched across the sweep
> Of aethereal waterfall.[96]

Here, Shelley evokes all five senses in order to convey to his reader the sense of awe and wonderment that the physical experience of the mountain incites. The poem expresses sensorially the majestic solemnity and meditative quality that a landscape can inspire. Shelley incorporated synaesthetic metaphor in order to express the "still and solemn power of many sights, / And many sounds, and much of life and death", which he finds within nature where "the voiceless lightning in these solitudes / Keeps innocently, and like vapour broods / Over the snow".[97] In "Stanzas Written in Dejection- December 1818, near Naples", the poet recounts how the

> Blue isles and snowy mountains wear
> The purple noon's transparent might,
> The breath of the moist earth is light
> Around its unexpanded buds;
> Like many a voice of one delight.[98]

This synaesthetic correspondence underlies a sense of the sublimity and beauty of nature, yet in this poem it is set in stark comparison with the poet's sense of inferiority and worthlessness. Synaesthetic imagery such as "The lightning of the noontide ocean / Is flashing round me, and a tone / Arises from its measured motion"[99] renders not only sublimity, but the enormous emotional and perceptual impact that the scene has on the poet. Similarly, "To a Sky-lark" is, as Lawrence Marks proposes, "the epitome of expression of an intrinsic relation between two modalities".[100] According to *The Norton Anthology*, the skylark, "freed from all bonds of earth and soaring beyond the reach of all physical senses except hearing, is made the emblem of a nonmaterial spirit of pure joy, beyond the possibility of human experience".[101] Using synaesthetic analogies Shelley achieves a sense of awe echoing that of religious ecstasy and profound insight, whereby the power of the skylark's song evokes "Things more true and deep / Than we mortals dream".[102] Sound and sight are inextricably related within this poem, a linkage which Marks suggests "appears to be totally natural, hardly forced or unusual".[103] The lines in which the skylark, "Like a glow-worm golden / In a dell of dew; / Scattering

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[96] Percy Bysshe Shelley. *Selected Poems* Ed. Timothy Webb (London: Dent, 1977) p. 3.
[97] P. 6.
[98] P. 11.
[99] P. 11.
[100] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 243.
[101] *Norton Anthology of the Romantic Period*, p. 765.
[102] Shelley, *Selected Poems*, p. 106
[103] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 243.

unbeholden / Its aerial hue / Among the flowers and grass which screen it from the view"[104] exemplify Shelley's supreme poetic control over synaesthetic analogies.

John Keats' (1795-1821) poetry was characterised by its "slow-paced, gracious movement; a concreteness of description in which all the senses – tactile, gustatory, kinaesthetic, visceral, as well as visual and auditory – combine to give the total apprehension of an experience".[105] Keats' epic "Endymion" contains examples of synaesthetic taste imagery ("to taste the gentle moon" and "the same bright face I tasted in my sleep"[106]), as well as synaesthetic touch ("the airy stress / Of music's kiss impregnates the free winds: / And with a sympathetic touch unbinds / Eolian music from their lucid wombs"[107]) and sight:

> There hangs by unseen film, an orbed drop
> Of light, and that is love: its influence,
> Thrown in our eyes, genders a novel sense,
> At which we start and fret; till in the end,
> Melting into its radiance we blend,
> Mingle, and so become a part of it.[108]

June Downey declared Keats to have been "not particularly successful in his synaesthetic fragments", although she notes that "the statuesque quality of much of Keats' imagery ... exemplifies his preoccupation with the tangible".[109] It is precisely this tangible, sensory quality which gives Keats' poetry its profound immediacy. Take for example these lines from "The Fall of Hyperion: A Dream", in which the qualities of sight, sound and smell are expressed through tactility, adding to the sense of intimacy and dreamlike beauty that the poem was attempting to express:

> In neighbourhood of fountains, by the noise
> Soft showering in mine ears, and, by the touch
> Of scent, not far from roses
> [...]
> Through bowers of fragrant and enwreathed light,
> And diamond paved lustrous long arcades.
> Anon rush'd by the bright Hyperion;
> His flaming robes stream'd out behind his heels,
> And gave a roar, as if of earthly fire,
> That scared away the meek ethereal hours
> And made their dove-wings tremble.[110]

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[104]Shelley, *Selected Poems*, p. 105.
[105] *Norton Anthology of The Romantic Period*, p. 825.
[106] P. 831.
[107] P. 831.
[108] P. 832.
[109] Downey, p. 496.
[110] *Norton Anthology of the Romantic Period*, pp. 875-886.

Keats' poetry uses the power of these synaesthetic comparisons to impart to the reader a sense of the alternating terror and beauty of his poetic world and its sublimity. Far from being "not particularly successful", his use of synaesthesia highlights his subtle and skilful grasp of the power and potency of sensuous imagery within poetic language.

American poets in the nineteenth century also displayed evidence of the synaesthetic expression of natural sublimity in their work. Edgar Allen Poe (1809-1849) has at times been proposed as a possible synaesthete, and Van Campen suggests that his synaesthesia may have been enhanced by (or even arisen from) his drug-intake.[111] Evidence for this comes primarily from a footnote that he added to the poem "Al Aaraaf" which states "I have often thought I could distinctly hear the sound of the darkness as it stole over the horizon".[112] This poem contains poetic synaesthesia in which sight and sound are interrelated:

> Witness the murmur of the gray twilight
> That stole upon the ear in Eyraco,
> Of many a wild star gazer long ago-
> That stealeth ever on the ear of him.[113]

Poe's poetic use of synaesthesia seems to be particularly focused on depictions of night and darkness, a tendency perhaps sufficiently explained within that short footnote. In "Tamerlane" he speaks again of "the sound of the coming darkness",[114] and in "The Sleeper", it is the moon that, "Softly dripping, drop by drop / Upon the quiet mountain top, / Steals drowsily and musically".[115] This consistency of synaesthetic imagery was noted by Marks, who suggested that if the poet was a true synaesthete then his synaesthesia "was of an extremely specific and limited sort, consisting exclusively of the association of sound with darkness".[116] Although the majority of Poe's synaesthesia is focused on this theme, there is still evidence of other forms of inter-sense analogy within his work. In "Al Aaraaf" he speaks of "Fair flowers, and fairy! to whose care is given / To bear the Goddess' song, in odours, up to heaven"[117] and how "ev'n ideal

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[111] Van Campen, p.105.
[112] Edgar Allen Poe, *Poems and Poetics* Ed. Richard Wilbur (USA: Literary Classics of America, 2003) p. 30.
[113] P. 29.
[114] P. 9.
[115] P. 48.
[116] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 231.
[117] Poe, p. 24.

things / Flap shadowy sounds from visionary wings",[118] lines which are similar to Keats' and Shelley's use of odour and synaesthetic music. Whether Poe's use of synaesthesia was drug-induced or true synaesthetic perception, or simply a conscious employment of literary technique is not known, but it is undoubtedly an interesting component of his work, and one which corresponds in many ways to the sublime nature focus of the English poets.

ii. The Harmony of the Spheres

The use of synaesthetic music is related to another poetic trope which characterised nineteenth century Romanticism: the idea of *musica universalis*, or the 'music of the spheres'. This concept stemmed from the Pythagorean theory of universal harmonies created by the revolution of the planets, which was also the basis for 'harmonic' (mathematical and proportional) relations in nature. The idea of universal harmonies was explored by philosophers such as Plato, Cicero and Boethius, and it was adopted over the centuries by various artists, musicians and writers who relished its creative possibilities. This universal, natural music was implicitly synaesthetic and was consistently expressed through inter-sense metaphors in nineteenth century poetry.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge's (1772-1834) view of the mind as "creative in perception, intuitive in its discovery of the first premises of metaphysics and religion, and capable of a poetic re-creation of the world of sense by the fusing and formative power of the imagination"[119] influenced his use of sensory imagery as a means of articulating and recreating the poetic beauty of nature, and relating it to the imaginative and creative powers of man. In "The Eolian Harp" Coleridge used the popular Romantic symbol of the Eolian harp, or air-harp, which was very much connected with ideas of universal music. This instrument consisted of strings tuned in unison and stretched over a rectangular sounding box which, when placed in the wind, produced patterns of musical chords. The harp was a novel object which piqued the literary imagination of poets and writers of the period, who used it often as an image of "the mind in poetic inspiration ... or else the mind in perception, responding to an intellectual breeze by

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[118] P. 26.
[119] *Norton Anthology of the Romantic Period*, p. 418.

trembling into consciousness".[120] Coleridge's poem highlights the synaesthetic attributes of Eolian music, as the 'long sequacious notes / Over delicious surges sink and rise, / Such a soft floating witchery of sound"[121]; the beauty of this music, made by the wind, represents the ephemeral beauty of nature experienced within all the senses. Combining a "delicious" taste, a "soft" touch, and a fantastic vision, ("Where Melodies round honey-dropping flowers, / Footless and wild, like birds of Paradise, / Nor pause, nor perch, hovering on untamed wing!"[122]), the Eolian music creates a unified sense by which nature can be fully experienced. It is through the experience of this music that the creative urge arises:

> O the one life within us and abroad,
> Which meets all motion and becomes its soul,
> A light in sound, a sound-like power in light,
> Rhythm in all thought, and joyance everywhere-
> Methinks, it should have been impossible
> Not to love all things in a world so filled
> [...]
> And what if all animated nature
> Be but organic harps diversely framed,
> That tremble into thought, as o'er them sweeps
> Plastic and vast, one intellectual breeze,
> At once the soul of each, and God of All?[123]

Coleridge suggests that this universal beauty, represented by the Eolian harp, is analogous to the creative instinct that is sparked within the poet, although he goes on to dismiss this idea as coming "too close to the heresy of pantheism, which identifies God with the nature that, in the orthodox view, is his creation".[124] Coleridge's use of synaesthetic unity alternatively represents a philosophic admiration of nature as allied to the creative instinct, but also a heretic suggestion that it blasphemously elevates this pantheistic admiration to the level of religious awe.

O'Malley also comments on Shelley's synaesthetic use of the Aeolian ('Eolian') harp and its link with the prism in his narrative poem "Alastor: or, The Spirit of Solitude" of 1815. He suggests that Shelley used two sets of images in a synaesthetic fusion throughout the poem: one referring to "rainbows and prisms", and the other to

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[120] P. 419.
[121] P. 419.
[122] P. 419.
[123] Pp. 419-420.
[124] P. 419.

Aeolian "natural" music or Aeolian instruments".[125] The repetition of the rainbow motif: "the hues of heaven" and "the bright arch of rainbow clouds" ,[126] "the beams of sunset hung their rainbow hues",[127] "restless serpents, clothed / In rainbow and in fire"[128] and "nurses of rainbow flowers"[129] reinforces this, as does further reference to the poet/hero as "a fragile lute, on whose harmonious strings / The breath of heaven did wander".[130] This technique is, as O'Malley suggested,

> designed especially to express a height of visionary awareness in the nameless hero. With his "frame [uniquely] attuned / To beauty" (287-288), the hero, like Shelley himself in the invocation, is symbolized most obviously perhaps as an Aeolian instrument; but his synaesthetic perception requires that his symbolic identity include his being an air-prism.[131]

In order to obtain insight enough for expression of the sublime in nature, the poet must enable himself to become an 'Aeolian' vehicle by which the sounds of his own soul are refracted into the beauteous prism of nature.

Later in the nineteenth century, Algernon Charles Swinburne's (1837-1909) poetry also showed a particular affiliation for the relation of light and music, as expressed in "Thalassius":

> And heard from above afar
> A noise of songs and wind enamoured wings
> And lutes and lyres of milder and mightier strings,
> And round the resonant radiance of his car
> Where depth is one with height,
> Light heard as music, music seen as light.[132]

The same synaesthetic transfer can be seen in "Astrophel": "Music bright as the soul of light, for wings an eagle, for notes a dove, / Leaps and shines from lustrous lines where through thy soul from afar above / Shone and sang till darkness rang with light whose fire is the fount of love".[133] Downey thought that Swinburne's "frequent attempt to

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[125] O'Malley, p. 35.
[126] *The Norton Anthology of the Romantic Period,* p. 708.
[127] P. 711.
[128] P. 713.
[129] P. 717.
[130] P. 718.
[131] O'Malley, p. 57.
[132] Algernon Charles Swinburne, *The Works of Algernon Charles Swinburne* Ed. Laurence Binyon (Hertfordshire, Wordsworth Editions, 1995) p. 110.
[133] Algernon Charles Swinburne. *A Midsummer Holiday: Astrophel: A Channel Passage and Other Poems* (London: William Heinemann, 1917 (1904)) p. 124.

render song visible [was] ... rarely successful"[134] but despite this assertion she recognised that the poet's

> synaesthetic phrasing, although often reported to be unmeaning, derives so much beauty from its association with melodious words and rhythmic cadences that the reader, preoccupied with the delight in sheer word-music, often surrenders all demand for meaning.[135]

These instances of music made visible (and thus, synaesthetic) were not "unmeaning" oddities, although they may have seemed so in 1912 when Downey was writing. Rather, they represented Swinburne's embracing of the synaesthetic ideal of music as a universally corresponding entity. Other critics (including T.S Eliot) identified Swinburne's poetic ambiguity as a celebrated characteristic, and Marks later stated that "it would be a serious error ... to conclude too hastily that all of Swinburne's synaesthetic images are loosely put together, vague, and poorly defined as to what sensory qualities correspond".[136] Swinburne has been regarded as another likely candidate for true clinical synaesthesia, but as his poetic synaesthesia shows evidence of careful technical crafting which echoes the earlier Romantic poets, this is hard to verify. Synaesthesia in much nineteenth century poetry seems to be a deliberate technique used to express poetic ideas of sublimity and universal harmony within nature, and Swinburne's use of it as a vehicle for the natural harmony of light and sound is very much within this tradition.

iii. Synaesthetic Emotion: "Suffer the Vermillion"

Another famous poem showing evidence of synaesthetic concepts is Coleridge's "Dejection: An Ode", which he wrote "after hearing the opening stanzas of 'Ode: Intimations of Immortality', which Wordsworth had just composed ... [and which] picked up on the theme of loss in the quality of perceptual experience".[137] Coleridge's ode relates his despair and unhappiness in love, paralleled by depictions of a cold and brutal natural world whose beauty is lost, not to his sight, but to his feeling: "I see them all so excellently fair, / I see, not feel, how beautiful they are!"[138] This suggests that it is not simply through sight that we perceive beauty and that, indeed, sight is woefully

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[134] Downey, p. 495.
[135] P. 495.
[136] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 244.
[137] *The Norton Anthology of the Romantic Period*, p. 459.
[138] P. 460.

inadequate in such a situation. Rather it is through a unification of all the senses, and thus a harmony of feeling, that the true emotive potential of beauty is recognised. This unification of senses is felt within the soul. It is a unification of sounds, ("And from the soul itself must there be sent / A sweet and potent voice, of its own birth, / Of all sweet sounds the life and element"[139]), of music, ("this strong music in the soul"[140]), and of light ("from the soul must issue forth, / A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud"[141]). Combined, these result in pure 'joy', a term which "Coleridge often uses ... for a sense of abounding vitality and of harmony between one's inner life and the life of nature'".[142] Joy is what the poet and his fellow man must strive for, it is "the spirit and the power ... Joy is the sweet voice, Joy the luminous cloud"[143] achieved through a synaesthetic unification of sense: "thence flows all that charms or ear or sight, / All melodies the echoes of that voice, / All colours a suffusion from that light".[144] In his state of dejection, Coleridge has lost the sense of harmony with nature that "to us gives in dower, / A new Earth and a new Heaven"[145] and so, unable to experience the beauty of the world though the multi-sensory feeling of the soul, he is limited to the inadequacies of a single sense.

The American nineteenth century poet Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) has also been suggested as a possible synaesthete. According to Nicholas Ruddick's article "Synaesthesia in Emily Dickinson's Poetry", "the range and variety of her synaesthetic images and the sophistication with which she manipulates them have almost no parallel in poetry in English".[146] This rather grand assertion reflects the prominence given by modern critics to her unprecedented poetic style, and although I would disagree with this statement, it does indicate the extent to which she used synaesthetic ideas. While her poetry contains a variety of synaesthetic metaphors, these generally involve conceptual aspects which have an emotional root. Dickinson's use of terms such as "slow- Violet Gaze"[147], "His Yellow Plan"[148], "Blue Monotony"[149] and "saturated

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[139] P. 460.
[140] P. 460.
[141] P. 460.
[142] P. 460.
[143] Pp. 460-461.
[144] P. 461.
[145] P. 461.
[146] Nicholas Ruddick "Synaesthesia" in Emily Dickinson's Poetry", *Poetics Today*, Vol. 5, No 1, 1984, p. 60.
[147]Emily Dickinson, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (Vol. I, II & III) Ed. Thomas H. Johnson (Cambridge MA: The Belknap Press, 1951)Vol. II, *#722*, p. 553

Sight"[150] are, in Ruddick's view, forms of a "dominant metaphor" which "gives the illusion of being synaesthetic".[151] I would suggest these are probably more closely related to ideasthesia and the sensory-conceptual metaphor. Dickinson's poetry contains many examples of these metaphors, and often they are used, as Ruddick claims, to assert a sense of intensity, sympathy, surprise or concision.[152] The lines "Sang from the Heart, Sire, / Dipped my Beak in it, / If the Tune drip too much / Have a tint too Red / Pardon the Cochineal- / Suffer the Vermillion"[153] represent a synaesthetic comparison within "an elaborate extension characteristic of hyperbole"[154] which heightens its intensity but also its conceptuality. Contrasted with the playful tone of her description of flowers, "They have a little Odor- that to me / Is metre- nay- 'tis melody- / And spiciest at fading – indicate- / A Habit- of a Laureate"[155] and the incongruous tone of "Piles of solid Moan"[156], it is clear that Dickinson's synaesthetic metaphors perform a highly conceptualised function within her poetry.

The emotional and intimate characteristics of Dickinson's poetry are evident in her use of synaesthetic metaphor. The poem "I felt a Funeral, in my Brain"[157] represents a unique expression of emotional pain characterised by its synaesthetic intimations. This implicit sense of synaesthetic transfer is continued throughout the poem as a means of translating to the reader the mounting horror and depression within the poet's mind, as seen in the lines, "A Service, like a Drum- / Kept beating- beating", "And then I heard them lift a Box / And creak across my Soul / With those same Boots of Lead, again, / Then Space- began to toll" and "all the Heavens were a Bell, / and Being, but an Ear, / And I, and Silence, some strange Race / Wrecked, solitary, here-". In #465[158], Dickinson uses a similar technique, echoing the unnerving opening line "I heard a Fly buzz- when I died-" by repeating the motif of the sound of the fly with synaesthetic interactions to impress the reader with a sense of unsettled perception: "There

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[148] *#591*, p. 452.
[149] *#928*, p. 677.
[150] *#640*, p. 493.
[151] Ruddick, p. 67.
[152] P. 72.
[153] *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* Vol.II, *#1059*, p. 747.
[154] Ruddick, p. 72.
[155] *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* Vol.II, *#785*, p. 592.
[156] *#639*, p. 491.
[157] *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* Vol.I, pp. 280-281.
[158] P. 358.

interposed a Fly- / With Blue- uncertain stumbling Buzz". It seems that it is not exaggeration to say that a great majority of Emily Dickinson's synaesthetic metaphors are closely allied with emotional and ideasthetic concepts.

The English Romantic poets tended to use synaesthetic metaphor for specific technical purposes: to depict the sensory effects of sublimity, as a vehicle for the expression of musica universalis, and as a means of intensifying emotion. These tropes can also be seen in the work of later poets such as Swinburne, and in the works of American poets such as Poe and Dickinson. The French Symbolist poets would extend the possibilities of poetic synaesthetic expression, but they continued to use synaesthesia in the technical, conceptualised manner of the Romantics. Synaesthetic metaphor in the nineteenth century provided a means for relation between different perceptions and experiences through the linking of the senses, which ultimately suggested a link between the personal world of human experience and the eternal world of nature.

iv. Symbolism and Universal Correspondences

The poetry of the French Symbolists had a huge influence on many of the poets writing in the early twentieth century, and the implicit synaesthesia that appears in much modernist poetry can in some ways be traced to Symbolist literary ideas. In her discussion of French Symbolist poetry, Enid Rhodes Peschel states,

> Symbolism implies at once a rebellion and a re-creation. It is a revolt against the kind of realism that is but the description of things, feelings and people. For the Symbolists do not wish merely to describe; instead, they aim to re-create through their words a state of being, a feeling, a glimmer, a vision. They want the reader to sense, and to react to, the experience itself. Seen this way, Symbolism is above all an attempt to transmit by means of symbols -- frequently by means of a poetic language that the poet must invent-- the mysteries that palpitate beneath experiences.[159]

This assertion highlights the importance of sensory perception within the Symbolist manifesto. Similarly, in "Introduction to the Study of Symbolism" Marcel Chicoteau suggests that "the reproduction of objects through the medium of the senses tends to the formation of abstract or 'pure' ideas. Symbolist poetry strives to reach this state of

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[159] Enid Rhodes Peschel, *Four French Symbolist Poets: Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Verlaine, Mallarme: Translation and Introduction* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1981) p. 2.

purity, finding in it its means of expressing a reality".[160] Symbolist poets turned to the senses in order to express the impressions and sensations of a universally corresponding world. Chicoteau explains that "the portrayal of sensuous impressions ... in French Symbolism ... is marked by the incessant emphasis on memorising, in a half-despairing attempt to recapture those fleeting moments in a sensuous satisfaction".[161] Thus the importance of reality lies not in its concrete and material existence, but rather in its existence within the human mind as created by the senses.

The relation of the Symbolist aesthetic with synaesthetic concepts has been widely acknowledged. Synaesthesia developed as an explicit component of the Symbolist manifesto, for it represented not only the significance of perception, but also the sense of unity and correspondence that the Symbolists sought within the world. Oreste Pucciani writes on the subject in "The Universal Language of Symbolism": "the drama of synaesthesia is that it implies being and reality in every register of human sensitivity, in all modes of being which are related to each other. From the point of view of this synthesis, it is possible to assume that if man is universal, so are his music, his poetry, his arts".[162] The interrelationship between the arts was also a prevalent idea at the time and Symbolism emphasised this, as Peschel noted: "Often in Symbolist poetry there is music: music evoked to capture the poet's mood and to epitomize his emotions ... or music re-created in sounds that filter thought the lines".[163] The synaesthetic expression of music in Symbolist poetry extended the Romantic use of synaesthesia as an expression of *musica universalis*, not only in using music as metaphor but by incorporating musical motifs and the subtle musicality of sound symbolism. Many of these ideas subsequently had a huge influence on the use of synaesthesia in the poetry, art and music of the early twentieth century.

The father of Symbolist poetry, Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), addressed the idea of synaesthetic correspondence:

> The reader knows our goal: to demonstrate that true music suggests analogous ideas in different brains ... what would be truly surprising would be if sound were not able to suggest colour or

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[160] Marcel Chicoteau, "Introduction to the Study of Symbolism", *Studies In Symbolist Psychology*, Sydney: Hoertel & Co, 1958, p. 8.
[161] P. 16.
[162] Oreste F. Pucciani, "The Universal Language of Symbolism", *Yale French Studies*, No. 9, Symbol and Symbolism, Yale University Press, 1952, p. 34.
[163] Peschel, p. 4.

> that colours could not give the idea of a melody, and if sound and colour were improper for translating things; things having always expressed themselves by a reciprocal analogy.[164]

Baudelaire's doctrine of synaesthesia did not only extend to the relation of sound and colour, but included all the senses in correspondence, eliciting a state through which "the ability to grasp resemblances, figures of speech and artifices in the outer world ... (and) the abandonment of self to a synthesis of sensuous perception"[165] was enabled. The appreciation of this state was implicit in Symbolist poetry, underlying its primary aim of re-creating a moment of multi-sensory perception in order to express the greater truths of existence. Lawrence Marks reinforces this when he writes of Baudelaire's doctrine of sensory correspondence that "Not only do sensory qualities correspond to each other, they also correspond to that ultimate reality which underlies them. Each sense serves up its own symbols of reality, but, discovers the poet, all symbols reflect a singular reality".[166] This singular reality was expressed through the correspondence of the senses, which was an explicitly synaesthetic idea.

The most explicit expression of synaesthetic concepts within Baudelaire's poetry can be seen in his famous sonnet "Correspondances" [Correspondences] where he writes of how "Les parfums, les couleurs et les sons se respondent" ["Smells, colours and sounds correspond"].[167] The preoccupation of this poem with synaesthetic concepts brings up the possibility that Baudelaire was a synaesthete himself, although his expression of these correspondences as "reciprocal analogy" could be conceived as evidence against this. In fact, "Correspondances" may have arisen out of both an actual perceptual experience (possibly drug-induced) and a theoretical philosophy of universal correspondence. Like all the Symbolist poets, Baudelaire sought to express universal truths and ambiguous concepts using perception as a symbol. As Marks noted, "To Baudelaire, synaesthesia did more than just illuminate the unity of the senses; it symbolized the unity of reality ... The correspondences of odours, colours, and sounds had a quasi-religious significance ... To decode correspondences in the natural world is simultaneously to decode correspondences in the spiritual world".[168] Thus the subject matter of "Correspondances" is not simply the explicit correspondences of synaesthesia

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[164] Baudelaire, quoted in Joseph Acquisto, *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2006) p. 26.
[165] Chicoteau, p. 17.
[166] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 224.
[167] Charles Baudelaire, *The Complete Verse* Ed. Francis Scarfe (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1986) p. 61.
[168] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 227.

but rather the symbolic allusion to the implicit correspondences of the spiritual world, which for Baudelaire and many of the Symbolist poets was "more than mere metaphor; it was fundamental truth".[169]

This fundamental truth informed many of Baudelaire's poetic works, and he frequently used the doctrine of synaesthesia as an expression of universal correspondences. In "La Vie Antérieure" [A Previous Life], he speaks of "Les houles, en roulant les images des cieux, / Mêlaient d'une façon solennelle et mystique / Les tout-puissant accords de leur riche musique / Aux couleurs du couchant reflété par mes yeux" ["The sea-swells, heaving the patterns of the skies, solemnly and mystically interwove the overwhelming harmonies of their mellow music with the hues of the sunset mirrored in my eyes"].[170] This is an expression of supreme sublimity which echoes the Romantic poets, yet Baudelaire uses the image of outer beauty and unity as a poignant counter to inner turmoil and chaos of "Le secret douloureux qui me faisait languir" ["The secret grief wherefore I pined"].[171] Baudelaire was intensely interested in the contrast of pure idealistic beauty with the painful ugliness of reality, and one of his defining characteristics was his ability to express the beauty inherent in even the most unimportant or abhorrent things. As Wallace Fowlie stated, "It is impossible to estimate how much Baudelaire's so-called morbidity and taste for extracting beauty from unusual experiences developed because of his hatred for the world in which he lived ... In his aesthetics, the slightest object may be magnified by the poet. He taught that there is poetry and beauty in the most trivial aspects of modern life".[172] This aspect of his work in particular was highly influential on modern poetry. In "Hymne à la Beauté" [A Hymn to Beauty], Baudelaire views beauty as "infernal et divin" ["daemonic and divine"], and uses synaesthetic comparison in an expression of its immense power: "Tu contiens dans ton œil couchant et l'aurore; / Tu répands des parfums comme un soir orageux" ["Your eye contains the sundown and the dawn, / You breathe out perfumes like a stormy evening"].[173] This personification of beauty is a dichotomous parallel to the reality of life, simultaneously wondrous and terrifying. For Baudelaire, synaesthesia was as much a vehicle of Symbolism as a means of personal expression, and the power

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[169] P. 229.
[170] Baudelaire, *The Complete Verse*, p. 71.
[171] P. 71.
[172] Wallace Fowlie, *Poem and Symbol: A Brief History of French Symbolism* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990) pp. 9-39.
[173]Baudelaire, *The Complete Verse*, p. 81.

of beauty in this poem is symbolised and expressed within synaesthetic concepts: "De Satan ou de Dieu, qu'importe? Ange ou Sirène, / Qu'importe, si tu rends, - fée aux yeux des velours, / Rythme, parfum, lueur, ô mon unique reine!- / L'univers moins hideux et les instants moins lourds?" ["What does it matter if you come from Satan or God? - Angel or Siren, velvet-eyed spirit all rhythm and perfume and light, - so long as you make the world less hideous and lighten the leaden hours?"].[174]

Baudelaire's use of odour as a primary sense has caused some critics to suggest that, if he were not synaesthetic, he perhaps had a heightened sense of smell. Marks suggests that "Baudelaire was acutely aware of the peculiar, intangible character of odours" and that "Perhaps the very impalpability of odours, their evanescence, made them seem to Baudelaire to be the closest that phenomenal appearance ever gets to noumenal reality".[175] The use of odour as a synaesthetic metaphor seems to be a nineteenth century characteristic, and for Symbolists such as Baudelaire it arose as a philosophical notion linked to the universal correspondence theories of Emanuel Swedenborg, the Swedish scientist, philosopher and theologian. It has been suggested[176] that odour played a unique role in nineteenth century literature, its significance arising from the sanitation reform which occurred in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century: "As odours were chased out of mainstream culture in the nineteenth century, they were taken up and transformed into literary signs ... the intrinsic formlessness of smell, in turn, made it an apt literary metaphor for the formlessness of emotions ... This olfactory language was often expressed as being interrelated with other sensory codes".[177] Baudelaire's heightened perceptibility to the multi-sensory correspondences of odour can be noted in many of his poems. In "Parfum Exotique" [Exotic Perfume], the smell of a lover transports the poet to a blissful, synaesthetic paradise: "Guidé par ton odeur vers de charmants climats ... Pendant que le parfum des verts tamariniers, / Qui circule dans l'air et m'enfle la narine, / Se mêle dans mon âme au chant des mariniers" ["Led by your odour to enchanting climes … While the scent of the green tamarinds that wafts through the air and fills my nostrils, comes mingling in my soul

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[174] P. 82.
[175] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 224.
[176] Constance Classen, David Howes and Anthony Smiedt, *Aroma: A Cultural History of Smell*, pp. 78-80.
[177] Pp. 78-87.

with the sailors' song"].[178]A similar concept is seen in "La Chevelure" [Hair], when the poet says "Tout un monde lointain, absent, presque défunt, / Vit dans tes profondeurs, forêt aromatique! / Comme d'autres esprits voguent sur la musique, / Le mien, ô mon amour! nage sur ton parfum" ["A whole faraway world that is absent, almost dead, survives in the depths of this forest of aromas; and as other minds transcend through music, so mine, O my beloved, shall float afar upon your perfume"].[179] The use of smell in these poems is characterised by synaesthetic comparison which suggests that heightened perception may awaken a new reality, and enable the exploration of new facets of an experience. This experience may be emotionally reflected through love, or spiritually reflected through nature as in "Harmonie du Soir" [Evening Harmony]: "Les sons et les parfums tournent dans l'air du soir; / Valse mélancolique et langoureux vertoge!" ["The sounds and perfumes spiral in the evening air, in a melancholy waltze, a slow sensual gyre"].[180] It can even be one of horror and revulsion, as in "Une Charogne" [Carrion], where the stink of a rotting corpse, "Brûlante et suant les poisons ... rendait une étrange musique, / Comme l'eau courante et le vent" ["inflamed and oozing poisons ... gave out an eerie music like the flow of water or wind"].[181] Baudelaire's use of synaesthetic comparisons was prolific, and the diversity of purpose which they serve within his poetry enabled him to explore multiple aspects of the doctrine of synaesthetic correspondence as it applied to different areas in his life and experience.

Arthur Rimbaud (1854-1891) is also noted for his use of synaesthetic concepts, due in most part to his poem "Voyelles" [Vowels] in which he relates the synaesthetic associations of the vowels. This sonnet has also suggested to critics and researchers that Rimbaud may have been synaesthetic himself, although his letter-colour comparisons seem sophisticatedly conceptualised, and thus perhaps contrived. However, Rimbaud's rather grand claim to have "invented the colours of the vowels ... I determined the shape and movement of each consonant, and with instinctive rhythms, I flatter to have invented a poetic verb form that is accessible one day to all the other human senses and I am serving as the translator" ["J'inventai la couleur des voyelles ! ... Je réglai la forme et le mouvement de chaque consonne, et, avec des rythmes instinctifs, je me flattai

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[178]Baudelaire, *The Complete Verse*, p. 83.
[179] P. 83.
[180] P. 116.
[181] P. 91-92.

d'inventer un verbe poétique accessible, un jour ou l'autre, à tous les sens. Je réservais la traduction"] (from "Délires II: Alchimie du verbe" [Second Delirium: Alchemy of the Word])[182], suggests that rather than being the result of a direct synaesthetic perception, the colours of the vowels were perhaps more likely to be poetic metaphor. In either case, there is no doubt that Rimbaud was interested in the doctrine of correspondences and explored synaesthetic concepts in the explication of this. Like Baudelaire, he was interested in the inherent beauty and poetry of the grotesque, and his poems display an unnerving sense of truth which is echoed in his use of unusual synaesthetic comparisons. They often have an especially vivid sense of colour which gives them the quality of a vibrant, dream-like reality, as seen in the synaesthetic colour in "Les Chercheuses de poux" [Lice-Seekers]: "le front de l'enfant, plein de rouges tourmentes, / Implore l'essaim blanc des rêves indistincts" ["The boy's head, full of red torment, / Pleads for white swarms of cloudy dreams"][183] and "L'étoile a pleuré..." [The stars wept...]: "L'étoile a pleuré rose au cœur de tes Oreilles, / L'infini roulé blanc de ta nuque à tes reins" ["The stars wept pink deep inside your ears, / Infinity's rolled white from your nape to your hips"][184], both of which suggest an implicit synaesthetic link between emotional state and colour. Rimbaud used these metaphors to shock and surprise his reader, alternating between violently graphic and disconcerting images and images of a quiet and intense beauty.

Rimbaud also mixed the senses and emotion as the Romantics did, as in "Fais jouer dans nos torpeurs, / Par les parfums les hystéries" ["Set the hysteria of fragrances / To work among our torpitudes"] (from "Ce qu'on dit au Poete à propos de fleurs" [What the Poet is Told on the Subject of Flowers][185]) and occasionally used metaphors of sight and pain which foreshadowed the extensive use of these by twentieth century poets: "Si un rayon me blesse / Je succomberai sur la mousse" ["Should a ray of light wound me / I'll expire on the moss"] (from "Bannières de mai" [Banners of May][186]). He even used a metaphor of geometric taste, "Gagnons, pèlerins sages, / L'absinthe aux verts piliers…" ["Good pilgrims, let's find / The green pillars of absinthe…"]

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[182] Arthur Rimbaud, *Collected Poems*, Ed. Martin Sorrell, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 235.
[183] P. 131.
[184] P. 135.
[185] P. 112.
[186] P. 176.

("Comédie de la Soif [Comedy of Thirst][187]), which, interestingly, displays a curious similarity to the experiences of Cytowic's synaesthetic subject MW, for whom the taste of spearmint produced the sensation of "cool, glass columns".[188] This unusual use of taste as a synaesthetic metaphor would come to have greater significance in the early twentieth century.

Martin Sorrell suggests that the adoption of a "poetry of sensation" by the Symbolist poets can be attributed partly to the influence of the Impressionist painters, for whom "the primacy of sensation ... indicate[d] a refusal to see art as predominantly cerebral and intellectual".[189] Paul Verlaine (1844-1896) was also concerned with synaesthetic expression and he often used it in an attempt to express the implicit relation of the human condition to the physical world. Peschel states, "Perceptions in Verlaine's poetry are paramount, for just as a person's soul reflects or incorporates a "selected landscape", so a landscape will incorporate the person perceiving it"[190] which echoes the Symbolist theory of an inherent correspondence between all universal things. Verlaine used this technique particularly in his representations of nature, and the evidence of synaesthetic concepts within many of his 'landscape' poems suggests that he adopted inter-sense analogies as a means of overcoming the difficulty of depicting the multi-faceted reality of the natural world. In "La Lune Blanche" [White Moon], he describes "La lune blanche / Luit dans les bois; / De chaque branche / Part un voix / Sous la ramée' ["White moon gleaming / Among trees, / From every branch / Sound rising into / Canopies"].[191] The sound association in this poem gives the image of the moon among the branches a profound and simple beauty, accompanied by a sense of solitude and even peace. Yet the very next lines introduce an implicit melancholy and longing which shadows and disturbs the peace: "L'êtang reflété, / Profond miroir / La silhouette / Du saule noir / Où le vent pleure" ["Mirror-pond / Giving back deep / Silhouettes / Of dark willow-trees / In the wind, weeping"].[192] This sense of peaceful beauty, contrasted with an unexpected sadness, can be found in many of Verlaine's poems which as Peschel says, "mediate ceaselessly, therefore, between gaiety and sadness, hope and fear, quiet and disquiet. It is as though just below their melodious and

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[187] P. 172.
[188] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 39.
[189] Paul Verlaine, *Selected Poems* Ed. Martin Sorrell (Oxford University Press, 1999, p. xxii.
[190] Peschel, p. 40.
[191]Verlaine, *Selected Poems*, p. 56.
[192] P. 56.

apparently simple surfaces, a quiet scream is waiting to be released".[193] Again, it is clear that emotional and conceptual ideas played a big role in the use of nineteenth century synaesthetic metaphor. In "Le son du cor..." [A hunting-horn], it is the synaesthetic sound of the man-made horn that establishes the emotional tone of the poem: "Le son du cor s'afflige vers les bois / D'une douleur on veut croire orpheline / Qui vient mourir au bas de la colline / Parmi la bise errant en courts abois" ["A hunting horn curls its distress / Over the woods, orphaned pain / Fading at the foot of the hill / In the barking scavenging wind"].[194] This sound is then merged with the sounds of nature to intensify the sense of distress and unrest: "L'âme du loup pleure dans cette voix" ["The wolf's soul cries inside this voice"].[195] Verlaine's poetry is a supreme example of the power of subtle contrast, and the synaesthetic comparisons he often employs enable him to create this contrast by highlighting the discrepancies between the physical world and the perceived world.

Verlaine's verse is also noted for its musicality, and he believed that the rhythmic metre of poetry was highly significant to its overall tone. Many of Verlaine's poems are prime examples of poetic sound symbolism, such as "Chanson D'automne", where the repetition of long, drawn-out vowel sounds creates an atmosphere of languorous ennui and a sense of innate sadness which affects the reader's experience of the poem: "Les sanglots longs / Des violons / De l'automne / Blessent mon cœur / D'une langueur / Monotone' ["The long sobs of / The violins / Of autumn / Lay waste my heart / With monotones / Of boredom"].[196] Verlaine's musicality also had a profound effect on modern poets, most notably in his innovative disregard for traditional rhyming verse and preference for a less structured *vers libre* (free verse) which became a hallmark of subsequent twentieth century poetry. Many of his poems were set to music by composers who appreciated their exquisite melodiousness, such as Debussy and Fauré. The innate musicality and preoccupation with the musical motif in Verlaine's poetry was implicitly related to synaesthetic concepts and in many of his poetic depictions of music, inter-sense analogies are evoked in an attempt to more adequately describe its subtle nuances and intangible quality. In "Le piano que baise…" [The Piano kissed…], the fragility of music is expressed by synaesthetic comparisons:

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[193] Peschel, p. 46.
[194] Verlaine, *Selected Poems*, p. 112.
[195] P.112.
[196] P. 25.

“Tandis qu’avec un très léger bruit d’aile / Un air bien vieux, bien faible et bien charmant, / Rôde discret ... Qu’as-tu voulu, fin refrain incertain / Qui vas tantôt mourir vers la fenêtre” [“While on almost silent wings / A slight and very old and charming air / Roams discreetly ... What did you want, you fine wisps / Of music dying at the window”].[197] Similarly, in “Écoutez la chanson bien douce” [Hear the soft and dulcet song], music is expressed through synaesthetic terms, which highlight its ethereality and aligns it with nature: “Écoutez la chanson bien douce / Qui ne pleure que pour vous plaire. / Elle est discrete, elle est légére: / Un frisson d’eau sur la mousse!” [“Hear the soft and dulcet song / Plangent only for your pleasure. / Discreet and light, a floating song, / A tremble of water on moss”].[198]

Like Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé (1842-1898) had a great appreciation for both art and music. His poem “L’après Midi d’un Faune” [A Faun’s Afternoon] is “a symphony to delight-and to tease- the senses, the mind and the spirit ... which inspired art by Manet and music by Debussy”.[199] The aural musicality of the poem’s language is intensified by the poet’s use of synaesthetic colour, “Ces nymphes, je les veux perpétuer. / Si clair, / Leur incarnate léger, qu’il voltage dans l’air / Assoupi de sommeils touffus” [“These nymphs, I would perpetuate. / So clear, / Their light carnation, that it floats in the air / Heavy with tufted slumbers”],[200] as much as its images are intensified by the metaphor of music: “Ne murmure point d’eau que ne verse ma flute / Au bosquet arose d’accords” [“No water murmurs but what my flute pours / On the chord sprinkled thicket”].[201] Taste also occurs synaesthetically, linked with tactility and pain: “J’accords; quand, à mes pieds, s’entrejoignent (meurtries / De la langeur goûtée à ce mal d’être deux) / Des dormeuses parmi leurs seuls bras hasardeux” [“I run, when, there at my feet, enlaced, lie / (Hurt by the languor they taste to be two) / Girls sleeping amid their own casual arms”].[202] Just as Baudelaire attempted to express the correspondences between all universal things, Mallarmé attempted in this poem to portray the correspondence between the mythical and the real, for as Peschel states the “lecherous and intellectual faun ... is, of course, a metaphor for the poet: the poet who

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[197] P. 73.
[198] P. 101.
[199] Peschel, p. 62.
[200] Stéphane Mallarmé, *Stéphane Mallarmé: Poems*, Transl. Roger Fry (London: Chatto & Windus, 1936) p. 104.
[201] P. 106.
[202] P. 112.

continually reaches for, and is mocked and wounded - yet also blessed - by his vision of the eternal".[203] In order to achieve this, Mallarmé employed synaesthetic concepts as a means of expressing the "intermingling between the realms, real and dreamed, sensual and spiritual".[204]

v. "Slow deliriums in shimmering light": The Disordering of the Senses

As well as the implicit synaesthesia of the theory of universal correspondences, synaesthesia was also evoked by Symbolist poets as a result of sensory 'derangement' elicited by the effects of alcohol and consciousness-altering drugs. As Van Campen says of researching drug-induced synaesthesia, "I was able to follow with delight the tracks of poets and novelists as they took their perceptual experiments to the edges of human experience, especially in nineteenth-century Western Europe ... I read wild-sounding descriptions by poets proclaiming the merits of their drug-induced synaesthesia".[205] The use of opium (or laudanum, a tincture of opium) in the nineteenth century was regarded as an entirely acceptable form of pain-relief and treatment for insomnia and other maladies. This inevitably led to addiction for many, due to its wide availability and the encouragement of its use. Many writers of the period took drugs as a form of inspiration, for the wild dream-like state and derangement of senses it induced (Van Campen offers the example of the famous Coleridge poem "Kubla Khan", supposedly composed in "a flush of opium-induced inspiration"[206]). Hashish was also common among the bohemians of nineteenth century Paris. Research undertaken by scientists in the 1960s on the effect of drugs on the human nervous system showed that vivid and unusual sensory perceptions similar to those experienced by synaesthetes were often part of the LSD, mescaline and psilocybin experience.[207] Just as these drugs could induce synaesthetic visions (and reportedly stimulate creativity), opium and hashish were linked to the heightening of the senses and the resultant experience of synaesthetic sensations. The English writer Thomas de Quincey depicted his opium-induced impressions in the book *Confessions of an English Opium Eater* (1821) and related how "opium, by greatly increasing the activity of the mind, generally increases, of necessity,

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[203] Peschel, p. 62.
[204] P. 63.
[205] Van Campen, p. 103.
[206] P. 104.
[207] Hartman, A. M., & Hollister, L. E. "Effect of mescaline, lysergic acid diethylamide and psilocybin on color perception". *Psychopharmacologia*, Vol. 4, 1963, pp. 441-45.

that particular mode of its activity by which we are able to construct out of the raw material of organic sound an elaborate intellectual pleasure".[208] This drug-induced heightening of the senses enabled De Quincey to find an exquisite pleasure in music, which could easily change to displeasure if the senses of the opium-eater become overly stimulated, causing "crowds to become an oppression to him; music, even, too sensual and gross".[209]

The Symbolist poets' use of hashish, opium and alcohol is well-documented, and formed part of a doctrine of "systematic derangement of the senses" which was something of a guiding principle for many, particularly the *enfant-terrible* of French Symbolism, Rimbaud. Peschel relates how the Rimbaud believed "he would make himself a poet-prophet-visionary- a voyant ... by means of 'a long, immense and reasoned deranging of all his senses' ... [a] sensuous deranging ... both systematic and intentional".[210] As Rimbaud stated in "The Poet as Revolutionary Seer" (1871):

> I say that one must be a seer, make oneself a seer. The poet makes himself a seer by a long, prodigious, and rational disordering of all the senses. ... This [new] language would be of the soul, for the soul, containing everything smells, sounds, colours; thought latching on to thought and pulling. The poet would define the amount of the unknown awakening in the universal soul in his own time.[211]

He believed that it was only through this systematic derangement that a poet could arrive at the unknown, and upon finally arriving at that state and achieving an understanding of the universal human condition, his creative demise would be imminent and inevitable[212]:

> Every form of love, of suffering, of madness; he searches himself, he consumes all the poisons in him, and keeps only their quintessences. This is an unspeakable torture during which he needs all his faith and superhuman strength, and during which he becomes the great patient, the great criminal, the great accursed – and the great learned one! – among men. – For he arrives at the unknown! ... Let him die charging through those unutterable, unnameable things: other horrible workers will come; they will begin from the horizons where he has succumbed.[213]

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[208] Thomas De Quincey. *Confessions of an English Opium Eater*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Ltd, 1994 (1821)), p. 149.
[209] P. 152.
[210] Peschel, p. 23.
[211] Arthur Rimbaud, "The Poet as Revolutionary Seer", 1871, in Ellmann, Richard and Charles Feidelson, Jr, (eds.) *The Modern Tradition: Backgrounds of Modern Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965). Accessed on 2/4/12 at <http://www.oneeyedman.net/school-archive/classes/fulltext/rimbaud.html>
[212] This theory turned out to be prophetic for Rimbaud, whose poetic inspiration vanished suddenly and inexplicably after the age of 21, and who eventually died at the young age of 37.
[213] Rimbaud, *The Poet as Revolutionary Seer*.

The process of sensory derangement was inextricably connected to synaesthetic perception and expression. Rimbaud uses a mélange of sensory imagery to create a confused, disordered feel of drunkenness in "Le Bateau Ivre" [The Drunken Boat], his paean to the idea of sensory derangement. He wrote:

> Je me suis baigné dans le Poème
> De la mer, infuse d'astres, et lactescent,
> Dévorant les azurs verts; où, flottaison blême
> Et ravie, un noyé pensif parfois descend;
> Où, teignant tout à coup les bleuités, dèlires
> Et rhythmes lents sous les rutilements du jour
> Plus fortes que l'alcool, plus vastes que nos lyres
> Fermentent les rousseurs amères de l'amour!'
>
> [I bathed in the Poem
> Of the Sea, lactescent and steeped in stars,
> Devouring green azures; where a drowned man
> Like bleached flotsam sometimes sinks in a trance;
> Where suddenly tinting the bluities,
> Slow deliriums in shimmering light
> Fiercer than alcohol, vaster than lyres,
> The bitter rednesses of love ferment].[214]

In this poem the boat is a symbol for the poet; the journey it takes is symbolic of the cleansing nature of sensory derangement. Rimbaud also used synaesthetic concepts to disquiet the reader, perhaps leading them to something of the visionary wisdom which he believed was only possible through a disturbance of perception; in this poem, as Peschel states, "beauty and ugliness seem to call for each other"[215] and this is expressed through the synaesthetic perceptions of the disordered senses.

Like Rimbaud, Verlaine and Baudelaire also subscribed in some ways to the systematic derangement of the senses through alcohol and drugs. In Verlaine's case this was characterised not so much by a desire for knowledge as an escape from the torment and depression of daily life, a characteristic which was reflected within his poetry, as Peschel relates:

> On one hand, there is charm ... and there are the innocent strengths and lovable weaknesses one associates with childhood ... On the other hand, however, there are anger, passion and viciousness, and a depression so devastating that it seeks relief in drunkenness. The tale of contradictions in Verlaine's life is like a prelude that prepares one to understand, to accept – and to listen for – the contradictions in his poetry.[216]

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[214] Rimbaud, *Collected Poems*, p. 126.
[215] Peschel, p. 30.
[216] P. 33.

Verlaine's use of synaesthetic metaphor also reflects these dichotomies. In his poem "Spleen", beauty is expressed through a sense of despair which is conveyed through synaesthetic associations: "Chère, pour peu que tu te bouges, / Renaissent tous mes désespoires. / Le ciel était trop bleu, trop tendre, / La mer trop verte et l'air trop doux" ["My love, your slightest movement / Rekindles my despair. / Too blue, the sky, too soft, / The sea too green, too sweet the air"].[217] These associations seem to echo de Quincey's statement about the painful sensory overload that came with opium-intoxication, suggesting the drug-induced stimulation of synaesthetic perceptions elevated sensory awareness to an almost painful state. Similarly, Marks suggests that Baudelaire's inter-sensory experiences may have derived from his experimentation with hashish, offering a quote from "Les Paradis Artificiels" on the poet's experience with the drug as possible proof: "odour, sight, hearing, touch participate equally ... Sounds cloak themselves in colours, and colours contain music".[218] Yet Marks also states that "the source of the poetic analogies was probably deeper and less serendipitous than this. Baudelaire ... recognised clearly that nothing can be created from nothing, not even in a drugged state. What hashish does is to make more vivid those analogies that already exist, albeit dormant, in normal perception".[219] Thus, the intoxicating effects of drugs or alcohol and the synaesthetic experiences that these incited, arose in part from the synaesthetic capacity already present within the poets' minds. The drug-induced synaesthetic effects that these poets often described would also be hugely influential in the early twentieth century, culminating in the works of writers such as Aldous Huxley and Timothy Leary, who advocated the use of psychedelic and conscious-altering drugs as a means of accessing the extended perceptions which are buried within our consciousness.

vi. Conclusion

The use of synaesthetic concepts in the poetry of the nineteenth century was varied and contrasting. Louise Vinge states that with the advent of Romantic poetry, "the rigid distinction between the senses was found insufficient to explain and describe our

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[217]Verlaine, *Selected Poems*, p. 91.
[218] Marks, *The Unity of the Senses*, p. 226.
[219] P. 226.

sensual impressions ... [and] associations, synesthesias were better suited to the Romantic imagination than the rational five-senses pattern".[220] Influenced by the works of philosophers who suggested that the five senses were inextricably linked, nineteenth century poets and writers explored ideas of sensory confusion, sensory interaction and synaesthesia. Vinge suggests that "because Romanticism and Symbolism had such a deep interest in sensual perceptions and the ways of describing their finest nuances, the use of the rigid five senses pattern was more or less ruled out except for occasional instances of analysis".[221] Instead, the English Romantic and French Symbolist poets (as well as later nineteenth century English and American poets who fall into neither category, but who were undoubtedly influenced by the poetic environment of the earlier poets) used synaesthesia as a specific technique in order to express the connections between man and the natural world. This technique can be seen explicitly in some of the dominant poetic tropes of the nineteenth century: the poetic expression of the beauty and sublimity of the natural world, the idea of universal harmony and its links with synaesthetic musical ideas, the emotive capacity that these ideas incorporated, and the Swedenborgian theory of universal correspondences which arose in part from these earlier ideas. The use of synaesthetic metaphor was also influenced by the nineteenth century tendency to use consciousness-altering drugs such as opium and hashish, as well as alcohol as stimulants for new perceptive experiences. Although this poetic synaesthesia was undoubtedly inspired by the cultural environment of the time, it shows evidence of being adopted as a deliberate technique, used to express the 'inexpressible', ineffable nature of the subjects being explored. The impact of nineteenth century poetry on the poetry of the early twentieth century should not be underestimated; it is very likely that the new paths which the use of synaesthetic metaphor took in the early twentieth century can be traced back to the influence of these nineteenth century ideas.

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[220] Vinge, p.166
[221] P. 178.

CHAPTER THREE: THE BEGINNINGS OF MODERNITY AND SENSORY CHANGE

By the end of the nineteenth century radical changes were beginning to take place in all areas of society, and the cultural impact of these changes in the twentieth century was nothing short of enormous. Technology, science and industry were rapidly evolving, necessitating changes in way of life. Artistic expression was increasingly characterised by experimentation and avant-gardism, as artists, writers and musicians sought to define and explore the changing world around them. These years are often regarded, from a modern perspective, as some of the most artistically innovative in the history of humanity. Yet experiencing the confusion and chaos of a seemingly unstable world was frequently threatening and confronting for many of those experiencing it, and alongside the innovation occurring in every area of society there was resistance and opposition from staunch traditionalists. The myriad anxieties and apprehensions precipitated by this innovation contributed to an atmosphere at the start of the twentieth century which, I am proposing, was naturally conducive to concepts of synaesthesia and synaesthetic expression.

In attempting to address the question of why this is so, I will look in this chapter at the context of the early twentieth century in terms of social and technological progress, philosophy and science, cultural movements, and the influence of war, place and tradition, all of which collectively contributed to the unique atmosphere of the time. I propose that as a result of this changing atmosphere there was a greater recognition of perception and sensory experience among individuals, and in turn, this emerging preoccupation with perception and the senses increased the likelihood of an exploration of alternative modes of perception as a means of understanding unprecedented and sometimes chaotic experiences. Thus, the prevalence of synaesthetic concepts in early twentieth century British and American poetry is inextricably linked to the cultural background of the time, and I suggest that this is related specifically to the phenomenon of fragmentation which implicitly characterises nearly all aspects of this period.

3.1Fragmentation and Synaesthetic Synthesis

The concept of fragmentation is integral to an understanding of the reasons behind the incredible influx of synaesthetic ideas within the Arts in the early twentieth century. The nature of the period was sensorially chaotic, involving a rapid and unrelenting progression of new sensory experiences elicited by social, technological and artistic innovation. Previously held ideas, traditions and conceptions were being questioned and dismantled, which along with the ensuing sensorial chaos had a strong fragmenting effect on the modern psyche. Aesthetic and artistic theories also reflected this characteristic, as music, visual art and literature rejected Romantic conceptions of universality and focused on the divisive, alienating nature of individual modern experience. Ben Singer explains in "Introduction: Modernism, Modernity and the Senses", how modernity

> emphasised the resulting "disenchantment" or "demagnification" of the world, a destabilization of traditional belief systems that left in its wake ... a constantly churning revision of social-ideological contingencies that superseded traditional social moorings ... [T]he sensory-perceptual counterpart of this idea of ceaseless social-ideological flux ... stressed the sensory dynamics of the new urban experience, surveying the metropolis as a phenomenological counterpart of unprecedented sensory-perceptual instability, complexity, and intensity.[1]

Fragmentation and dissolution understandably characterised the age in which religion, morality, social norms, traditions and art became increasingly subjected to the dissecting influence of avant-garde ideas and modern technologies. This phenomenon could be seen in practically all areas of British and American society and was a major contributor to the growing unrest and trepidation regarding the rapid modernisation of the world. The tendency toward fragmentation necessitated a response which could somehow unify these increasingly disjointed experiences in an attempt to alleviate the existential panic this caused, a response which allowed some level of understanding or acceptance of living in a changing modern world. Kevin T. Dann suggests in his book *Bright Colours Falsely Seen: Synaesthesia and the Search for Transcendental Knowledge* that a synaesthetic impulse arose in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in response to this threat of fragmentation and instability. Thus, the increase in the use of synaesthetic concepts in aesthetic theories, not just in literature but in art and music as well, came from the desire to provide unity:

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[1] Ben Singer, "Introduction: Modernism, Modernity and the Senses", *Monatshefte*, Vol. 98, No. 2, (University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp. 175-179, p. 176.

> it was this sense of impermanence and instability that gave rise to the synaesthetic impulse ... In the fragmented society of late nineteenth-century Europe ... people were reaching in all directions for experiences and explanations that might affirm their sense that the world is knit together, that some underlying unity exists ... [synaesthesia] became the object of intense observation at the turn of the century partly because of the overall desire for synthesis.[2]

While Dann suggests that this synaesthetic impulse was the result of "intense observation at the turn of the century", I believe that it also arose out of a stimulation of the universal synaesthetic capacity that recent research has suggested exists in all of us. Synaesthesia as a scientific subject was losing favour, and although there were some artists, writers and musicians who were influenced by the synaesthetic techniques of the Symbolists and Romantics, it was not a wide-spread tendency. Despite this, the contextual background of the period was especially conducive to a synaesthetic mode of perceiving and making sense of the world which arose out of the universal synaesthetic capacity; a mode which worked to synthesise the fragmented experiences of modernity.

3.2 Social and Technological Change

The significance of synaesthesia in relation to the multifarious social and technological changes occurring at this time can, I suggest, be explained in two ways: firstly, as a means of ordering chaos, and secondly, as an internalisation of technology. The massive social changes occurring in every aspect of life at the turn of the century were precipitated by the rapid growth of industry and the incredible technological advances being made. New and exciting products were swiftly being mass-produced and were becoming more affordable for the working classes, which meant a shift in social and cultural identity. The growing economy brought wealth to many, and with wealth came a changing identity in which leisure, sport and entertainment took on increasing prominence in people's lives. This prominence led to a change in morals and values, and more emphasis began to be placed on pleasure and self-indulgence, particularly among the younger generations. Similarly, urban growth and city life began to blur class distinctions in some parts of the world, and this in turn began to incite a growing awareness and recognition of equality, particularly in the areas of women's rights and colonialism, which continued throughout the century. In

[2] Kevin T. Dann. *Bright Colors Falsely Seen: Synaesthesia and the Search for Transcendental Knowledge*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998) p. 36.

conjunction, the radio and telephone rapidly increased communication, which in turn led to a change in social interaction and a wider dissemination of news and information, as well as a growing 'popular culture'. These advancements greatly impacted on mass social identity by making it easier to contact and connect people over distances and to publicly broadcast information, thereby encouraging a boom in advertising and awareness of products which fed consumerist trends in fashion, entertainment and everyday lifestyle and contributed to the growth of materialistic culture. As Peter Gay notes in *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy*,

> The seedbed for modernism was assembled from the widely distributed prosperity in industrializing and urbanizing states ... Modern wealth derived from many sources and this underwrote the differences in local avant-garde tastes. Maturing capitalism showed extraordinary ingenuity in devising techniques for harnessing resources ... while the age of modernism took wing, mechanization, it has been well said, took command.[3]

These changes had an enormous impact not only on society itself but on culture and the arts, including poetry.

i. Ordering the Chaos

While some areas of society were embracing the new sensory stimuli produced by this rapidly changing world, change was also seen by many as unnerving and difficult rather than liberating. Nevertheless, whether change was perceived as stimulating or threatening, there was an increasingly urgent need to make sense of the changing world. A multi-sensory, synaesthetic mode of perceiving could have functioned, I suggest, as a means of ordering the chaos and reverting what was new into something familiar and more acceptable. As Susan Stewart notes in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses*, when we are "confronted with the cognitive dissonance of unintelligible relations, we find relief in comparisons of likeness and similitude".[4] To demonstrate this point, consider the new forms of music which were gaining popularity in the early twentieth century, such as Jazz or Blues. To many people this new music was disconcerting, sounding loose, unstructured and melodically unpleasant. Perceived associations of decadence, immorality and vulgarity, and origins in African-American

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[3] Peter Gay, *Modernism: The Lure of Heresy From Baudelaire to Beckett and Beyond* (New York: W.W Norton, 2008), pp. 18-22.
[4] Susan Stewart, "War and the Alienation of the Senses" in *Poetry and the Fate of the Senses* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2002) p. 45.

culture were also threatening for many among the older generation. One of the earliest critical reviews of jazz, by a Swiss writer called Ernest Ansermet, appeared in the "Revue Romande" in 1918. In this review, Ansermet speaks of the new music using metaphorical terms of inter-sensory experience: "When they indulge in one of their favourite effects ... it seems as if a great wind is passing over a forest or as if a door is suddenly opened on a wild orgy".[5] In order to convey his impressions of this new sound accurately, Ansermet chose comparisons within other sensory realms, thus relying on what are essentially synaesthetic concepts to formulate an understanding of a music that was new and unusual to him. Even the names of new styles of music originated from synaesthetic forms of expressions: the 'Blues' originally came from the synaesthetic metaphor of the colour blue as sadness or depression, a usage that has now become commonplace.

Thus, the link between social, industrial and technological change and the use of synaesthesia and synaesthetic concepts in literature is a logical one when the effects of the changing world on individual experience and perception are noted. In this chaotic and confusing world, the importance of perception and 'noticing' was heightened. New things were continually appearing, cities were growing and becoming more and more stimulating, and an influx of immigrants due to easier travel meant new cultures and ways of life were constantly being adopted. Sight, traditionally the most highly valued of the senses, was stimulated as never before, but the other senses were similarly bombarded by the prolificacy of new sounds, smells, tastes and textures that came with these changes. In order to cope with these conflicting stimuli, a synaesthetic interpretation was beneficial. Expressing one sense in terms of another increases our ability to process the world around us, particularly when faced with new and unusual experiences; we turn to what we know in order to comprehend what we don't. Consider the widespread use of synaesthetic metaphors such as sharp cheese or warm colour, which arose naturally in language in order to express certain intangible qualities. Synaesthetic concepts are a logical and useful tool for perceiving and expressing new sensory stimuli. In saying this, I am not suggesting that these concepts were always knowingly or consciously employed by people as a framework for processing the world around them. Rather, I am proposing that synaesthesia and its related concepts arose

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[5] Ernest Ansermet, "Revue Romande", 1918 in Thomas L. Morgan (ed.) *The First Real Critical Discussion of Jazz*, Switzerland, 1995-2010, accessed on 12/1/10 at <http://jass.com/bechet.html>

naturally as a helpful means of ordering the world in the face of such an immense load of sensory information, becoming an intrinsic part of the perception and expression of the period in the same way that synaesthetic metaphors became part of language.

ii. Internalising Technology: Media as Metaphor

> "All media are active metaphors in their power to translate experience into new forms".[6]
> -Marshall McLuhan

The natural inclination to use inter-sensory language in the description and expression of new sensory experiences was bolstered, I suggest, by another effect arising from the changes occurring in this period: the internalisation of technology. Technology was advancing at an almost unseen rate at the turn of the twentieth century. New advancements in areas of physics, engineering, mathematics and the medical sciences, precipitated by growth in the economy, travel and communication, led to the development of new devices and technologies which became rapidly integrated into an increasingly urbanised society. The effect of these technologies on day-to-day life was unprecedented. Increasingly affordable and widely available, they impacted greatly upon communication, social practices, the dissemination of news and information and international relations. As such, they undoubtedly played a part in the changing nature of perception which was characteristic of this period.

Communications theorists have discussed the possibility of technology becoming internalised to the extent that it is intrinsic to the way we perceive, view and act in the world. Marshall McLuhan suggested in 1964's *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* that the implications of the industrial revolution, and the resulting

> aspiration of our time for wholeness, empathy and depth of awareness is an adjunct of electrical technology. The age of mechanical industry that preceded us found vehement assertion of private outlook the natural mode of expression ... The restructuring of human work or association was shaped by the technique of fragmentation that is the essence of machine technology.[7]

McLuhan then goes on to note how the progress of communicative technology has a unifying effect which mimics the effects of synaesthesia:

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[6] Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, (1964) 199) p. 57.
[7] P. 5.

> It begins to be evident that "touch" is not skin but the interplay of the senses, and "keeping in touch" or "getting in touch" is a matter of a fruitful meeting of the senses, of sight translated into sound and sound into movement, and taste and smell. The "common sense" was for many centuries held to be the peculiar human power of translating one kind of experience of one sense into all the senses, and presenting the result continuously as a unified image to the mind ... and may in the computer age easily become so again.[8]

Although McLuhan was referring to the "computer age" of the 1960s here, his message also applies to the technologies of the electric age of the early twentieth century which directly preceded this, and he discusses the ways that many of these early twentieth century technologies came to affect human perception. He proposed that such technologies could be seen as "the extensions of man ... extensions of the body's senses" and that "it is the nature of the medium through which people communicate which shapes a given society".[9] These ideas have been influential in the study of communications, and they underpin what I suggest is another factor in the importance of synaesthetic ideas to the early twentieth century period: the internalisation of such technologies and their effect on perceptive modes. The rapid increase of new technologies would have had an undeniable effect upon the senses. I suggest that the nature of some of these technologies elicited sensorial effects which unified the inherent fragmentation of modern experience and once again increased the tendency of the period towards synaesthetic expression. Many of these technologies had their roots in the nineteenth century, but it was only in the early twentieth century that their dissemination and integration in society became widespread.

Rapid advances in transport technology from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century, including the introduction of the steam engine, automobile and aeroplane, had an enormous impact on the lives and identities of the general public. As transport became easier, cheaper and faster a new wave of emigration and travel opportunities opened up. It was suddenly possible to travel between places at a rapid speed, and the mass-production of these technologies meant accessibility for more people. The possibilities this afforded were considerable. Businesses grew as it became easier to communicate, transport goods, and travel between countries, increased leisure time meant more holidaying, and greater availability of materials meant rapid growth of cities leading to further industrialisation. The ease of travel also meant greater exposure

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[8] P. 60.

[9] Seth Giddings and Martin Lister (eds.), *The New Media and Technocultures Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2011) p. 82.

to different cultures, encouraging the beginnings of multiculturalism and providing new forms of inspiration and awareness, particularly to those in the creative arts. McLuhan suggested that,

> the railway did not introduce movement or transportation or wheel or road into human society, but it accelerated and enlarged the scale of previous human functions, creating totally new kinds of cities and new kinds of work and leisure ... the airplane, on the other hand, by accelerating the rate of transportation, tends to dissolve the railway form of cities, politics and associations.[10]

Thus the effect of transport technology in the early twentieth century was much more influential than simply increasing the ease of moving people from place to place; it influenced human capability for exchange and collaboration and changed the way society functioned. It also featured heavily in the art and literature of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (think of Monet's famous Impressionist painting *The Gare Saint Lazare*: *Arrival of a Train* (1877) or Ezra Pound's iconic Imagist poem "In a Station in the Metro"). These advances in transport technologies inevitably changed society's worldview, once again unifying aspects of their perception. Now able to communicate rapidly and travel with ease, individuals could integrate a much broader range of sensory experiences into their worldview. The upshot of the increased exposure that these transport technologies provided was, as I have already noted, a considerable increase of new and unprecedented sensory stimuli. These stimuli arose from a growth in internationalisation and globalisation, which meant that the tastes, smells, sights, sounds and somatosensory perceptions of new cultures and environments could be increasingly experienced by those who would previously have been unable to access them. Urban growth and industrialisation had a similar effect. The effects of these changes are especially evident in the literature, art and music of the time, which became increasingly focused on foreign cultures and urban environments (Picasso's African influences or Fernand Léger's mechanised cityscapes, for example).

The increasing availability of electricity and the resulting technologies this generated were also hugely influential in relation to the senses. Electricity in the home led to the invention of numerous electrical appliances which irrevocably changed the face of culture and entertainment, and in turn fed growth in consumerism and economic activity. One of the most sensorially significant effects of the introduction of electricity was the transition from gas to electric lighting which happened in the late nineteenth

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[10] McLuhan, p. 8.

century. By the early twentieth century, electric streetlights were present in most major towns, and electric lighting in domestic homes was becoming a more common feature. The transition to electric lighting and its rapid proliferation in the early twentieth century effectively changed the quality of night, which would have had a huge impact on the perception of light and dark. The conversion from a gas-lit world to an electric one must have been a strange and novel one, but perhaps slightly threatening in its modernity. Electric lighting elicited a form of sound (buzzing and crackling), heat and a burning sensation, but a strange lack of smell in comparison to previous light forms which revolved around fire, gas, oil and coal, which would have increased its unearthliness. The neon signage that proliferated in the 1920s had the same qualities, along with one other significant sensory characteristic: colour. These perceptive effects were undeniably influential to the period. Milica Banjanin, writing about the street-lighting in the poetry of Russian Modernists, suggests

> The artificially illuminated world at night brings chaos, the realm of dreams, demons and ghosts, real and imagined danger, both rest and fear. In some works city lights are perceived as fantastical, infernal and illusory aspects of the city ... Artificial light makes the nocturnal city appear as part of a mysterious ritual in which the streets seem to live only at night, under electric lights.[11]

The new perceptive experiences that this technology engendered enhanced the capacity for synaesthetic interpretation.

The gramophone, the radio and the telephone also played a huge role in the cultural context of the early twentieth century, and these too had particular sensory effects. The invention of the telephone and the gramophone, followed by the first commercial radio broadcasts in the 1920s, meant that the dissemination of information had suddenly reached a much larger scale. They also had an underlying effect on the perception of sound; now, for the first time, sound could be perceived across space and time. Just as the electric light-bulb and the neon bulb affected the perception of light and dark, sound technologies (and later, with television and film, sound-and-vision technologies) undoubtedly influenced the perception of aurality. People were exposed to new music and new sounds which they would otherwise have been unaware of, and the quality and clarity of sound became much more of an issue. The camera, photography and film had a similarly strong effect on visuality. While photography was an invention

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[11] Milica Banjanin. "Where Are the Street Lights Running To? The Poetics of Streetlights in Russian Modernism", *New Zealand Slavonic Journal*, Vol.38, 2004, pp.71-91.

of the nineteenth century, the twentieth century saw its functionality and dissemination increase. The ability of the camera to visually represent an instantaneous moment and to faithfully represent our own vision affected visual art forms such as painting, and in the same manner it affected the way the sense of sight operated in society. The rise of abstraction in art as an alternative to the representational qualities of the camera consequently encouraged "the poet and novelist [to turn] to those inward gestures of the mind by which we achieve insight and by which we make ourselves and our world. Thus art moved from outer matching to inner making",[12] as McLuhan noted.

With the invention of the motion picture in the late nineteenth century and the advancement of this technology from silent film to the 'talkies' to the personal television set of the mid-century, another medium for the exploration of cross-modal sensory perception was created. The development of technology which could couple sound/music with visual images stemmed from the *son-et-lumiere* shows of the past, and culminated in early twentieth century films like Disney's *Fantasia* (1940), in which classical music is paired solely with animated visuals, including abstract light-and-shadow effects. The opportunities afforded by the invention of film for the synchronisation of music and visuals were undoubtedly involved in the extension of the senses. As McLuhan suggested,

> Film was, as a form, the final fulfillment of the great potential of typographic fragmentation. But the electric implosion has now reversed the entire process of expansion by fragmentation. Electricity has brought back the cool, mosaic world of implosion, equilibrium, and stasis ... with its total field of simultaneous impulses ... Radio teamed up with film to give us the talkie and to carry us further on our present reverse course of implosion or re-integration after the mechanical age of explosion and expansion.[13]

The coupling of sound and image in this multi-sensorial fashion elicited a process of de-fragmentation or unification which, as I have suggested, was particularly conducive to a greater use and understanding of synaesthetic concepts. Tim Armstrong suggests in his 1998 book *Modernism, Technology and the Body*, that "The nineteenth century psychophysics which gave birth to cinema, the telephone, and the phonograph had fragmented the human subject in order to study perception. Attempts to map sound onto vision ... might be seen as a response to that fragmentation".[14] McLuhan even proposed

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[12] McLuhan, p. 194.
[13] P. 294.
[14] Tim Armstrong, *Modernism, Technology and the Body: A Cultural Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 222.

such a response: "With the telephone, there occurs the extension of ear and voice that is a kind of extra sensory perception. With television came the extension of the sense of touch or of sense interplay that even more intimately involves the entire sensorium".[15] He queried whether the

> television image is, in effect, a haptic, tactile, or synesthetic mode of interplay among the senses, a fulfillment on a popular plane of the aesthetic program of Hildebrand, Berenson, Wolfflin, Paul Klee and Giedion. Are the popular effects of TV... similar to the ideals of synesthesia proposed by the avant garde painters of the late nineteenth century? ... What we must grasp is that television has the power of imposing its own conventions and assumptions on the sensibilities of the viewer. It has the power of translating the Western literate back into the world of non-literate synesthesia.[16]

Inevitably, the sensory effects of such technologies would have been integrated into the perceptive experiences of society as a whole.

Synaesthetic concepts therefore may have functioned in two ways in reaction to social and technological change. Firstly, as a mode of perception to cope with the sensory overload of the 'new', and as a means of understanding that which is new and threatening by associating it with something familiar. Secondly, as an engendered effect of technological innovation which ultimately required a change in the nature of perception and an 'internalisation' of the medium of technology itself, as McLuhan argued. Both of these functions impacted upon the field of literature, and poetry and poetics in particular; indeed, some movements such as Futurism were centred on technology and the machine as metaphors for modern literary and artistic expression, and McLuhan used poetic examples to illustrate his points.[17] For those who were turning to metaphor in their attempt to respond to the new and unprecedented sensations of modernity and the industrial revolution, the use of synaesthetic concepts was natural.

3.3 Science and Philosophy

These massive social and technological changes naturally led to a questioning of the nature of reality and of identity. New and innovative theories were being developed in evolutionary science, psychology and philosophy, and these had a massive impact on

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[15] P. 265.

[16] Marshall McLuhan, "Inside the Five Sense Sensorium", in David Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, pp. 44-46.

[17] See, for example, his discussion of the effect of the typewriter on the visuality and expression of language. McLuhan, "Understanding Media", pp. 258-264.

the advancement of modern thought. I suggest that there was a trend in scientific and philosophic thought in the early twentieth century which specifically relates to the increased conduciveness of the period to perceptual ideas and synaesthetic modes of perception, and this is characterised by a move from the universal to the individual. As I discussed in Chapter Two, Romantic and Symbolist literature of the nineteenth century dealt primarily with synaesthesia in relation to universal concepts. This was a trend which related very much to the period, when universal conceptions of man remained dominant. Due to the influence of a number of prominent theorists however, the late nineteenth and early twentieth century encouraged an increasing focus on the individual. This was a response to the existential crisis and the crumbling of faith precipitated by Darwin's theory of evolution and Nietzsche's nihilism, as well as the trend toward individualisation in Freudian psychoanalytic theory.

i. The Universal and The Individual

Darwin's nineteenth century theory of evolution and natural selection formed the basis for the general acceptance of the origin of the human species in twentieth century thought. His suggestion in *The Origin of Species* that humans evolved directly from animals[18] was shocking to some and downright blasphemous to others, and it challenged both religious faith and the idea of human superiority. In conjunction with the brewing anxiety caused by industrial and social change, evolutionary theory and its related concepts disrupted long-established ideas of identity and 'self'. Although religion had been increasingly losing ground to science for nearly a century, Darwin's theory of human origins was a huge challenge to the faith and religious convictions of many, who felt as though the very constituents of their identity were slipping away. In the face of identity confusion and crises of faith, individuals were forced to turn their focus inward and look at what constitutes the self. Individualism also became a defining element in modernist art and culture, as Peter Gay notes,

> There is something romantic about the lonely avant-garde artist ... The larger and noisier the crowd clamoring around him, the more tightly will the creative loner wrap himself in his productive segregation ... [T]he claim of being first and alone in the field became a central

[18] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 1859, ed. Charles W Eliot (New York: The Collier Press, 1909).

> feature in the competitive modernist enterprise, which conjured up the figure of the inventive spirit who neither wants nor needs ancestors or company, except, of course, for his muse.[19]

The importance given to individual experience and perception set the scene for early twentieth century thought.

Freud's theories of the unconscious mind, repression and dream interpretation also encouraged people to consider their individual self and their perceptive capacities. His belief that adult identity could be heavily influenced by childhood experience[20] was especially pertinent to sensory perception. In psychoanalytic theory, childhood experience arises from the perceptions that one has as an infant and in turn contributes to the formation of one's adult identity. This relates implicitly to the idea of infantile synaesthesia and its formative influence on our own universal synaesthetic potential, but it also characterises the 'individualising' trend of this period. Freud was concerned primarily with the individual human experience as manifested in conscious and unconscious thought. His discussions of the conflict between the inherent drive for death (*thanatos*) and instinct for life (*eros*) in humans were implicitly related to perception. Freud believed the death drive was the result of a desire in all humans for an eternal state of calm, a 'dead' state, explained by the concepts of un-pleasure (seen as a stimulus that the body receives which ultimately leads to anxiety or pain) and pleasure (the decrease in stimuli that leads to a calm or peaceful state). In this theory, ultimate pleasure is realised in a state of zero perception: that is, death.[21] Thus perception (particularly the concept of chaotic sensory stimuli which contains implicit links to synaesthetic modes of perception) was an integral element to psychoanalytic theory, which had a powerful effect on early twentieth century thought despite the fact that much of it has since been discredited. Freud's theories about the unconscious mind and dream interpretation were also influential in a creative capacity and contributed to the development of modernist movements like Surrealism, where the focus on unconsciousness and the 'dream-world' of the individual was integral.

Nietzsche, writing in the late nineteenth century, also raised questions about existence and external reality which were highly pertinent to the chaotic changes happening in every aspect of life around the turn of the century. Nihilism, the belief that

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[19] Gay, pp. 42-43.
[20] Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, Vol. XVIII, Ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press Ltd (1920) 1955).
[21] Pp. 7-66.

life has no intrinsic meaning or value, was born from the uncertainty that such times afforded, and Nietzsche's 1882 declaration that "God is dead"[22] was seen by some as an accurate prediction of the world in the early twentieth century. This death of the God figure (representing religion and spirituality) due to the increasing secularization and industrialization of society would lead, Nietzsche proposed, to the loss of a universal perspective and so to a loss of any sense of objective truth. Instead, humanity would retain only the fluid perspectives of individual perception. The disintegration of religion and the 'universal perspective' emphasised this individuality, which Nietzsche suggested could have a positive influence on humanity by encouraging greater development of creative capacities. The influence of Nietzsche's theories on the development of modern poetry has been effectively established. Joseph Riddel confirms in "Neo-Nietzschean Clatter: Speculation and the Modernist Poetic Image" that "we do know that many of the most prominent American poets had more than a passing interest in Nietzsche, though just what they appropriated ... is difficult to isolate".[23] Riddel attributes this interest partly to the "modern poets' need to return ... to questions of language: of referentiality, objectivity, precision, or adequation, and hence metaphor".[24]

Concepts inherent in existentialist philosophy, such as the priority of existence over essence, echoed the Nietzschean focus on the individual over the universal. Similarly, the suggestion that reason and rationality are simply structures imposed by individuals to create value and meaning in an absurd and irrational world of phenomena highlights the role of individual experience in the constitution of what we know as reality. Existential questions may have had some impact on the recognition and application of alternative theories of perception. The shift in focus from the objective truths of the Enlightenment period, as found in scientific and mathematical theory, to the subjective nature of human existence around the turn of the century naturally incorporated a greater acknowledgement of the human senses. The problematic nature of perception lies in the fact that "our perceptual beliefs and judgements about things and their qualities in the external world go beyond the content of the experience of

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[22] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*. 1882, Transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1974) p. 181.
[23] Joseph Riddel, "Neo-Nietzschean Clatter: Speculation and the Modernist Poetic Image", *Boundary 2*, Vol. 9, No. 3, 1981, p. 210.
[24] P. 212.

perceiving itself",[25] as Robert Swartz states in *Perceiving, Sensing and Knowing: A Book of Readings from Twentieth Century Sources in the Philosophy of Perception*. Therefore an object in the external world is distinct and separate from what we perceive it to be: an object which is purely a construct of the sense-data provided to us by our brains. The nature of reality is called into question. Swartz notes that one of the integral questions being explored in the period was, "Is the relationship between the contents of sense-experience and the external world such that it allows us validity to infer from one to the other?"[26] The drastic implications of this question show how the roots of all philosophical thought on life, reality, human existence and human experience can be found in the basics of sensory perception. As John Hagopian says in "Symbol and Metaphor in the Transformation of Reality into Art", "all rational experience arises out of the initial, undifferentiated contacts with reality. And metaphor is a kind of rationality in that it arises out of ... primitive synaesthesia ... [thus] in the development of man's social reality, perception must precede concept".[27]

This focus on perception in philosophical thought was continued by the phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, whose theories were concerned with the centrality of perception as a means of understanding and acting within the world. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy placed perception at the fore of knowledge and existence, and took a particularly interdisciplinary approach which prioritised synaesthetic modes of perception. His 1945 study *The Phenomenology of Perception* outlines this implicitly synaesthetic discourse:

> Synaesthetic perception is the rule, and we are unaware of it only because scientific knowledge shifts the centre of gravity of experience, so that we have unlearned how to see, hear, and generally speaking, feel, in order to deduce, from our bodily organization and the world as the physicist conceives it, what we are to see, hear and feel. ... The senses intercommunicate by opening on to the structure of the thing [being sensed]. One sees the hardness and brittleness of glass, and when, with a tinkling sound, it breaks, this sound is conveyed by the visible glass. ... The form of a fold in linen or cotton shows us the resilience or dryness of the fibre, the coldness or warmth of the material. ... In the same way, [we] hear the hardness and unevenness of cobbles in the rattle of a carriage, and we speak appropriately of a 'soft', 'dull' or 'sharp' sound. Though one may doubt whether the sense of hearing brings us genuine 'things', it is at least certain that it

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[25] Swartz, Robert J (ed.) *Perceiving, Sensing and Knowing: a book of readings from twentieth-century sources in the philosophy of perception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976) p. 15.
[26] P. 17.
[27] John Hagopian, "Symbol and Metaphor in the Transformation of Reality into Art", *Comparitive Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 1968, p. 53.

> presents us, beyond the sounds in space, with something which 'murmurs', and in this way communicates with the other senses.[28]

The suggestion that these examples eventually reveal is one of synaesthetic unity as a basis for the very nature of all our perception, an idea which stemmed from Aristotle's "common sensibles", but which was quite ahead of its time in its implicit associations with the current idea of universal synaesthetic capacity, as seen in this passage:

> If, then, taken as incomparable qualities, the 'data of the different senses' belong to so many separate worlds, each one in its particular essence being a manner of modulating the thing, they all communicate through their significant core. ... The sight of sounds or the hearing of colours come about in the same way as the unity of the gaze through the two eyes: in so far as my body is, not a collection of adjacent organs, but a synergic system, all the functions of which are exercised and linked together in the general action of being in the world, in so far as it is the congealed face of existence.[29]

As Merleau-Ponty also points out, the implications of these ideas are extremely relevant to the Arts, and he discusses them in reference to the work of painters such as Cézanne.[30] His philosophy is, I suggest, the culmination of the early twentieth century focus on the individual, and represents the pervasiveness of synaesthetic ideas to the period. Just as technology and social change was affecting the function of perception in the early twentieth century, scientific and philosophical thought was moving away from the nineteenth century predilection for the universal, and was increasingly concerned with the nature of individual experience.

3.4 Non-Literary Art and Culture

Aesthetic movements in the visual arts and music were intensifying this focus by moving away from representative modes of expression and onto abstract modes. As Cytowic noted, "synesthesia is far from being an 'intellectual' act, although it can certainly be the stuff from which creative dreams are made ... Artists have always claimed a more direct perception of the world, a directness that is characterised, for one, by the synesthetic percept".[31] Impressionism, originating in France in the late nineteenth century, was especially connected with modes of perception and ways of seeing. It arose out of the desire to move away from traditional 'realistic' methods of visual

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[28] Maurice Merleau-Ponty (transl. Colin Smith) *The Phenomenology of Perception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962) p. 229.
[29] Pp. 230-234.
[30] P. 318.
[31] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 269.

representation and the use of classical subject matter, both of which were seen as outdated and irrelevant to the modern world. Instead, artists who embraced Impressionism recognised the role of perception in visual representation and sought to paint their 'impressions' of modern life, rather than trying to imitate an objective reality. As I have noted, the rise of photography inevitably precipitated this as it reproduced the world more faithfully than any painter could, thus necessitating the exploration of non-traditionally modes of representation. The Impressionist painters were particularly interested in the inconstant and transitory nature of light and its effect on supposedly unchanging, static objects. Initially facing staunch opposition from more traditionalist sectors of the art community, they persevered with their artistic philosophies, developing new ideas of representation and abstraction which changed the face of art and the role of the artist irrevocably. Many of the ideas behind Impressionism can be correlated with synaesthetic concepts, such as the recognition that perceptive reality is in the eye of the beholder and there is no objective 'truth' in visual perception (especially in relation to a quality such as colour).

Cubism and its rejection of traditional perspective in representation encouraged further development in visual theories of perception. Picasso's and Braque's analytical period focused on the abstraction of natural forms into geometric shapes, often using multiple viewpoints within the one painting. They challenged traditional notions of representation by suggesting that multiple perspectives are in fact more like our own experience of 'seeing' an object than the a one-dimensional perspective, an idea which corresponds closely with synaesthetic modes of perception and the simultaneous use of multiple senses. Synthetic Cubism, in which different textures and surfaces were brought together in a collage effect, further echoed the basic concepts behind synaesthesia and synaesthetic modes of perceiving. These modes were, once again, implicitly related to ideas of fragmentation and the dissolution of natural forms. Apart from creating an awareness of different ways of seeing by dissecting and deconstructing familiar objects, the Cubists also grasped the fact that when we look at a scene or an object, we are often drawn to particular aspects or qualities, making our attention towards it selective. Both of these concepts were naturally conducive to poetry, where attention must necessarily become selective and poetic subjects are dissected and fragmented through language, but they also emphasise the joining of these fragments through a multi-sensory, simultaneist synthesis.

McLuhan's argument proposed that electric technologies, particularly the speed of electricity, engendered new forms of thinking which emphasised simultaneism and the instant awareness of the 'whole'[32]. He suggested that this was implicitly reflected in the artistic world:

> Cubism, by giving the inside and outside, the top, bottom, back, and front and the rest, in two dimensions, drops the illusion of perspective in favor of instant sensory awareness of the whole. Cubism, by seizing on instant total awareness, suddenly announced that *the medium is the message*. Is it not evident that the moment that sequence yields to the simultaneous, one is in the world of the structure and of configuration? Is that not what has happened in physics as in painting, poetry, and in communication?[33]

The rise of abstraction as a mode of representation in modern art was important to the development of a non-imitative representation of perception. Bernard Gortais states in his article "Abstraction and Art" that "representation in art means making present something that was not present before, it means making something perceptible to the senses (but not necessarily intelligible) that was not perceptible before ... a work of art is thus the objectivation (representation in the form of an object or event) of a subjective relationship to the world by means of expression that are perceptible to the senses".[34] Interest in synaesthesia increased when artists began to turn away from realism and explore new methods of abstraction in order to express themselves.

Wassily Kandinsky in particular rejected traditional representation in preference for an abstract symbolism, for which he used music as a model. He "explored harmonic relations between sound and colour and used musical terms to describe his paintings",[35] adopting a theory of synaesthesia which he applied to his painting, as well as other creative works (including a theatre piece in 1912 called *Der gelbe Klang* or *The Yellow Sound*). Kandinsky was part of the avant garde *Der Blaue Reiter* group in Vienna, whose aims included the unification of the arts and the expression of spirituality. These artists were breaking new ground at the time, and they influenced many other artists who were also captivated by the idea of relations between art and the other creative disciplines, particularly music. As Kandinsky himself said, "Just as sounds and rhythms combine in music, so must forms and colours be united in painting by the play of their

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[32] McLuhan, *Understanding Media*, p.13.
[33] P.13.
[34] Bernard Gortais, "Abstraction and Art", *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences*, Vol. 358, No. 1435, 2003, p. 1241.
[35] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 270.

manifold relationships".[36] Other painters such as Piet Mondrian, Robert Delaunay, Sonia Terk Delaunay, Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright explored the expressive potential of synaesthetic ideas within their artworks. These ideas of representation were particularly relevant to a poetics that, as Charles Altieri says in "Objective Image and Act of Mind in Modern Poetry", was "still trying to find ways of creating a coherent role for consciousness to play in arranging, clarifying, and intensifying experience".[37]

Similarly, musicians and composers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century began to experiment with the aesthetics of sound and structure. Just as Cubist painters and poets explored fragmentation and deconstruction, modern composers used dissonance and fragmented rhythms to create new forms of music, and again the use of multisensory associations was adopted, especially among Impressionist composers such as Debussy, Ravel and Satie, who were attempting to depict sensory experience and 'impressions' through music. Alexander Scriabin was interested in the psychology of music and colour and incorporated theories of synaesthesia and music-colour analogies into many of his compositions. He was, as Van Campen notes,

> a self-declared mystic [who] made plans for a large mystical show. He envisioned new modes of expression for the arts that would address unknown psychological abilities of the beholders ... that united music, poetry, dance, light projections and odours of incense, which he believed would create synesthetic experiences for the audience.[38]

Similarly Arnold Schonberg, who was also connected with *Der Blaue Reiter*, was fascinated by the multi-faceted aspects of coloured music and experimented with these ideas in his opera *Die Gluckliche Hand*. Olivier Messiaen has also discussed his musical synaesthesia, stating "When I hear music, and equally when I read it, I see inwardly, in the mind's eye, colours which move with the music and I sense these colours in an extremely vivid manner, and I sometimes even precisely indicate these correspondences in my scores ... juxtaposing them and putting them in relief against each other, as a painter underlies one colour with its complimentary".[39] Thus, synaesthetic ideas played a part in the development of modernist classical music, which certainly had some

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[36] Cornelius Doelman, *Kandinsky*, (London: Blanford Press, 1964).
[37] Charles Altieri, "Objective Image and Act of Mind in Modern Poetry", *PMLA*, Vol.91, No 1, 1976, pp. 101-102.
[38] Van Campen, p. 53.
[39] Cytowic, *A Union of the Senses*, p. 268.

influence on poetry and poetics as is evident in the titles of some of T.S Eliot's poems ("Rhapsody on a Windy Night" and "Preludes" for example).

Robert Adams noted in the article "What was Modernism?" the "major distinctive style of modernism ... [and] how closely it corresponds with the fractured surfaces of cubism, the broken, syncopated rhythms of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, the montage method of the movies".[40] Once again, the fragmentary effect of these art forms was seen to characterise modern expression. The links between music and poetry in particular have always been close due to the central importance of rhythm, phrase and tone to both, and the development of different forms of music in the early twentieth century mirrored somewhat the development of poetry. Modernist ideas of deconstruction, rejection of traditional 'rules' and changing modes of perception can also be seen when examining modern music such as jazz, which musically resembles techniques used in art, literature and poetry. The links between poetry and jazz are discussed by Barry Wallenstein in "Poetry and Jazz: A Twentieth Century Wedding". He notes that,

> poetry has always craved the company of music ... Since the performance of jazz is not unlike the performing language of poetry, one could also study the structure of a jazz composition and note how improvised solos break away from the original harmonic and melodic structure. Similarly, in much of modern poetry, especially free verse, the range of improvisatory gesture is immense ... a traditional sounding first line will not necessarily be followed by a regular meter, rhyme or rhythm.[41]

Music, like the visual arts, encouraged a greater focus on individual perception, abstraction and unification of the fragmentation of the modern experience. The interdisciplinary trends that were emerging in this period were also connected implicitly to synaesthesia and the mutual perceptive focus that was shared between art forms.

3.5 War, Place and Tradition

Along with developments in technology, society and culture, the early twentieth century was also affected by World War I, which had a catastrophic impact. The ramifications of this worldwide event, including the widespread loss of lives, make it one of the most important events in twentieth century history, and therefore essential to

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[40] Robert Martin Adams, "What Was Modernism?" *The Hudson Review*, Vol.31, No. 1, 1978, p. 22.
[41] Barry Wallenstein, "Poetry and Jazz: A Twentieth Century Wedding", *Black American Literature Forum*, Vol.25, No 3, St Louis: St Louis University, 1991, p. 595.

any discussion of modernism and literary innovation. The significance of World War I to the prevalence of synaesthetic concepts in literature can be related to the social, physical and psychological effects of war on the senses. Michael Hamburger suggests in his book *The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960's*, that "the most memorable and characteristic poetry of the First World War was that produced by the impact of modern warfare on sensibilities essentially civilian".[42] Modern technology, and the terrible implications that came with it, changed the face of war irrevocably, impacting on the perceptions of those involved or affected by it. Along with the changes in personal identity influenced by the emotional, physical and psychological ramifications of war, came a shift in social identity fed by ideas of nationalism and patriotism. The possibility for mass destruction through man-made weapons, together with the changing social identity elicited by patriotism and nationalism, meant that war in the twentieth century had a huge psychological influence on individual identity, alongside its physical, mental and emotional consequences. As such it contributed greatly to the shift in focus on sensory awareness and perception which is evident in the poetry of the time. The ramifications of war are also evident in the process of fragmentation which occurred across the arts. Tim Armstrong discusses the "shift from mass to fragmented bodies"[43] in the war art of futurist painter Christopher Nevinson and suggests that "Bodily terms ... were to become commonplace in literary evocations of the Great War, register[ing] a modernity which grounds itself in the fragmented body".[44] The spectre of war, with all its fragmenting and disintegrating effects, haunts the poetry of the period, as Leo Mellor points out in his article "Words from the Bombsites: Debris, Modernism and Literary Salvage":

> Even when T. S. Eliot's Unreal City of The Waste Land is stable enough to be tied to a specific London-locale it is also notoriously a place that stacks up broken and resonantly jumbled material stuff. In this Eliot seems to have typified how swathes of first-wave modernism had a yearning for locating in the urban landscape violently disordered debris – and then for attempting the extraction of meaning from it. If it wasn't the bewailing of falling towers it was the rummaging through shards of engravings and the lamenting of decayed books.[45]

The extraction of meaning from this "broken and jumbled material stuff" occurred in part through the use of synaesthetic metaphor, which provided a means of unifying and

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[42] Michael Hamburger, *The Truth of Poetry: Tensions in Modern Poetry from Baudelaire to the 1960's*, (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1969) p. 164.
[43] Armstrong, p. 96.
[44] P. 96.
[45] Leo Mellor, "Words from the Bombsites: Debris, Modernism and Literary Salvage". *Critical Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 4, 2004, p. 77.

understanding the fragmented sensory experiences of the period. World War I had a profound impact on the sensory experiences of those who lived through it in two different ways: firstly, through the introduction of new and terrifying sensory stimuli arising from the unique technology, terrain and physical experiences that it entailed. Secondly, through the sharp reminder of mortality that it offered which I suggest affected the emphasis placed on certain aspects of perceptive experience (for example, the smell of a loved one would have increased in importance when the possibility arose that they might not come back). The sensory effects of World War I resulted in a form of synaesthetic sensory transference which emphasised tacioceptive (touch) and nociceptive (pain) elements of experience, and which can be seen most profoundly in the widespread use of synaesthetic metaphors within war poetry, which I will discuss in further detail in Chapter Four.

The concept of 'place' also informs many different elements of identity, particularly nationality or race, experience, memory and history; elements which affect our individual and collective identities and inevitably impact upon our perceptive experience. The importance of place in my discussion lies within the link that Modernism encouraged between British and American poetry in the early twentieth century. Colin Falck notes in his book, *American and British Verse in the Twentieth Century*, that the differences which existed between the poetry from Britain and America in the nineteenth century were important precursors to twentieth century poetic development. American poetry, he suggests, "spent the opening decades of the nineteenth century wandering between two worlds- the one dead, the other scarcely more than a fitful gleam in the occasional visionary poet's eye ... [W]hen the pantheistic and the empirical finally broke loose in American poetry it was ... in an unmanageable flood".[46] In comparison, Britain displayed "a tradition of moralized landscape poetry [stretching] as far back as the middle of the 17th century"[47], which was upturned by "the crisis which brought Romanticism about ... the need to rebuild a spiritual world from the ruins of religious dogmas and from the mechanistic meaninglessness that seemed to have been bequeathed to us by natural science".[48] Under the banner of Modernism the poetry of Britain and America became much more closely aligned. The Modernist

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[46]Colin Falck, *American and British Verse in the Twentieth Century: The Poetry that Matters* (Hants: Ashgate, 2003) pp. 7-9.
[47] P. 9.
[48] P. 11.

denunciation of the past meant a reduction in the influence that these differences were making on poetic style and a convergence in the aims and aspirations of the poets from both places. Falck states that

> As British and American poetry moved into the twentieth century the experiential lyric established itself at the centre of both traditions, whether in its more autobiographical-seeming or 'confessional' version or in the form of obviously dramatized monologues. The main thing that such not too strikingly similar poets ... have in common ... is that they allow us to identify with a particular human consciousness in the act of experiencing.[49]

The increasingly converging focus of American and British poetry was emphasised in the early twentieth century as more connections were forged between America and Britain; for example T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound, two of the most important poetic theorists of the period, were both Americans who lived in London. The concept of place is inextricably linked with multi-sensory perception, but it places particular priority on visual perception which is echoed in the increasingly visual focus of twentieth century poetry. Fred Moramarco discusses this 'pictorial mode' in "Kindred Muses: American Poetry and Painting", noting how American painters and poets were "jointly inspired by the immense grandeur of the unspoiled ... landscape ... [and were] collaborators in an attempt to evoke that grandeur in the products of their shared aesthetic vision".[50] Much of the poetry produced in the early twentieth century was characterised by visual depictions of place-oriented scenery, and the dichotomy between urban and rural was becoming increasingly significant with industrialisation and the growth of cities. The representation of place through sensory and visual modes of expression was mutual to both British and American poetry, and was a result, as Falck suggests, of the "twentieth-century poetic sensibility that discovers meanings in experience rather than looking to experience to illustrate meanings that have already been understood".[51]

The concept of tradition or history in poetry also impacted upon the early twentieth century poetic environment. Tradition in the artistic sense generally refers to past trends, expectations and advancements as revealed by previous bodies of work. In poetry, especially early twentieth century poetry, tradition was alternately embraced and rejected, playing a significant role in the advancement and explication of new ideas involved in Modernist poetic theory and practice. Stan Smith suggests in his book

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[49] P. 15.
[50] Fred Moramarco, "Kindred Muses: Amercian Poetry and Painting", *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol.11, No 4, 1977, p. 69.
[51] Falck, p. 134.

Inviolable Voice: History and Twentieth Century Poetry that a poem is "produced at the intersection of two histories: the history of the formal possibilities available to the poet ... and the history of the individual as a particular expressive 'medium', a product of his own time and place".[52] He posits that the connection between the "raw materials- the poet's experience, memories, ideas" of the present and the "determinate means- literary forms and conventions' of the past, is "language ... [which] lies at the centre of the ... equation"[53], and acts as a link between the two. The tradition or history of poetry works in tandem with poets' own individual experience and their attempt to express the change and innovation occurring in Modernist poetry. In this sense, language (and metaphor in particular) becomes the mediating factor between the pressures of the past and the pressures of the present. As I have shown, synaesthetic metaphor is especially conducive to this idea, and in many ways it lies at the crux of the poet's dilemma in balancing these two factors: in order to express the new, we turn to what we already know.

While much of modernism was characterised by the search for new forms of expression, Robert Adams also notes that the "deliberate cultivation of the past seems ... characteristic of modernism"[54] citing the primitivism evident in some of Modernist art's most central works like Picasso's "Les Demoiselles D'Avignon" and Stravinsky's "Sacre du Printemps". Adams proposes that "Eliot and Pound ... were 'modern' poets from the beginning, and before long they were to be almost the touchstones of modernism; but all their work was deeply rooted in a consciousness of the past".[55] T.S Eliot famously discussed the place of tradition in modern poetry in his 1919 essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent", identifying it as something that "cannot be inherited ... [one] must obtain it by great labour"[56], and as something involving "in the first place, a historical sense ... a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence ... a sense of the timeless and of the temporal together ... [which] makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity".[57] This idea can once more be connected with ideas of perception and the role it plays in countering

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[52] Stan Smith, *Inviolable Voice: History and Twentieth Century Poetry* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Humanities Press, 1982) p. 9.
[53] P. 9.
[54] Adams, p. 20.
[55] P. 21.
[56] T. S Eliot, *The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism* (London: Methuen & Co, 1920) p.49.
[57] P. 49.

the fragmentation of individual modern experience. Eliot's analogy whereby the "poet's mind is in fact a receptacle for seizing and storing up numberless feelings, phrases, images, which remain there until all the particles which can unite to form a new compound are present together"[58] places importance on perception as a medium for 'collecting' such particles, which are in effect the elements needed for the creation of a poem. Without a sense of temporal existence and knowledge of 'the self' in relation to the past (i.e. tradition) and the future, the poet has no catalyst for combining these elements. Thus the synaesthetic tendencies of the modernist aesthetic are once again involved in the unification of the fragmented elements of modern experience, acting in some ways as a catalyst in the poetic reaction between tradition and modernity.

3.6 Poetry and Poetics

Many of the ideas which I have discussed up to this point were influential to the progression of poetry and poetics in the early twentieth century. Modernism as a poetic movement, however, is difficult to define. Adams, after an exhaustive discussion in the article "What was Modernism?" can only identify it as "an inaccurate and misleading term, applied to a cultural trend most clearly discernible between 1905 and 1925".[59] Richard Sheppard suggests that "the concept of Modernism does not denote a coherent movement but is a loose-fitting label designating an experience of a cultural crisis ... [which] increasingly afflicted European artists and intellectuals from about 1885, came to a head about the time of the Great War, and generated highly diverse responses throughout the arts and across a range of disciplines".[60] Modernism in poetry is often taken to represent a number of different influential poets and poetic movements, occurring in the early twentieth century and involving innovation and the restructuring of poetic traditions to create new forms of poetry. Common characteristics shared by most of these poets include a rejection of Romantic and Victorian poetic tradition, technical innovation (particularly in the use of free-verse), and often radical experimentation and reconfiguring of poetic elements such as prosody, rhyme, rhythm and structure. There are many poets whose poetic innovations are considered to be the

[58] P. 55
[59] Adams, p. 19.
[60]Richard Sheppard, "Modernism, Language, and Experimental Poetry: On Leaping over Banisters and Learning How to Fly", *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 92, No. 1, 1997, p. 98.

nineteenth century precursors to modern poetry: notably, the English Romantics and the French Symbolists as discussed in the previous chapter, Walt Whitman who revolutionised the American tradition and went some way to instigating the free-verse movement, and Emily Dickinson and Gerald Manley Hopkins for their radical experimentation with form, sound and prosody, among others.

The importance of synaesthesia to early twentieth century poetics lies in its close relationship to imagery and metaphor. In the early twentieth century, poets began to rebel against the Romanticism of the previous century, seeking to discard previous notions of form and structure to create a brand of poetry relevant to the period. Poetic movements such as Imagism sought to create poetry which involved concentrated, clear images and language, and rejected the sentimental poetic tradition of the previous century. Thus, imagery became a dominant part of the poetic landscape in the period. Imagery, defined by *The Princeton Encyclopaedia of Poetry and Poetics* as

> the reproduction in the mind of a sensation produced by physical perception ... [which] refers to images produced in the mind by language, whose words and statements may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perceptions were the reader actually to have those experiences, or to the sense impressions themselves,[61]

is a primary element in the link between early twentieth century poetry and perception. As Dennis Haskell states in his essay "Poetic Image and Symbol", "poetic image is a combination of words which engenders the effect of a sensory perception".[62] The nature of the image in poetic history was famously discussed by C. Day Lewis in his book *The Poetic Image*. Lewis stated that "the image is the constant in all poetry, and every poem is itself an image",[63] thus highlighting the immense importance of imagery to poetry: it is not merely a technique but a primary component of poetry itself. He defined the nature of the poetic image, suggesting that "an epithet, a metaphor, a simile may create an image; or an image may be presented to us in a phrase or passage on the face of it purely descriptive, but conveying to our imagination something more than the accurate reflection of an external reality".[64] The image in poetry does not simply represent the physical world but appeals to the senses of the reader, and therein lies its importance to poetry: "every image - even the most purely emotional or intellectual one - has some

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[61] Preminger, p. 363.
[62] Dennis Haskell, "Poetic Image and Symbol" in Sharma, Anuraag & Trikha, Pradeep (eds.) *Caring Cultures, Sharing Imaginations* (Sarup and Sons, New Delhi, 2006), p. 29.
[63] Cecil Day Lewis, *The Poetic Image* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1947), p. 17.
[64] P. 18.

trace of the sensuous in it".[65] Imagery was not acknowledged in this way for many years, as Day Lewis notes: "critics of the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were apt to talk of imagery as ornament, mere decoration, like cherries tastefully arranged on a cake. The idea that imagery is the core of the poem, that a poem may itself be an image composed from a multiplicity of images, did not begin to have any wide official currency till the Romantic Movement".[66] It was at this same time that poets also began to experiment with sensory and synaesthetic imagery, using inter-sense analogies in order to create a unique interpretation of personal experience, a practice that continued into the twentieth century.

Much of the poetry in the early twentieth century retained the visual focus of the Imagists, endowing it with a more aesthetic and philosophical bent. The fragmentary, dissociated nature of modernity encouraged an increasingly interdisciplinary approach to all forms of artistic expression, and poets were increasingly incorporating influences from modern art and music into their work. Jon Cook in *Poetry in Theory* says that "the temptation here is to say that in the twentieth century there is not poetry but 'poetries'; that there is no longer a single state of the art, but many different states ... While this is true ... there are patterns in the ways that modern poetry's past has been imagined, just as there are differences in judgement about the nature of poetic language and the characteristics of modern poetry".[67] Even in poetics, this period was characterised by a fragmentation and dissolution of traditional forms, ideas and conceptions; but I would argue that the widespread occurrence of synaesthesia and synaesthetic concepts among all these different "poetries" acts in some way as a unifying link. While the intention, style and subject of these poets differed greatly, their use of synaesthetic metaphor remains a constant thread running throughout the poetry, and this tendency was inextricably connected to the cultural context of the period.

i. Conclusion

The ideas discussed up to this point have shown how an examination of the early twentieth century context, specifically in the areas of innovation, technology and social

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[65] P. 19.
[66] P. 18.
[67] Jon Cook, *Poetry in Theory: An Anthology 1900-2000* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), p. 2.

change, scientific and philosophical theory, aesthetic modernism in the visual arts and music, and the influence of war, place and tradition, is essential to my forthcoming discussion of synaesthetic concepts in poetry. I have suggested that as a result of the myriad factors contributing to change in the early twentieth century, a natural focus on perception arose. The impact of industrial and technological progress and the massive societal change this encompassed encouraged a greater awareness of the world and necessitated a more cohesive mode of perception, conducive to synaesthetic concepts. Scientific and philosophical theories addressing human origins, and theories of the mind moved the focus from universal to individual human experience, while the creative arts were concerned with the nature of reality, perspective and representation, and their inherent links to perception. War in the twentieth century brought with it new sensory experiences and emotions, as well as a reminder of mortality, and the importance given to place and tradition in artistic innovation emphasised a preoccupation with questions of identity and experience. The increasing awareness of perception engendered by all these factors, and the necessity of a response to the fragmentary effects of the early twentieth century experience, inevitably played a part in encouraging synaesthetic modes of perception. One result of the combination of these factors was the increased conduciveness of the period to synaesthetic metaphor, and this can be seen most clearly in poetry, where perception and language interact through the use of metaphor and image.

CHAPTER FOUR: POETIC SYNAESTHESIA FROM YEATS TO THE GREAT WAR

4.1 W.B Yeats and Nineteenth Century Inheritance

W.B Yeats (1865-1939) is regarded as one of the premier fore-runners of modern poetry, bridging the divide between the nineteenth and twentieth century. John Williams suggested in *Twentieth Century British Poetry: A Critical Introduction* that while Yeats was "far from rejecting out of hand the Romantic heritage of English poetry" he was "prepared to be critical of the emanations of Romanticism that had evolved during the nineteenth century".[1] Richard Fallis in "Yeats and the Reinterpretation of Victorian Poetry" similarly describes Yeats as "enough the Victorians' contemporary to understand their language on their own terms; but, on the other, his assertion of a radical Romantic interpretation of poetry makes him our contemporary as well",[2] a statement which suggests his unique position in modern poetic history, arriving as he did on the cusp of two eras. While Yeats may not be a 'modernist' poet as such, his poetic works explore many of the issues that became prominent in later modern poetics, and his aims as a poet came closer to those of later poets than that of his predecessors.

A. C Partridge said in *The Language of Modern Poetry* that "The importance of Yeats' poetic history is its comprehensive account of a cycle of development".[3] Yeats' poetry was continually evolving to address the concerns elicited by the changing world. Incorporating elements from the Romantic and Symbolist traditions, his oeuvre is a multi-faceted reflection of the state of poetry and poetics at the turn of the century. Yeats wrote in his essay "The Symbolism of Poetry" (1900),

> All sounds, all colours, all forms, either because of their preordained energies or because of long association, evoke indefinable and yet precise emotions ... and when sound, and colour, and form are in a musical relation, a beautiful relation to one another, they become, as it were, one sound, one colour, one form, and evoke an emotion that is made out of their distinct evocations and yet is one emotion. The same relation exists between all portions of every work of art ... and the more perfect it is, and the more various and numerous the

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[1] John Williams, *Twentieth Century British Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (London: Edward Arnold, 1987) p. 7.
[2] Richard Fallis, "Yeats and the Reinterpretation of Victorian Poetry", *Victorian Poetry*, Vol.14, No 2, p. 89.
[3] A. C. Partridge, *The Language of Modern Poetry: Yeats, Eliot, Auden* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1976) p. 75.

> elements that have flowed into its perfection, the more powerful will be the emotion, the power, the god it calls among us.[4]

This musical relation of sound, colour and form and the emotion that each evokes was, for Yeats, the essence of a symbol and implicitly reflected the influences of Baudelaire and the French Symbolists. Like them, Yeats believed that the "form of sincere poetry ... must have the perfections that escape analysis, the subtleties that have a new meaning every day".[5] The synaesthetic implication of the 'musical relation' of sounds, colours and forms was also an explicitly Symbolist idea. Yeats' individual use of synaesthetic metaphor can be partly explained by his statement that

> emotion that cannot be evoked by any other arrangement of colours and sounds and forms ... we may call ... metaphorical writing, but it is better to call it symbolical writing, because metaphors are not profound enough to be moving, when they are not symbols, and when they are symbols they are the most perfect of all .[6]

Yeats' synaesthetic metaphors have a symbolic aspect which echoes nineteenth century use, but he also begins to take poetic synaesthesia in slightly different directions. For example, a high proportion of Yeats' synaesthetic comparisons involve taste, a sense which was under-represented in nineteenth poetry, only appearing occasionally in the work of Keats and Shelley. Yeats frequently uses food imagery to stimulate the sense of taste, particularly in his early poems: for example, "berries ... / reddest stolen cherries ... / oatmeal-chest" ("The Stolen Child"), "saltin' herrings" ("The Ballad of Moll Magee"), "the milky sky" ("The Sorrow of Love"), "the sun and moon were in the fruit ... / When earthly night had drunk his body in" ("The Man who Dreamed of Faeryland"), "red wine / white bread" and the "silver apples of the moon, / The golden apples of the sun" ("The Host of the Air") [7], among many others. His most poetically significant use of this sense however, occurs not when he uses images alone, but when he incorporates synaesthetic metaphors into his symbols. In his famous poem "Easter 1916", Yeats uses synaesthetic taste metaphors three times: "what voice more sweet than hers", "so daring and sweet his thought" and "he had done most bitter wrong".[8] "Sweet voice" and "bitter wrong" seem, to our habituated twenty-first century ears, to be dead metaphors, having passed into such common usage that we ignore their latent synaesthetic associations.

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[4] W.B Yeats, "The Symbolism of Poetry", 1900, in W. B Yeats, *Selected Criticism* Ed. Norman A. Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1964) p. 46.
[5] P. 52.
[6] P. 45.
[7] W. B Yeats, *Selected Poetry* Ed. Norman Jeffares (London: Macmillan, 1962) pp. 5-25.
[8] P. 94.

Although 'bitter' and 'sweet' have long been associated with taste, this meaning has over time been extended to other sensory and emotive qualities. As a result of centuries of linguistic habituation, the description of a 'sweet' voice or a 'bitter' wrong is, now, no less unusual than a sweet candy or a bitter lemon. Yeats endowed these dead metaphors with a unique poetic significance, elevating them to the status of symbols through the trope of synaesthetic taste and its application to political action.

i. "Love's bitter-sweet": Yeats and Synaesthetic Taste

Yeats used synaesthetic taste metaphors repeatedly throughout his writing, aligning the sense of taste with sight, smell, touch and hearing: for example, "sweet-throated like a bird ... / the sweet sound of his bow ... / sweet-throated maid" ("Cuchulain's Fight with the Sea"), "gaze no more in the bitter glass" ("The Two Trees"), "a chattering wise and sweet" ("The Cap and Bells"), "a bitter black wind" ("Red Hanrahan's Song about Ireland") and "the bitter sweetness of false faces" ("The Grey Rock"), as well as such lines as "to drink of that salt breath out of the sea ... taste of that salt breath" ("To A Shade"), "so great a sweetness flows into the breast" ("A Dialogue of Self and Soul"), "bitter furies of complexity" ("Byzantium"), "salt blood blocks his eyes" ("The Delphic Oracle upon Plotinus") and "the ecstatic waters laugh because/ Their cries are sweet and strange" ("News for the Delphic Oracle").[9] Yeats' use of these metaphors extended beyond mere poetic decoration; they are intrinsic to the interest in a metaphysical world which he shared with the French Symbolists, and they are often given symbolic significance. Yeats' 1926 poem "Her Vision in the Wood" is permeated with taste, particularly the taste of wine. "At wine-dark midnight in the sacred wood", he writes, "I tore my body that its wine might cover / Whatever could recall the lip of lover ... / I held my fingers up, / Stared at the wine-dark nail". This sense of taste is furthered in the lines "love's bitter-sweet had all come back" and "drunken with singing as with wine".[10] Stan Smith, in *W.B Yeats: A Critical Introduction,* writes of the poem that "Passion is inseparable from suffering, seizing the whole bodily frame ... Bitter-sweet is almost too weak a fusion of opposites to describe

[9] Pp. 13-196.
[10] P. 171.

this sado-masochistic relation, which Yeats seems to imply here is the deepest truth of bodily love".[11] Yet the "bitter-sweet" love in this poem is not simply a weak synaesthetic description. It is transformed, by its link with the image of wine as a metaphor for blood, into a more complex symbol incorporating ideas of passion, female sexuality and, as Smith notes, "the fury of the aged at the great gap between what they can imagine and what they can perform ... rage at bodily decrepitude and impotence".[12] The synaesthetic bitter-sweetness of the blood/wine metaphor becomes symbolic of femininity, and has implicit connections to youth, beauty and vampiric passion.

Henry Merrill comments on the connection between femininity, age and vampirism in Yeats' poetry in his article ""Dead Many Times": "Cathleen ni Houlihan," Yeats, Two Old Women, and a Vampire":

> The transformation of the Old Woman into a young girl carries with it more than a few hints of one specific change from age to youth: the change that occurs to a vampire after an infusion of blood ... Drinking the blood of the living is the sole thing that provides the vampire with continuing youth ... Her attractions are those of the vampire, destructive and ultimately asexual.[13]

In a reversal of the menstrual transformation of girl to woman, Yeats' women are given back their youth through the metaphor of blood, which forms a symbol of intense, bodily passion. The woman from "Her Vision in the Wood" is seen as "the beast that gave the fatal wound" who "stared upon his blood-bedabbled breast / And sang [her] malediction with the rest".[14] The vampiric nature of this passion is a form of regeneration; love is bitter-sweet as blood/wine is bitter-sweet, and drinking it offers a form of rebirth that protects against the inevitability of ageing. The image of the vampire was prominent in late nineteenth century Irish imagination, with the Gothic novels of Matruin, Le Fanu and Bram Stoker enjoying literary success, and this may have influenced Yeats' turn-of-the-century use. The immortality of the vampire possibly also interested Yeats, whose contemplation of death, as Smith argues, suggests a belief that "we die many times before our death ... [that] Love ... is a series of deaths and

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[11] Stan Smith. *W.B Yeats: A Critical Introduction*. (London: Macmillan, 1990) pp. 99-100.
[12] P. 100.
[13] Merrill, Henry. ""Dead Many Times": "Cathleen ni Houlihan," Yeats, Two Old Women, and a Vampire". *The Modern Language Review*, Vol. 96, No. 3. Modern Humanities Research Association, 2001, pp. 649-650.
[14] Yeats, *Selected Poetry*, p. 171.

rebirths prefiguring the greater death".[15] Yeats explored the theme of ageing in many of his poems ("Her Vision in the Wood" comes from the collection fittingly entitled *A Woman Young and Old*), often using the same associations of femininity and vampiric passion. In "Before the World Was Made" the female narrator asks, "If I make the lashes dark ... / And the lips more scarlet ... / From mirror after mirror ... / I'm looking for the face I had ... / What if I look upon a man ... And my blood be cold the while?"[16] The mirror is a double symbol; the ageing woman looks for the face of her youth and beauty, but it remains invisible, just as Gothic legend denies the vampire a reflection. "Chosen" speaks of "subterranean rest / On the maternal midnight of my breast ... I struggled with the horror of daybreak"[17] and "From The 'Antigone'" repeats once again the "bitter-sweetness" of blood, "inhabitant of the soft cheek of a girl".[18] Once again, Yeats' use of the synaesthetic taste metaphor works to construct this symbol. The vampiric woman experiences bitter-sweet love metaphorically as bitter-sweet blood, and drinking or tasting it is a form of regeneration. Thus Yeats' use of what we now know as a dead metaphoric description, "bitter-sweet", is given symbolic and poetic significance.

As well as this tendency to the use of synaesthetic taste, which came to have even greater significance in the early twentieth century, Yeats repeated other synaesthetic connections throughout his poems. A. J Bate says in his essay "Yeats and the Symbolist Aesthetic",

> "Correspondances" and synaesthesia are central to both French Symbolisme and the broader history of Symbolism, with its roots in hermeticism. Yeats uses the term in his edition of Blake: "Whoever has understood the correspondence asserted by Blake between (say) sight, hearing, taste and smell, and certain mental qualities, feels at once that much in his own intellect is plainer to him. ... A 'correspondence', for the very reason that it is implicit rather than explicit, says far more than a syllogism or a scientific observation".[19]

Yeats' ideas on symbolism were intrinsically linked with his mystical beliefs, and his poetry shows the influence of the Symbolist fascination with synaesthetic sound. Music is linked to images of nature, a Symbolist tendency which would also be used quite prominently in later Modernist poetry (particularly Eliot's, which I will discuss in the

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[15] Smith, *W.B Yeats: A Critical Introduction*, p. 119.
[16] Yeats, *Selected Poetry*, p. 167.
[17] P. 169.
[18] P. 173.
[19] A. J. Bate, "Yeats and the Symbolist Aesthetic". *MLN*, Vol. 98, No. 5. The John Hopkins University Press, 1983, 1227-8.

next chapter). The aural qualities of the "humming sea" of "The Song of the Happy Shepherd" and the "famous harmony of leaves ... / lamentation of leaves" from "The Sorrow of Love"[20] are joined together in "the shaking of its leafy head /[which] Has given the waves their melody" from "The Two Trees".[21] Imagery of night is similarly linked to both sound and touch: the aurally-centred phrases "night resonance recedes" [22] ("Byzantium") and "under the famished horn / Of the hunter's moon"[23] ("Under the Moon") are contrasted with the tactility of the lines, "midnight there enfolded them like a fleece"[24] ("The Man Who Dreamed of Faeryland") and "unfolds above them clinging, creeping night"[25] ("He Bids his Beloved be at Peace"). Yeats also connects sound with both vision and touch, sometimes within the same poem: as "the cracked tune", "a sudden flaming word/ In clanging space a moment heard" and "pierced by my glad singing through" in "The Song of the Happy Shepherd"[26] reveal. This synaesthetic metaphor of tactility was, like synaesthetic taste, not particularly common in the nineteenth century, often being overlooked for images involving colour, music or smell, but it became prevalent in the early twentieth century. Yeats' use here once again foreshadows the path that poetic synaesthesia would eventually take.

Light and touch were quite often linked in Yeats' poetry, and he used them in a specific metaphor of pain which ominously foreshadows the war poets' use of that synaesthetic comparison, and consequently represents another of the dominant synaesthetic metaphors to arise in the poetry of the early twentieth century. Yeats frequently couples the sensory perceptions of coldness and light, as in "The Cold Heaven" which begins, "Suddenly I saw the cold and rook-delighting heaven, / That seemed as though ice burned and was but the more ice" and goes on to say "I cried and trembled and rocked to and fro, / Riddled with light".[27] The coldness of light, suggestive of dawn and the "first cold gleam of day" ("Towards Break of Day") was also extended to the light of the moon: "the light of the moon ... / A glittering sword out of the East"[28]

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[20]Yeats, *Selected Poetry*, p. 17.
[21] P. 21.
[22] P. 153.
[23] P. 39.
[24] P. 19.
[25] P. 29.
[26] Pp. 1-2.
[27] P. 62.
[28] P. 118.

("Meditations in the Time of Civil War", VII) and "the unclouded moon / Has flung its arrowy shaft upon the floor"[29] ("The Blood of the Moon"). Yeats discussed the symbol of the Moon in his essay "The Philosophy of Shelley's Poetry":

> The Moon is the most changeable of symbols, and not merely because it is the symbol of change. As mistress of the waters she governs the life of instinct and the generation of things ... and, as a cold and changeable fire set in the bare heavens, she governs alike chastity and the joyless idle drifting hither and thither of generated things ... she may deny life and shoot her arrows; but because she only becomes beautiful in giving herself ... she is not loved by the children of desire.[30]

Note the descriptions here: the moon is female, and she is "cold and changeable". Yeats' use of 'sword' and 'arrow' in describing the light of the moon recalls the Roman Diana and the Greek Artemis, goddess of the moon and the hunt; the collocation of the moon with femininity possibly began with these mythologies. Yeats' synaesthetic comparison here also echoes the symbolism of his synaesthetic taste metaphor; both construct femininity as something hostile, but where the vampiric longing for the bitter-sweetness of blood/youthful passion characterised the feminine previously, it is now symbolically seen as bearing arms against masculine desire and championing chastity. Once again this traditional metaphor is given renewed symbolic significance through its synaesthetic attributes. It is interesting that Yeats' dominant synaesthetic metaphors arose out of dichotomous representations of femininity. This characteristic seems to be particularly Yeatsian, as Smith notes, "Yeats took delight in the dialectic, that is, the clash of opposites, believing that every synthesis was something produced by fierce conflict between a thesis and its antithesis".[31] In his attempt to produce symbols that were 'the most perfect of them all", Yeats utilised the dialectic power of metaphor, particularly synaesthetic metaphor which, as he predicted, emphasised the "beautiful relation of sound, colour, form" within his symbols, giving them a greater poetic resonance. While Yeats' use of synaesthetic metaphor was more traditional and less pervasive than that of later poets, it was undeniably important to the progression of poetic synaesthesia in the twentieth century. If Yeats' work can be seen as a link between the poetry of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, then his use of synaesthetic metaphor represents the turning point of poetic synaesthetic expression from the nineteenth century to the early twentieth century.

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[29] P. 146.
[30] Yeats, *Selected Prose*, pp. 75-76.
[31] Smith, *W.B Yeats: A Critical Introduction*, p. 109.

4.2 Ezra Pound and Imagism

From Yeats onwards poetry and poetics in the early twentieth century, moving away from the Romantic trend toward sentimentalism and emotiveness, began to focus on the expression of meaning through experience rather than direct statement or symbolic abstraction. A common factor in this poetry was the move towards presenting lived experience over vague aesthetic or symbolic embodiments. This required a greater focus on perception as the basis of lived experience, and sensory imagery and sensory metaphors were widely used as a means of expression. Ezra Pound (1885-1972) and the Imagists sought to produce in their poetic work a "direct treatment of the thing, whether subjective or objective"[32] by presenting images drawn from sensory experience as significant in themselves. The idea of the poetic image as "a vortex or cluster of fused ideas ... endowed with energy"[33] was central to the changing poetic style, and meant that a greater emphasis was placed on visual experience in particular. Pound defined it in "A Few Don'ts" of 1913:

> An 'image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time ... It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives that sudden sense of liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art.[34]

The focus on the image, and sensory experience, meant that the poetry of this period was naturally conducive to synaesthesia. So it is interesting that Pound warned against this, writing "Don't mess up the perception of one sense by trying to define it in terms of another. This is usually only the result of being too lazy to find the exact word. To this clause there are possible exceptions".[35] In fact, the Imagist poets used a number of forms of synaesthetic metaphor and it is these "possible exceptions" which will be the focus of my discussion.

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[32] Ezra Pound. *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber, 1954) p. 3.
[33] G. Singh, (ed.) *The Sayings of Ezra Pound* (London: Duckworth, 1994) p. 17.
[34] Pound, p. 4.
[35] P. 7.

i. The Bodily Image

The exceptions that the Imagists used seem to follow certain patterns of synaesthetic correspondence based on the visual image. Pound's use of synaesthetic metaphor was not prolific; however, contrary to his warning, he does repeat specific synaesthetic tropes within his imagery. He consistently refers to the wind in synaesthetic terms, incorporating multiple senses: smell ("the stark winds reek with fear") and taste ("Drink of the winds their chill"[36]) in "Villonaud for this Yule", and sight/sound in "A Song of the Degrees": "The wind moves above the wheat- / With a silver crashing, / A thin war of metal".[37] In "Exile's Letter", the wind is seen "lifting the song, and interrupting it, / Tossing it up under the clouds",[38] an image that depicts the wind and the song, both distinctly non-visual entities, in visual terms. A similar link between wind and song occurs in "Canto XLIX" ("the monk's bell / Borne on the wind"[39]) and "Canto LI" ("close eyed in the oily wind ... / And a sour song from the folds / of his belly"[40]). Many of these images incorporate multiple senses in the description of wind/song; the visual, tactile and gustatory senses are stimulated along with the auditory. Interestingly enough, the nature of the wind in non-synaesthetic perception is inherently multisensory. We may feel the chill of the wind and hear its howl simultaneously, sometimes it is accompanied by a smell (or even, taking into consideration the reciprocal relationship between these two senses, a taste) and although we cannot 'see' the wind itself, we can see its physical and visual effects. Thus, Pound's poetic appropriation of synaesthetic imagery in describing the wind was particularly suggestive of the intersensoriality which characterised the period; Pound used synaesthetic metaphor give poetic vigour to "a vortex or cluster of ideas".

Pound's synaesthetic metaphors also involve the image of the sun. In "Sestina: Altaforte", he writes "I love to see the sun rise blood-crimson ... / I watch his spears through the dark clash".[41] He uses a similar association in "Ballad of the Goodly Fere"

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[36] Ezra Pound. *Selected Poems 1908-1959* (London: Faber, 1926 (1975)) p. 19.
[37] P. 48.
[38] P. 72.
[39] P. 152.
[40] P. 154.
[41] P. 21.

("the blood gushed hot and free, / The hounds of the crimson sky gave tongue"[42]) and in the *Cantos*: "close-webbed mist, unpierced ever / with glitter of sun-rays"[43] from "Canto I", "the light sucks up vapour"[44] from "Canto LXXIV", and "every rose / blood-red, blanch-white that in the sunset-glows / cries "Blood, Blood, Blood""[45] from "Canto LXXX". The close association of sunset, blood and bodily touch in each of these images generates the metaphor of sun as warrior, echoing Yeats' synaesthetic light imagery and the mythological symbolism of the moon. Just as the Yeatsian image involves connotations of bodily/sexual intimacy, Pound's synaesthetic sun metaphors are uncomfortably physical; the rays spear, they pierce, they lick and suck, intruding upon the body with an alternately violent and erotic intensity. This particular synaesthetic connection came to have a resonance beyond that which Yeats and Pound gave it, and it represents one of the dominant synaesthetic metaphors of the early twentieth century. Although it was widely used by various modernist and imagist poets, the most fascinating of these uses is by the soldier poets of the First World War, the significance of which I will discuss later in this chapter.

After Pound began to move away from Imagism as a poetic movement, Amy Lowell (1874-1925) took the figurative helm,[46] and her poetry also displays the sight-touch connection that was so prominent in this period. Like Yeats, Lowell associates the light of the moon with sharpness. In "A Year Passes", she writes how "the sword-shaped moon / Has cut my heart in two"[47] and in "Apples of Hesperides" she describes "the moon-pierced warp of night",[48] a line which is echoed in "A London Thoroughfare": "The moon cuts / Clear and round, / Through the plum-coloured night".[49] She also mentions the "sharp edges of the night"[50] in "The Taxi", and "moon-spikes shafting through the snow-ball bush"[51] in "The Garden by Moonlight". Lowell, though, contrasts these sharp moon metaphors with an image of suffocating dark:

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[42] P. 23.
[43] P. 113.
[44] P. 164.
[45] P. 177.
[46] In fact, her involvement in this movement was so extensive that Pound and others gave it the tongue-in-cheek label "Amygism".
[47] Amy Lowell. *The Complete Poetical Works of Amy Lowell (*Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1921) p. 204.
[48] P. 2.
[49] Pp. 33-34.
[50] P. p. 43.
[51] P. 212.

"against his temples beat / The all enshrouding, suffocating dark"[52] ("J. K Huysmans") and "Clasp instead the cold body of the darkness. / ... It will ... push and undulate against me / Breathing into my mouth / And passing long fingers through my drifting hair"[53] ("Strain"). In contrast to Yeats' construction of the feminine 'attack' represented by the moon, Lowell positions darkness in these lines as an inherently masculine threat, unwelcomely intimate, pushing and undulating and 'hungering over' the female figure. This oblique shift in the metaphor is interesting in that it ostensibly relates, at least in part, to Lowell's position as a female poet in a male-dominated literary environment, which demonstrates that these synaesthetic metaphors were arising partly out of the personal, unconscious experiences of the poets, as opposed to being inherited or influenced purely by nineteenth century ideas.

In addition to her use of sight-touch metaphors, Lowell also frequently used synaesthetic connections in descriptions of music and sound. Jane P. Ambrose writes of Lowell's musical inclinations that, "Although she had no formal training in music, Amy Lowell's sensitive and discerning ear for the rhythms of her poetry helped her to hear music in a way usually open only to musicians ... several of her poems are highly original in the manner in which they translate music to verse".[54] Part of this 'highly original' translation in fact, became quite common among modern poets of the period: the synaesthetic, metaphorical expression of sound. Other poets such as Eliot and Stevens were similarly preoccupied with the links between music and poetry, and I will discuss this interdisciplinarity when I look at their work in later chapters. Ambrose notes Lowell's close friendship with the musician Carl Engel, suggesting that "Under Engel's expert tutelage, she also developed a sophisticated, continental taste for contemporary works several decades in advance of their general acceptance by American audiences".[55] This fascination with Modernist composers is evident in her poetry, and she based poems on works by Stravinsky, Bartok, D'Indy and Schoenberg, among others. The dissonant, atypical sounds used by many of these composers (and the subsequent distaste this caused in the public's reception of them) are reflected in Lowell's synaesthetic metaphors of music as an extension of the sight/touch connection.

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[52] P. 14.
[53] P. 216.
[54] Jane P. Ambrose. "Amy Lowell and the Music of her Poetry", *The New England Quarterly*, Vol. 62, No. 1. The New England Quarterly Inc, 1989, p. 45.
[55] P. 45.

Music in her poetry is, like moonlight, very often sharp or painful: "the notes cut sharp through the autumn air"[56] ("Roads"), "the sting / Of sharp, red brass pierced every eardrum"[57] ("The Cremona Violin"), "music quenched in blood ... Flute-showers of notes strung and arrested on a sharp chord"[58] ("Chopin"), "thin-voiced, nasal pipes / Drawing sound out / Until it is a screeching thread / Sharp and cutting / It hurts"[59] ("Stravinsky's Three Pieces") and "the flat blows of sound / Hurt me"[60] ("Maladie de L'Apres-midi"). These painful sounds are often associated with violins, as in "Violin Sonata by Vincent D'Indy", where "The quick cut of a vibrating string / Another, and another / Biting into the silence / Notes pierce, sharper and sharper ... / They are jagged and clear ... / They hurt",[61] or in a "scrape of insect violins"[62] ("Late September"), "a voice cold as flutes / And shrill as dessicated violins"[63] in "The Bookshop", and "A violin scorching on an F-sharp exit"[64] ("Gargoyles"). In these metaphors, the tactile feel of the violin string is converted to an aural sensation; the sharp, burning sensation of wire on fingers is transferred to sharpness and burning of sound.

The intrinsic sense of touch in these lines is compounded by a further visual element, something that Lowell also explored in her musical metaphors. In "Azure and Gold" appear the lines "The air was rose and gold / Arabesqued with the song of birds".[65] In "Roads" the lines "I see it as music, I hear it as light / Prismatic and shimmering and trembling to tone"[66] reflect this sight-sound connection, as they do in "Music": "The round notes flutter and tap around the room / And hit against each other / Blurring to unexpected chords".[67] The idea reaches its apotheosis in "The Cremona Violin", which speaks of

> a tone
> So shimmering-sweet and palpitant, it shone
> Like a bright thread of sound hung in the air [...]
> The notes rose into the wide sun-mote [...]
> They lay like coloured beads a-row [...]

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[56] Lowell, p. 10.
[57] P. 95.
[58] P. 233.
[59] P. 148.
[60] P. 216.
[61] P. 220.
[62] P. 72.
[63] P. 231
[64] P. 231.
[65] P. 2.
[66] P. 10.
[67] P. 73.

A single note which spread and spread
Till it filled the room with a shimmer like gold
[...] while loud harp strings hailed
Their thin, bright colours down.[68]

The profusion of synaesthetic images of music in this poem recalls in some respects the French Symbolist poets, to whom Lowell (like many of the Imagists) was partly indebted.

In the style of the Symbolists, Lowell frequently describes music in terms of synaesthetic colour: "pale violin music whiffs across the room / A pale smoke of violin music blows across the moon"[69] ("Stravinsky's Three Pieces"), "He sang a pale song of repeated cadenzas"[70] ("The Bookshop"), and "Purple flutes fading silver and rose through the pines"[71] ("The Water-Stair"). Then, in a reversal of this, she associates visual images of colour with music: for example, "Red! Red! Coarse notes of red / Trumpeted at the blue sky ... / In long streaks of sound, molten metal" and "Clang! From its red and yellow trumpets ... / Splitting the sunlight into ribbons, tattered and shot with noise"[72] ("The Trumpet-Vine Arbour"), "The curve of a blue bay ... / Is shrill and sweet to me like the sudden springing of a tune"[73] ("Meeting-house Hill") and "Sunset wanes ... / The afterglow is haunted and nostalgic / Over the yellow woodland it hangs like the dying chord of a funeral chant"[74] ("The Middleton Place"). The two-way nature of this inter-sensory connection suggests the poetic appropriation of a metaphorical technique that must have seemed especially apt for a poet exploring musical ideas in an imagistic manner. Yet the remarkable profusion of such metaphors, and their wide-ranging use, suggests that perhaps they were not only the result of conscious deliberation in the manner of the Symbolists. While Lowell may have been indebted to them in many of her visual-music metaphors, her incorporation of tactile metaphors was very much a twentieth-century characteristic. Like Pound, Lowell experienced the stimulation in synaesthetic capacity which characterised the early twentieth century period. This stimulation was particularly conducive to the metaphoric representation of new sensory impressions, such as the new sounds appearing in modern

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[68] P. 89.
[69] P. 148.
[70] P. 231.
[71] P. 546.
[72] P. 109.
[73] P. 449.
[74] P. 450.

classical music, and even her musical metaphors show evidence of haptic, bodily elements alongside their visual qualities.

H.D. (Hilda Doolittle, 1886-1961) was another pre-eminent Imagist poet who presented synaesthetic images in many of her poems. In "Sea Rose" of 1916 she illustrates the essentially synaesthetic nature of perceptual experience with the question, "Can the spice-rose / Drip such acrid fragrance / hardened in a leaf?"[75] Perceptual experience of a rose involves both sight and smell, and H.D's image of the rose transforms one into the other; the dripping of the "acrid fragrance" becomes both visual image and odour. Contrary to Pound's directive against synaesthetic comparison, the perceptual experience that makes up our conception of an image is necessarily and intrinsically multisensory, and H.D's poems represent this masterfully. When we look at a rose we may see its image, its colour and shape, as separate from its fragrance, but in our perceptual experience of that instantaneous moment, and our memory of it later, they are inextricable from each other. The word "spice", furthermore, suggests an element of taste to the image that augments its synaesthetic significance and, echoing Yeats' taste metaphors, represents the reappearance of what would become another of the dominant synaesthetic tropes of the period.

H.D repeats the synaesthetic imagery of flowers in "At Baia", which describes "the very form, the very scent, / not heavy, not sensuous,/ but perilous-/ perilous-- /of orchids, piled in a great sheath"[76] and again in "Hymen":

> There flowered these stalks of cyclamen:
> (Purple with honey-points
> Of horns for petals;
> Sweet and dark and crisp,
> As fragrant as her maiden kiss).[77]

This stanza once again incorporates taste, (honey, sweet) as well as smell (fragrant) and touch (points, crisp, kiss) into the visual image of a flower. The synaesthetic intensity is furthered in the next few lines,

> There with his honey-seeking lips
> The bee clings close and warmly sips
> And seeks with honey-thighs to sway
> And drink the very flower away.
> (Ah, stern the petals drawing back;

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[75] Hilda Doolittle, *Collected Poems of H. D* (New York: Liveright Publishing, 1925) p. 3.
[76] P. 186.
[77] P. 157

Ah rare, ah virginal her breath!),[78]

before culminating in an image of erotic potency: "Quivering he sways and quivering clings ... / One moment, then the plunderer slips ... / Between the purple flower-lips".[79] H.D, in aligning the perceptual experience of sexual passion with the perceptual experience of a flower, has drawn comparison between their joint multisensory stimulation. It is interesting to note here that both H.D and Lowell's synaesthetic metaphors are related in some sense to an awareness of their own positions as female. Both refer to masculinity, either as threatening or as erotic, within these metaphors. The question of whether this represents a specific, gender-related trend within the use of poetic synaesthetic metaphor is unfortunately outside the reach of my study, however it does suggest certain possibilities for future comparative research in the area.

H.D uses the synaesthetic metaphor of a flower again in "Song", addressing the subject of the poem:

You are as gold
as the half-ripe grain [...]

as white as the white rain
that beats through
the half-opened flowers [...]

Can honey distil such fragrance
As your bright hair [?][80]

Here, it is the subject who acts as the image of a flower, once again stimulating the joined senses of smell and taste through vision (particularly through colour). H.D repeats the idea of merging senses in "Wine Bowl", where "in my skull, / from which vision took flight, / will come wine / will pour song / of the cool night, / of the silver and blade of the moon".[81] This image again incorporates taste, sound and touch into vision, situating them all "inside the skull". The poet recognises the intrinsic synaesthetic potential of our perception, mediated by the brain, which must be combined into an instantaneous moment in order for us to make sense of it. In "Sheltered Garden", H.D continues to link taste and smell with images of plants:

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[78] P. 157
[79] P. 158.
[80] P. 194.
[81] Margaret Ferguson, Mary Jo Salter, & Jon Stallworthy (eds.) *The Norton Anthology of Poetry*, Fourth Edition. (New York: W.W Norton, 1996) p.1204-5.

I have had enough --
border-pinks, clove-pinks, wax-lilies,
herbs, sweet-cress.

O for some sharp swish of a branch --
there is no scent of resin
in this place,
no taste of bark, of coarse weeds,
aromatic, astringent

[...]

Or the melon --
let it bleach yellow
in the winter light,
even tart to the taste --
it is better to taste of frost --
the exquisite frost --
than of wadding and of dead grass.[82]

In this image of a garden, the scent of resin and the taste of bark, the aroma and sourness of weeds, the tartness of the melon and the exquisite taste of frost are mingled with an implicitly synaesthetic immediacy.

As well as taste and smell, H.D also incorporates the tactile and nociceptive senses into her imagery. In "Priapus" she writes of the inherent pain in the sight of natural beauty ("Thou has flayed us with thy blossoms; / Spare us the beauty / Of fruit-trees"[83]), a concept she repeats in "Chorus of the Women of Chalkis", "The beauty is too much / For any woman. / It is burnt across my eyes"[84], which is hinted at in the "burning blue"[85] from *The Flowering of the Rod*. As I have suggested, this synaesthetic visual-tactile connection became one of the dominant synaesthetic metaphors of the period; starting with Yeats, it recurs throughout Imagist poetry. Even the poems of Edward Storer and T.E Hulme, identified in Peter Jones' collection of Imagist poems as 'Pre-Imagists',[86] show evidence of this concept. Storer's haiku-like "Image" depicts "lovers/ Burning to a chaste white moon"[87] and "Street Magic" sees the narrator declaring "One night I saw a theatre, / Faint with foamy sweet, / And crinkled loveliness / Warm in the street's cold side".[88] Hulme similarly writes of "beauty like a scented cloth / Cast over

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[82] *H.D Collected Poems*, p. 25-26.
[83] Peter Jones (ed.) *Imagist Poetry* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972) p. 61.
[84] P. 69.
[85] Hilda Doolittle. *The Flowering of the Rod* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1946) p. 11.
[86] Jones, p. 45.
[87] P. 47.
[88] P. 47.

me, stifled me. I was bound / Motionless and faint of breath / By loveliness"[89] ("Conversion"). Both poets couple the sight of beauty with a physical, bodily reaction, and incorporate superfluous suggestions of taste (foamy sweet) and smell (scented cloth) into this reaction. In fact, a physical bodily reaction in the face of extreme beauty is not an unusual idea; think of the gasp of breath, the racing heart, the stomach flutters and physical exhilaration which traditionally occur in encounters with extreme beauty or sublimity. However, the Imagist poets took this concept further, aligning vision itself with an immediate physical reaction (a synaesthetic reaction), whereas our own reaction would be based more on thoughts, emotions and memories. John Gould Fletcher, another Imagist poet, proclaimed in "Irradiations": "Brown bed of earth ... / hold me tight: / Broad field of sky ... / Fill up my pores with light ... / I will touch the sky with my fingers".[90] The fusing of sky and body in this image is a continuation of the synaesthetic light/touch connection. Skipwith Cannell echoes Yeats' and Lowell's moon symbolism with the lines "upon my head has the moonlight / Fallen / As a sword"[91] from "Nocturnes". F.S Flint also continues the tradition, writing in "Searchlight" of how "darkness has an edge / that grits the nerves of the sleeper" and "a beam of light ... / dividing the night into two before him, / still, stark and throbbing".[92] The extent of the appearance of these metaphors bears some explanation. Written in 1917, the significance of Flint's poem and its synaesthetic concepts can be more clearly understood in conjunction with an examination of its context: the implicit reference to war informs its poetic potentialities and thus alters the significance of its imagery. World War I had an immense impact on all cultural fields including poetry and poetics, and its implications directly relate to the synaesthetic trope of tactility/pain which arose so extensively in the period.

4.3 Synaesthesia and World War I

The impact of World War I on the senses was nothing short of catastrophic. For those involved in combat, the relentless sensory assault of new and horrific sounds, sights and smells was an inescapable facet of the war experience and one that features

[89] P. 48.
[90] Pp. 73-74.
[91] P. 59.
[92] P. 78.

very prominently in war literature. To read a war poem from Owen, Sassoon or Rosenberg is to be struck by the sensory immediacy and the visceral perceptiveness of the language. The soldier poets, struggling to adequately express the new and unfamiliar terrors of trench warfare, consistently turn to the only thing they can rely upon in an uncertain world: their own perceptive experience. Thus their poetry abounds with the sights, smells and the sounds of their own immediate existence, a characteristic which goes some way to explaining the compelling resonance war poems continue to have. The overwhelmingly sensory nature of much of what is labelled 'war poetry' is, understandably, particularly conducive to synaesthetic language, and the use of synaesthetic metaphor in this poetry was quite extensive.

My discussion of the use and significance of the synaesthetic language in these poems centres mainly on certain sensory aspects of British trench experience; however it is worth noting that the sensory impact of war was not limited to soldiers and those involved in combat. It affected others who played some role in the war, particularly nurses and medical personal but also, to a lesser extent, civilians who may not have had any direct involvement but for whom war still meant upheaval, as Thomas Hardy so famously depicted in his poem "Channel Firing":

> Again the guns disturbed the hour,
> Roaring their readiness to avenge,
> As far inland as Stourton Tower,
> And Camelot, and starlit Stonehenge.[93]

The widespread sensory disturbance invoked by World War I was, I suggest, a significant factor in the focus on sensory perception and the subsequent rise in synaesthetic modes of perceiving in the early twentieth century, and was especially related to the rise of the synaesthetic tactile metaphor. I propose that the importance of synaesthesia to the sensory war experience lies in what I will label as 'synaesthetic transference': a situation in which the perceptive experience of one sense, inciting a particular emotional or physical affect (often traumatic), is then transferred to the perceptive experience of another sense. For example, the unpleasant and often traumatic physical and perceptive experience of living below ground-level in trench warfare was consistently transferred to the perceptive experience of darkness or light; darkness and

[93] Jon Silkin (ed.) *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry* (London: Penguin, 1979) p. 78.

light became a form of touch,[94] assuming weight, density, suffocating claustrophobia. This inter-sensory transference, which has some roots in post-war psychoanalytic work on the nature of trauma and the condition of 'shell-shock', can be seen in prose writing of the period, but it has a particularly evocative resonance in poetry. However before discussing the synaesthetic qualities of war poetry, I would like to elaborate on my discussion from Chapter Three about the sensory and perceptive 'importance' of the First World War to early twentieth century society. In that chapter I suggested that the social, physical and psychological effects of war on sensory experience led to a greater awareness of perception and the senses for both soldiers and civilians, and this in turn encouraged the rise in the significance of the senses. To extend this discussion, I suggest that the 'sensory importance' elicited by the outbreak of war in 1914 can be looked at in two ways: firstly, in reference to mortality and memory, and secondly, in response to the sensory degradation of "the scorching cautery of battle"[95], as Wilfred Owen so poignantly put it.

i. "All this is ended": Mortality and Memory

The impact of mortality and memory on sensory perception during the war was expressed succinctly by Rupert Brooke in these lines from "IV: The Dead": "these hearts ... / had seen movement, and heard music /... touched flowers and furs and cheeks. All this is ended".[96] Death is the end of consciousness and the abrupt severance of sensory perception. The dead, who could no longer see, hear or touch, would be reduced to the inanimate/ inert and become by association not just a lifeless object, but an inhuman one. For soldiers faced with the terrifying reminder of their own mortality, perception became a barrier against this unthinkable reduction of humanity through death. By paying more attention to their senses in life, they were counterbalancing the reduction of death, and thus consolidating their humanity before it could be taken away from them; perceiving became a synonym for living and perception a synonym for life. Thus, in the early twentieth century, when the question of mortality was made so

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[94] This idea was discussed by Santanu Das in *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).
[95] Wilfred Owen, *The Poems of Wilfred Owen* Ed. Jon Stallworthy (London: The Hogarth Press, 1985) p. 122.
[96] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 81.

pertinent by the outbreak of war on a greater scale than ever before, perception assumed an even greater significance. The inherent terror of death, as not only an ending but as a reduction in humanity, can be seen in many of the wartime poems: for all their differing intentions, the idea of 'living' was consistently linked to sensory experience. It can be seen in John McRae's famously patriotic poem "In Flanders Fields" which proclaims, "We are the dead. Short days ago / we lived, felt dawn, saw sunset glow",[97] and it can just as clearly be seen in Edward Thomas' "Rain", a very different poem in both style and subject, in the lines "remembering again that I shall die / and neither hear the rain nor give it thanks".[98] Julian Grenfell speaks of this in even more explicit terms, defining "life as colour and warmth and light"[99] in his poem "Into Battle". Edgell Rickword's "The Soldier Addresses his Body" depicts a soldier grappling with the concept of his mortality, and lamenting the "world of things we haven't done ... / countries not seen ... /bitter mountain wines we've never drunk; nor snatched the bursting grapes/ to pelt slim girls among Sicilian vines".[100] The tendency of the war poets, faced with the knowledge of their own mortality, was to equate life closely with individual experience and perception, and this echoes the greater existentialist and phenomenological tendencies of the twentieth century which I briefly discussed in the previous chapter.

The question of human mortality, so horrifyingly relevant to the First World War, had wider implications for twentieth century poetry. With the divide between combatant and non-combatant came some necessary differences in the understanding and discussion of the concept of mortality. For the soldier, persistent confrontation with death was the norm; thus, the concept of mortality carried different implications for him than for the civilian, for whom death was a present but distant occurrence. I suggest that for the soldier, sensory perception was made significant by the constant threat of death, whereas for the civilian it was more closely allied with memory and grief. For the soldier, the reduction of sensory experience was a major consideration in the prospect of death, rendering living perceptive experience all the more important. The same principle occurred, I suggest, in civilian attitudes to death, but instead of being incited by personal reminders of mortality it developed through memory.

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[97] P. 85.
[98] Edward Thomas, *Collected Poems* (London: Faber & Faber, 1979) p. 84.
[99] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 83.
[100] P. 138.

In contrast to the male combatants, civilian women on 'the home front' had a markedly different experience of war and death, and this difference can be seen in their poetry. Women poets in Britain confronted death primarily through bereavement, grief and memory. Prevented by their gender from sharing the combative war experience with males and faced with the prospect of a society bereft of young men, the focus of their war poems was often centred on the absent male, and was very much concerned with memory and perception. Marian Allan's "The Wind on the Downs" remembers the male figure, "brown and tall ... /strong.../ In khaki tunic" and despairs of the fact "I can no longer see your face ... / hear you laughing as you used to do".[101] May Wedderburn Cannan echoes the idea in "Lamplight", saying "Almost I see your eyes / Light with the old gay laughter ... / Your voice comes hushed to me".[102] The sensory memory of the absent male is the source of grief, and the contemplation and fear of death once again lies in the reduction of sensory experience. While the woman is still alive and thus able to perceive, a portion of her perception has been irretrievably destroyed with the death of her lover (or her brother, cousin, friend or whoever else the combatant may have been), and now exists only through memory. Confronted with a less immediate mortality than the soldiers, women poets linked these memories with sensory experience, endowing that experience with the same significance which the soldiers gave it.

It is interesting to note that the women also attributed this quality of sensory memory to the imagined lives of soldiers. The soldier persona in Lillian Anderson's poem "Leave in 1917" has "garnered his memories against the morrow", chanting

> Here was the slated threshold of his home,
> and here his lighted hearth; here daffodils
> shone amber in the firelight; here the breath
> of violets and rosy hyacinths
> clung heavy to the blue and bitter incense
> of lately-kindled logs. And sweet, sweet, sweet
> the finches singing in the orchard dusk![103]

The rhetorical anaphora of the repeated "here" in these lines gives the impression of a slow and deliberate storing away of sensory impressions in the mind, in response to the

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[101] Catherine Reilly (ed.) *Scars Upon my Heart: Women's Poetry and Verse of the First World War* (London: Virago, 1981) p. 1.
[102] P. 16.
[103] P. 5.

threat of "the morrow", which will likely be death. The synaesthetic quality of these lines is also remarkable, producing a melange in which all five senses are identified. Smell is linked to touch, as well as sight and taste: the odour of the flowers "clung heavy", the incense is "blue" and "bitter". Sound is also linked to taste in the "sweet, sweet, sweet" singing of the finches, the commonly used synaesthetic metaphor further emphasised here by the triple repetition. Like Allan and Cannan, Anderson looks to sensory memory as a defence when confronted with the prospects of death and mortality. However, she then goes one step further by using synaesthetic comparison to bolster the memory, and thus to bolster the defence, when placing herself in the mind of a soldier for whom, she imagines, its need will be even greater. Faced with the threat of death, either directly or indirectly, women and men both turned increasingly to their sensory perceptions.

ii. "The Scorching Cautery of Battle": Sensory Degradation

Wilfred Owen's powerful lines "their senses in some scorching cautery of battle / Now long since ironed"[104] ("Insensibility") convey the extraordinarily brutal effects of combat on the senses, an aspect of war history that is often overlooked. Recent critical interest in the senses as an integral element in our understanding of history makes the consideration of the sensory effects of World War I an increasingly important one. Mark Smith's book *Sensory History* clarifies the area as "less a 'field' of inquiry and more a habit of thinking about the past, an engrained way of exploring not just the role of sight in the past but the other senses, too".[105] Smith suggests that the history of the senses plays an important part in our understanding of the past, and stresses the idea that the senses are "historically and culturally generated ideas of knowing and understanding".[106] Scholars such as Smith, Constance Classen, and Santanu Das, whose fascinating 2005 book *Touch and Intimacy in First World War Literature* examines the sense of touch throughout war literature, have recently brought this field back into public awareness. In the historical context of the First World War, a sensory focus reveals a peculiarly isolated cluster of experiences which are essentially lost to us in our

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[104] *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 190.
[105] Smith, *Sensory History*, p. 4.
[106] P. 3.

drastically removed modern context, and which can only be recovered in a limited sense through personal accounts. The effect of prolonged combat on the senses was inescapable. The visual, aural and visceral barrage created by the introduction of new machinery and technology to the battle-field, the roar of shells and bullets, the uncomfortable physical aspects of open-air trench warfare and the visual horror of widespread death and injury were undoubtedly debilitating. Although these experiences have become an accepted part of World War I writing almost to the point of cliché, the deficiency of language in overcoming the gap between experience and representation remains. This gap is most nearly bridged by poetry, and it is through the poetry of the First World War that we come closest to re-establishing these lost sensory experiences.

Much of the poetry written by soldiers involved in combat comments on the extensive sensory impact of war. Edmund Blunden in "Come on, my lucky lads" asks,

> In what sub-natural strange awaking
> Is this body, which seems mine?
> These feet
> [...] these ears which thunder, these hands which twine
> On grotesque iron? Icy-clear
> The air of a mortal day shocks sense[107],

and in "Third Ypres" speaks of "the ditches where they bawl sense awake".[108] Owen expresses the effects of sensory incapacitation in "Dulce et Decorum Est", noting how the marching soldiers "All went lame; all blind / Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots / Of gas shells".[109] He contrasts this with the horrific and lasting sensory impression of a gas attack:

> If in some smothering dreams you too could pace
> Behind the wagon[...]
> And watch the white eyes writhing[...]
> If you could hear...the blood
> Come gargling[...]
> Bitter as the cud
> Of vile, incurable sores.[110]

Both of these phrases are characterised by their powerful multi-sensory impact. In his memory of the gas attack victim, Owens' sensory impressions are so corrupted that they become almost synaesthetic in nature, and he experiences the dying man not only through sight and sound but also through taste: as the "bitter" cud of sores. For Owen,

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[107] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 104.
[108] P. 106.
[109] P. 182.
[110] P. 183.

even simple war routine (marching) affected the senses, rendering soldiers incapacitated before they sustained an injury. The soldier was never free from the sensory degradation of war, which was equally as potent in moments of attack as it was in moments of daily drudgery, and which did not diminish but formed a permanent scar on the mind of the observer.

By its very nature, the sensory degradation caused by war was essentially synaesthetic, affecting all the senses equally and in a collective rather than an individual way. The most potent form of this sensory degradation was through memory. For many soldiers, the memory of a particularly affecting sensory experience became almost synaesthetic in nature, and this was most often connected with tactility or hapticity. Santanu Das suggests that "the writings of the First World War are obsessed with tactile experiences".[111] He finds that the "relation between touch and trauma has largely gone unnoticed" but suggests that "theorisation of trauma ... draws upon the vocabulary of touch as an index of the intimate, or the exposed".[112] While his study concentrates primarily on the representation of touch in war literature, he also acknowledges the links between the senses and "seeks to recover the 'sensuous' world of the trenches and the war hospitals ... to show how the texture of such experience is fundamental to, and provides new ways of understanding, First World War literature and art".[113] To illustrate the relationship between touch, trauma and memory, Das quotes Ivor Gurney's famously visceral lines, "That red wet/ Thing that I must somehow forget"[114], explaining that "memory here is like a sharp weapon that cuts through both consciousness and literary form ... Gurney must- and could not- forget the viscera of war"[115]. Das also suggests that, "in spite of the falling metre, 'wet' sticks at the end of the line and in our minds, acting as a formless noun ... the pastoral fabric ... rips apart before the imagined touch".[116] While the "imagined touch" is certainly implicit in the horror of these lines, I would go further and suggest that the caesura itself also emphasises the inter-sensory nature of the memory that haunts Gurney. Rather than the qualities of red and wet it is the "red wet", a peculiarly synaesthetic blend of colour and

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[111] Das, p. 5.
[112] P. 31.
[113] P. 6.
[114] *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 115.
[115]Das, p. 31.
[116] P. 31.

touch, emphasised by the line break and the lack of comma separating the adjectives, which he must forget. The "red wet" becomes almost a thing in itself, a sort of monstrous entity that takes on a life of its own by haunting the speaker. Instead of being a person, blood, or an injury that the speaker tries to forget, I would suggest that it is the synaesthetic entity which becomes a source of fear and uncertainty. For Gurney, as for Owen, an instance of sensory degradation made synaesthetic through memory becomes the source of lingering distress, an example of the acute sensory impact that the war had upon soldiers.

So far my discussion has been concentrated primarily on British poets and trench experience, but the concept of sensory degradation and the sensory impact of war was equally pertinent to soldiers of other nationalities and experiences. Leon Gellert, an Australian soldier who fought in Egypt and took part in the infamous Gallipoli landings, noted in his poem "Night Attack" how "every beating vein and trembling sense / Long-tired with time, is pitched and overwrought".[117] Like the soldiers on the Western Front, these desert soldiers had to contend with extreme environmental conditions, discomfort, disease and a lack of food, water and sanitation, as well as the demands of combat. For Gellert, this combination of demands had an explicit sensory effect. Under pressure, the poets' senses began to be degraded:

> for the eye, the darkness holds strange form
> [...] the whole black landscape swarms with shapes of white and grey
> [...] for the ear, a sound, a pause, a breath
> [...]
> The hand has touched the slimy face of death.
> The mind is raking.[118]

The poem starts with the single phrase, "Be still", which resonates like a whisper in the darkness: the poet reassuring himself. Despite this reassurance the unbearable suspense of waiting causes the senses to 'tremble', eliciting phantasms of fear for the eye, the ear, and the hand. For Gellert, the trembling of the senses was as natural a reaction as the trembling of the body in response to danger. Thus, the damaging sensory effects of war were not confined to a particular geographical area, and nor were they confined purely to the experience of the Allied Forces. The poem "Decampment" by German

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[117] Jill Hamilton, *Gallipoli to Gaza: The Desert Poets of World War I* (New South Wales: Simon & Schuster, 2003) p. 97.
[118] P. 97.

expressionist poet Ernst Stadler displays a similar sensory effect to "Night Attack". The poet embraced "sweet...rest, (to) forget oneself, / unchain the body from reality"[119] but his peaceful oblivion was interrupted when,

> through the misty air rolled the echo of signals,
> hard, sharp, whistling like sword-cuts
> [...] as if through the darkness suddenly lights gleamed
> [...] trumpet calls grated.[120]

The effect of the sudden intrusion of war upon the senses was inherently synaesthetic: light, sound and touch were jumbled together in the fray. Like Ivor Gurney, German poets were also haunted by their perceptual memories. The poetry of Wilhelm Klemm, a German who served as a regimental surgeon in Flanders, is full of the horrors of perception. In "The Clearing Station" of 1917, the speaker is surrounded by "straw rustling", "moans ... drifting and choking", "a stench of blood, pus, shit and sweat", "bandages ooze[ing]", "clammy trembling hands", "the battle thunders ... groaning and grumbling non-stop"[121] and all the other sights, sounds, smells and feelings of human suffering. The sensory impact of Klemm's work as a surgeon can be seen even more strongly in his second poem on the subject, "Clearing Station"[122], which uses visceral and bodily language to induce disgust. The poem is teeming with "festered dressings", "quivering ... wounds", "dressings full of maggots", and "streams of bright green pus". It is similarly populated with the horrific spectres of half-dead soldiers, "intestines hanging out", whose "rump-bone[s gape]/ round an arse-hole" or whose "flesh foams into the air". The disturbingly graphic nature of this poem, which concentrates so specifically and so violently on the human body, is highly sensory. The poet is haunted by the sights, the smells and the sounds of his encounters with the wounded and dying. Margot Norris suggests in *Writing War in the Twentieth Century* that Klemm "vivifies the scene by making the wounds come alive, making them sensate, as it were, rendering them mobile, vocal and expressive".[123] The effect of these 'sensate wounds', "the pallor ... / the whiteness ... / the ribbons of spilt blood", the "gamut of odours" and the

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[119] *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 235.
[120] P. 235.
[121] Transl. Patrick Bridgewater, p. 237.
[122] P. 238-9.
[123] Margot Norris, *Writing War in the Twentieth Century* (Virginia: University Press of Virginia, 2000) p. 55.

"howling, whining and crying, the yammering and begging" is highly damaging, and the enduring sensory impact means that, for Klemm, "every morning ... is war again".[124]

The synaesthetic effect of terror on the senses was a seemingly common occurrence. British war journalist Phillip Gibbs reported on the success of the Canadians in seizing Vimy Ridge in 1917:

> The bombardment was now in full blast. It was a beautiful and devilish thing, and the beauty of it, and not the evil of it, put a spell upon one's senses. All our batteries, too many to count, were firing, and thousands of gun flashes were winking and blinking from hollows and hiding-places, and all their shells were rushing through the sky as though flocks of great birds were in flight, and all were bursting over the German positions with long flames which rent the darkness and waved sword-blades of quivering light along the ridges.[125]

Gibbs' report skews the sensory effects of the war to suit his nationalistic intentions, and he proclaims the bombardment "beautiful", likening the falling shells to "flocks of great birds in flight". Despite the romanticising of war reportage for propaganda, the account still bears interesting similarities to the sensory poetry of the soldiers. Compare Stadler's "echo of signals, / hard, sharp, whistling like sword-cuts ... / as if through the darkness suddenly lights gleamed"[126] to Gibbs' shells "bursting over the German positions with long flames which rent the darkness and waved sword-blades of quivering light along the ridges". The intrinsic link between these very different pieces of war literature is that both the soldier and the reporter, whose war experiences must have been almost entirely different, represent the effects of the bombardment in sensory and synaesthetic terms. The uncanny similarity of the tactile metaphor 'sword-cuts' and 'sword-blades' used by both writers can be traced back to the sensory degradation of war. The journalist, whose experience of war has been indirect and far removed from the experience of trench-warfare, elicits under sensory assault and in the presence of death a synaesthetic response similar to that of the soldiers. The spontaneous association of light or sound with touch, particularly the violent touch of a blade is, I suggest, a natural response to frontline conditions of war, and which goes some way to explaining its wide use in the literature, particularly the poetry, of the period.

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[124] *Penguin Book of First World War Poetry,* p. 238.
[125] Phillip Gibbs, 1917, *Source Records of the Great War, Vol. V,* ed. Charles F. Horne, *National Alumni 1923,* accessed 3/4/11 at <http://www.firstworldwar.com/source/vimy_gibbs.htm>
[126] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 235.

iii. Sensory Transference

Although there were statistically likely to be a number of synaesthetic soldiers and writers involved in the war, I do not believe that the frequent sensory transferences found in the literature can be traced solely to synaesthetes. Rather, I suggest that as a result of the increased sensory importance, the threat of mortality, and the degradation of the senses, this synaesthetic transference arose naturally. I also suggest that unlike true synaesthetes, whose personal synaesthesias are often (but not always) idiosyncratic, the synaesthetic transferences that can be seen in war literature follow a pattern of similarity. Arnold Modell, in a paper entitled "The Synergy of Memory, Affects and Metaphor" states that:

> as feelings are to some measure beyond our control, translating such feelings into metaphors provides us with a schema that enables some degree of organisation and control. Through the use of metaphor we are able to organise otherwise inchoate experiences ... for the artist, memories of traumatic experiences are not rigidified ... but instead metaphors are transformed into a new modality.[127]

In this way, the traumatic nature of war would stimulate the latent synaesthetic capabilities of the non-synaesthete soldiers, resulting in the increasingly multi-sensory metaphoric expression which can be seen in so much war poetry. Since many of these synaesthetic tropes appear in prose writing as well as poetry, I do not believe they were simply the domain of poets. However the sheer number of examples that can be found within the oeuvre of war poetry suggests that it was the poets, for whom metaphor was integral, who expressed the sensory transferences of war most strongly.

The term 'transference' was originally used to describe a psychoanalytic phenomenon involving the redirection of feelings and emotions, particularly arising from childhood experiences, which can occur in psychoanalytic therapy. It was also a pivotal component in Freud's work on neurasthenia, which was widely diagnosed in soldiers during and after the war and was commonly referred to as 'shell-shock'. Although the term 'neurasthenia' has become outdated, treatment of anxiety disorders and post-traumatic stress disorder was built on theories of psychoanalysis and

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[127] Arnold Modell. "The Synergy of Memory, Affects and Metaphor", *Journal of Analytical Psychology*, Vol. 42, 1997, p. 107.

recognises the theory of transference.[128] If transference is a "concept that refers to our natural tendency to respond to certain situations in unique, predetermined ways--predetermined by much earlier, formative experiences",[129] then it is feasible that the adult response to trauma, reverting to formative infantile synaesthetic experiences, is multi-sensory. I suggest that a form of sensory transference occurred in response to the traumatic situation of war, and that the widespread use of similar synaesthetic metaphors in the poetry of World War I is illustrative of this.

iv. "Down pressed the sky": The Touch of Darkness and Light

Earlier in this chapter I discussed Pound and Yeats' use of the synaesthetic joining of vision and touch. This particular metaphor, which can be seen in the works of many modernist poets, came to have an ominous significance during the period of the First World War. Living conditions in the trenches of World War I were characterised by an extreme discomfort of all the senses; impaired sight and hearing, overwhelmed smell and taste, and the constant burden of touch and tactile experience. Such discomfort was so all-encompassing that its effects were not restricted to individual senses but began to impinge synaesthetically on other senses. Das mentions this concept in relation to touch, arguing that "the visual topography of the everyday world ... was replaced by the haptic geography of the trenches ... In an atmosphere of darkness, danger and uncertainty, sights, sounds and even smells are encountered as material presences against the flesh".[130] I will elaborate on this idea by examining the synaesthetic transferences that occur in a similar manner, not only for the sense of touch, but in combinations involving all the senses. Das's study has revealed the prevalence and importance of the sense of touch in war literature, but I will also show that synaesthetic tactile metaphors continued to stay dominant throughout the early twentieth century, and that they were not only a war phenomenon. I will begin by elaborating on the synaesthetic significance of Das's discussion of 'haptic geographies'

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[128] J. D. Lindy, "Transference and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder", *Journal of American Academy of Psychoanalysis*, Vol. 17, 1989, pp. 397-413.
[129] Peter Grant, *Contributions of Psychoanalysis*, 2009, Minneapolis: American Psychoanalytic Association, accessed 5/5/11 at <http://www.apsa.org/About_Psychoanalysis/Contributions_of_Psychoanalysis.aspx>
[130] Das, p. 24.

and the inter-sensory transference of touch and sight, by looking at the poetic metaphor of the 'heavy sky'.

Das establishes the primacy of the sense of touch to trench warfare through his discussion of darkness, or "absence of vision". He suggests that in the absence of vision the soldiers' "world is experienced as contact rather than through the eyes ... darkness ... seems to have acquired substance".[131] He then goes on to suggest that it is not only the absence of vision that stimulates the tactile sense, but also the presence of continuous sound: "if darkness takes on solidity in the subterranean world of the trenches, so does the sound of shelling, especially during a barrage"[132] and smell, "the various odours here have congealed into a 'wall', a 'solid mass' ... what it reveals ... is the strong impulse towards materiality".[133] Das concedes that these "accounts of haptic sound", and presumably also those of haptic sight and smell, "might be interpreted as ... instance[s] of momentary synaesthesia".[134] For Das, these instances of momentary synaesthesia reveal the strong impulse toward materiality, illustrating how the "sense of touch [is] not limited to the experience of the fingers but a more diffuse and active sense spread all over the body ... drawing on a common sense to translate the different kinds of sensory stimuli impinging on the consciousness".[135] This is a particularly interesting idea when looked at in conjunction with current synaesthesia research. Recent scientific studies in neuroplasticity, especially those looking at cross-modal plasticity in blind subjects,[136] have revealed that the links between the sensory areas of the brain are highly complex and interconnected. In their 2008 study "Rapid and Reversible Recruitment of Early Visual Cortex for Touch", Merabet et al. looked at the neural changes occurring after a short period of visual deprivation in normally-sighted subjects, and found that,

> sudden and complete visual deprivation in normally sighted individuals can lead to profound, but rapidly reversible, neuroplastic changes by which the occipital cortex becomes engaged in processing of non-visual information.[137]

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[131] P. 78.
[132] P. 79.
[133] P. 85.
[134] P. 80.
[135] Pp. 74-75.
[136] Cohen et al, "Functional relevance of cross-modal plasticity in blind humans", *Nature*, Vol. 389, 1997, pp. 180-183.
[137] Merabet et al, pp. 1-12.

In effect, sudden visual deprivation can elicit synaesthesia-like responses from the brain. The implications of this study are particularly relevant to the conditions of the First World War, where visual deprivation was a common occurrence. If short-term, temporary visual deprivation leads to such rapid cross-modal plasticity, then the idea of soldiers in the trenches of World War I experiencing some form of synaesthetic transference is increasingly supported. I suggest that this phenomenon would not be limited only to sight and touch, but would apply to all the senses, possibly arising out of the latent synaesthetic capacity which remains dormant from early childhood. For poets, the interaction of poetic metaphor and the stimulation of this latent synaesthesia through trauma, mortality or sensory degradation could very likely have resulted in the synaesthetic metaphors that were used so frequently in the war poetry.

The metaphor of the heavy sky can be widely seen in the poetry of the First World War. The prevalence of this metaphor is most likely associated with the strong impulse towards materiality, arising from the uncomfortable living conditions of the soldiers which Das mentions as a primary factor contributing towards an increased 'hapticity' of sensory experience. Trench life involved the constant burden of heavy weight. The feeling of suffocation and claustrophobia implicit in this burden was enhanced by the "long communication trenches, full of thick sticky mud often waist deep"[138] which soldier G. F Wear recounts in his memoir. Captain A. A Dickson of the Sherwood Foresters also speaks of "the front line, where, by constant baling, liquid slime could just be kept from lipping over the dug-out door-sills".[139] As well as the heavy loads carried by the men, the weather conditions (the constant assault of rain, snow, or heat depending on the season) were a source of tactile discomfort. The perception of such conditions was, as Das suggested, transferred from the sense of touch to the other senses.

In poetry, this can be seen in the repeated linking of heaviness/density or physical discomfort with darkness/light, most often in association with nightfall or dawn. The alternation of dawn and dusk becomes a constant visual reminder of time and mortality, hanging like a physical burden over men who are marching inevitably

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[138] George F. Wear, Memoirs, from *Everyman at War*, C. B. Purdom (ed.), 1930, accessed 12/5/11 at <http://www.firstworldwar.com/diaries/17-21.htm>
[139] *Everyman at War*.

towards their own death. Private William Reginald Dick's memoirs speak of the solidity and burden of darkness and light: "a heavy darkness broods over the sector, and I peer into a black void. It is the cold lifeless hour before the dawn; the night presses solidly down".[140] The heavy darkness 'broods' just as the men do, and even the coming light of dawn is as cold and lifeless as the dead bodies strewn around beneath the sky. Numerous war writings and memoirs make mention of the physically debilitating weight of the equipment that the soldiers were required to carry. Das notes that the average weight of the packs the British soldier carried varied from sixty to seventy-seven pounds, and for the French and German soldiers this increased to between seventy and eighty-five pounds.[141] The packs were not the only heavy loads enforced on the soldiers though. Dickson speaks of "floundering with the dead weight of a wounded man along the collapsing makeshift trench, and then back again".[142] Dick writes "The water-laden petrol tin I am carrying pulls down my arm till the sinews ache. I change it frequently, but it drags like a lead weight"[143] and W. Walker of the 13th Northumberland Fusiliers echoes the sentiments: "The mud on my greatcoat made it monstrously heavy, so that it flapped like lead against my legs, making the going utterly wearisome".[144] The repeated use of the words "lead" and "dead" (with all their metaphoric associations) acts as a form of sound symbolism in these descriptions; the blunt heaviness of the words themselves burdening the sentences just as the loads burden the soldiers. The same form of sound symbolism is also evident in Blunden's "The Zonnebeke Road", where repeated /*d*/ sounds puncture the lines; "the low sky like a load/ Hangs over, a dead weight".[145] When Captain Dickson uses the expression "dead weight" to describe the wounded and most likely dying soldier he is carrying, the term becomes almost literal. In this context then, Blunden's use of the expression takes on an uncanny significance. Blunden's visual perception of the sky becomes interchangeable with his tactile perception, and his use of sound symbolism emphasises this; the sky weighs down on him like the dead weight of a wounded man or the load of a pack, in the same way that the words weigh down the sentence. Blunden's perception of the lightness and darkness of the sky becomes interchangeable with his tactile perception.

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[140] *Everyman at War*.
[141] Das, p. 76.
[142] *Everyman at War*.
[143] *Everyman at War*.
[144] *Everyman at War*.
[145] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 105.

Sassoon and Rosenberg also align tactile and visual perceptions of the sky. The sense of apocalyptic desolation Sassoon evokes in "Prelude: The Troops" ("They march ... / to the land where all / Is ruin, and nothing blossoms but the sky / That hastens over them where they endure"[146]), is echoed in Rosenberg's famous opening lines from "Break of Day in the Trenches" where "the darkness crumbles away".[147] Rosenberg's use of the word "crumble" suggests that the darkness is, for him, a solid mass susceptible to decay and disintegration, just as likely to decay and crumble as "the torn fields of France" or the poppies that "drop, and are ever dropping".[148] His synaesthetic transference of tactile darkness hinges on his experience of wartime destruction, which is echoed in many of his poems: the "burnt space through ripe fields / A fair mouth's broken tooth" [149] from "August 1914" and the "shattered track" and "rusty stakes" of "Dead Man's Dump", are all emblems of the "sprawled dead" that "earth has waited for ... / All the time of their growth / Fretting for their decay".[150] Sassoon emphasises the ruin of war in a slightly different way. His curious use of the word "blossoming" conjures up disparate images of blooming flowers, spreading bloodstains or bruises and perhaps clouds of smoke or gas. For Sassoon, the sky not only has density but grows and expands like an active entity, juxtaposed with the image of the land below where all natural entities have been reduced to dust and rubble. Wilfred Owen also uses the metaphor of the heavy sky. The light of dawn in "Exposure" is heavy and sodden, sagging like the waterlogged clothes and packs of the soldiers: "clouds sag stormy / Dawn massing in the east ... attacks once more in ranks on shivering ranks of grey" and, just like the soldiers shivering in their drenched state, the "air ... shudders black with snow".[151] "Exposure" is haunted by the sense of touch that Das suggested was so inherent to war literature: the "winds that knive us", "mad gusts tugging", "shaking grasp", "pale flakes with fingering stealth [that] come feeling for our faces" and the "frost [that] will fasten on ... us",[152] implying a tactility which even the title ("Exposure") reinforces. The poem "dwell[s] tantalisingly on the moment of phantasmic

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[146] P. 129.
[147] P. 208.
[148] P. 208.
[149]P. 208.
[150]P. 211.
[151]P. 181.
[152] Pp. 180-181

hand-shake or hand-grip"[153] as Das suggests, and the implications of this phantasmic grip can be seen echoing throughout many of Owen's poems.

In his poem "Insensibility", Owen wrote "their eyes are rid/ of the hurt of the colour of blood forever".[154] The peculiarly haunting transference of colour and touch in these lines of Owen's expresses the visceral effects of war more than a merely historical account of war experience possibly could. Owen was particularly receptive to the idea of synaesthetic pain, which is an area that has only recently begun to be thoroughly explored by synaesthesia researchers. Pain holds an unusual place in discussion of the senses: is it a sense in itself? Is it a form of tactility? It is in fact, a fairly common component in synaesthetic perceptions, and can be perceived through colour, sound and even occur in response to the sight of another person's pain-inducing experience, a phenomenon called mirror-touch synaesthesia which is only now beginning to be explored[155] but which has great potential for new fields of discovery in studies on empathy and imagination. The synaesthetic transference of tactile and visual (as seen in the 'heavy sky' metaphor) was extended by the metaphor of light as wound/pain, which was first hinted at in the poetry of Yeats, Pound and the Imagist poets, as discussed earlier in this chapter. However it was World War I, I suggest, which saw this nociceptive synaesthetic experience become one of the dominant synaesthetic metaphors of the early twentieth century.

In Sassoon's poem "In the Church of St Ouen", in which "the windows burn and bloom like flowers, / And sunlight falls and fades"[156], the use of the word 'burn' to describe the light of the windows in the church becomes, again, darkly significant in the context of the writing environment. Sassoon repeats the metaphor in his poem "How to Die", in which "dark clouds are smouldering into red / while down the craters morning burns".[157] In "Mental Cases" Owen extends the metaphor into an even more visceral horror: "on their sense / sunlight seems a blood-smear; night comes blood-black / Dawn

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[153] Das, p. 149.
[154] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 105.
[155] See for example, John Bradshaw,. "I can Feel Your Pain". *Australasian Science*, Vol. 30, No. 4. Hawksburn, 2009, pp. 31-34 and Banissy et al. "Prevalence, Characteristics and a Neurocognitive Model of Mirror-Touch Synaesthesia". *Exp Brain Res.* Springer-Verlag. 2009, pp. 261-272.
[156] Siegfried Sassoon, *The War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon* Ed. Rupert Hart-Davis (London: Faber, 1983) p. 72.
[157] P. 92.

breaks open like a wound that bleeds afresh".[158] In this poem the perceptive experience of light and dark is synaesthetically transferred to the tactile sensation of a wound: darkness rushes in like blood to the brain, light breaks open the bodily surface like a gash. The visual light/dark now becomes an internal nociceptive perception rather than external haptic one. Recovered fragments of Owen's poetry show further evidence of his use of this sensory transference, particularly in relation to dawn. In 1917, Owen wrote to his mother "I'm going to get up at dawn tomorrow to do a dawn piece which I've had in mind"[159]; the next day he wrote an untitled fragment which began "Cramped in that funnelled hole, they watched the dawn / Open a jagged rim around ... / not seen ... only felt / As teeth of traps".[160] Dawn for Owen seems to be inextricably related to the nociceptive senses, and he feels the light viscerally against his skin, like the rim of a jagged object or pointed teeth. It is interesting to note that in World War I dawn was often the moment of 'going over the top' (rising out of the trenches to attack the enemy), resulting in hundreds of thousands of deaths and horrific injuries. For those who had lived through such experiences, dawn must have carried a dreadful significance and its intrinsic association with pain and injury must have appeared quite understandable. The war poets' use of this association carries a sombre reminder of the horrific effects of war on the human body; the light-as-wound metaphor cut deep.

Other soldier poets also adopted the metaphor, expressing light in terms of tactile experience. Richard Aldington, the Imagist poet and husband of H.D, fought on the Western Front. His poem "Sunsets" of 1916, echoes the light/pain associations of Owen and Sassoon:

> The white body of evening
> Is torn into scarlet,
> Slashed and gouged and seared
> Into crimson,
> And hung ironically
> With garlands of mist.
> And the wind
> Blowing over London from Flanders
> Has a bitter taste.[161]

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[158] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, P. 195.
[159] *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, p. 183
[160] P. 183.
[161] Jones, p. 55.

Aldington's poem is particularly synaesthetic, linking the senses of touch and taste within a sickening image of wartime experience. Aldington's "slashed and gouged and seared" is just as contextually significant as Blunden's lines "daylight oozes" and "the light comes in with icy shock"[162], or Graves' "infection of the common sky".[163] It is not hard to imagine the real physical experiences which may have inspired these metaphors. Graves couples the external tactility of the heavy sky metaphor with something internal: an infection or slow suffocation. The external begins to encroach on bodily boundaries, and Graves' response to the encroaching burden of the sky is one of retaliation. The external tactile perception of the sky is followed by a direct retaliatory reaction as the soldiers thrust out their tongues and fists, as if attempting to throw off a heavy weight ("Down pressed the sky, and we, oppressed, thrust out / Boastful tongue, clenched fist"[164]). The internal touch, however, cannot so easily be shaken. Sassoon's "flapping veils of smothering gloom"[165] in "Counter Attack" embody both internal and external tactility, but the soldier in Sassoon's poem does not 'thrust out' against it as Graves' does. Instead he yields to the internal, smothering gloom, and "lost in a blurred confusion of yells and groans", sinks slowly "down and down" into oblivion. Unlike the light of the heavy sky in Graves' poem, which could at least, with effort, be thrown off, Sassoon's smothering gloom was final.

While the influence of the tactile in war literature is, as shown by Das, extensive, there were undoubtedly other forms of synaesthetic transference at work. Sassoon's synaesthetic expressions frequently involved a sense of growth or expansion, incorporating sound as well as touch and sight. Sassoon related darkness, or the absence of vision, to sound. In "Lamentations" the sound and the darkness are connected, but still remain separate ("from the blind darkness I had heard his crying"[166]). "Golgotha", beginning to join the two, speaks of how "laughter rakes the whistling night"[167] and then in "Break of Day" the two are inextricably joined: "darkness brims and roars into their heads".[168] In his poem "The Death Bed" however, Sassoon reverses this comparison by relating silence, or the absence of sound, to light and colour.

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[162] *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, p. 106
[163] P. 121.
[164] "Recalling War", p. 121.
[165] P. 129.
[166] *War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon*, p. 86.
[167] P. 24.
[168] P. 102.

Interestingly, this poem attempts to express the perceptive experience of one near death by using synaesthetic associations. The dying character is "aware of silence heaped / Round him, unshaken ... / Aqueous like floating rays of amber light, soaring and quivering", and as he tastes the water someone holds to his mouth he "drop(s) through crimson gloom to darkness" while the water becomes "a calm, sliding green".[169] The colour references in this poem are quite prolific, and even though the dying soldier is "blind; he could not see the stars", still "queer blots of colour, purple, scarlet, green / Flickered and faded in his drowning eyes".[170] Sassoon's soldier seems to be reverting back to his infantile state, and as he slips slowly into "silence, and safety; and the veils of sleep" of death. Just like a child nursed in a mother's arms, his sense impressions also revert to their infantile synaesthetic origins.

Conversely, Owen uses synaesthetic smell metaphors which echo the heavy sky metaphor in their reference to weight and density. He mentions the "green thick odour of his breath"[171] in "The Next War", a "lump of stench"[172] in "The Dead-Beat" and "a concentrated pile / of seething vapours"[173] in "To Poesy". Blunden's line "acid vapours hovering dense" in "Come on, my lucky lads" shows a very similar association. Owen also seemed to be particularly partial to the synaesthetic taste metaphor which appeared in the work of Yeats and the Imagists, as he echoed the previously mentioned "bitter cud of sores"[174] with "bitter blood / and the death-smell"[175] in "Has your Soul Sipped?", and the "murk of air ... stank old, and sour" in "The Sentry". However, Owen also links music with sweetness: "sweet ... bugles"[176], "sweet ... nocturnes ... / sweeter than odours / of living leaves"[177] and "songs more sweet than possible things are sweet"[178]. Sassoon, on the other hand, seems to link music primarily with odour; for him "fragrance ... and music (become) woven as one".[179] He repeats this in the poem "France" with "hearing

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[169] P. 52.
[170] P. 52.
[171] *The Poems of Wilfred Owen*, p. 142.
[172] P. 121.
[173] P. 3.
[174] P. 117.
[175] P. 67.
[176] P. 119.
[177] P. 67.
[178] P. 75.
[179] *War Poems of Siegfried Sassoon*, p. 52.

such harmonies as might / Be downward wafted"[180] and again in "The Dream": "sweet songs are full of odours".[181] Both poets seem to turn to synaesthetic metaphors not only to express traumatic and unpleasant experience but also to express pleasure and beauty, and their use of metaphors in this respect echoes the nineteenth century Romantic and Symbolist poets.

Rosenberg was another war poet who used synaesthetic taste and smell metaphors extensively. He speaks of odour in terms of music, speech and even silence: "Music, breathed ephemeral / Fragrant"[182], "such rare fragrance of sweet speech"[183] and "As though the silence was a flower / And this its perfume, dark like dust".[184] His taste metaphors involve an intermingling of ecstasy and pain, as for example in "I am the blood / Streaming the veins of sweetness; sharp and sweet"[185] or "vision swims / In fierce delicious agonies"[186], which echo Yeats's images of bitter-sweet blood. Although I have maintained that the majority of war poets using synaesthetic metaphor in their works were not synaesthetic, there is some evidence to suggest that Rosenberg may have been a legitimate synaesthete. While there are inherent difficulties in making retrospective judgements about the synaesthetic condition of an individual without direct evidence, the abundance of idiosyncratic synaesthetic colour evident in Rosenberg's poetry, in comparison to the forms of synaesthetic metaphor used by the other poets, could substantiate this claim. His poem "On Receiving News of the War" uses the synaesthetic description, "snow is a strange white word", and speaks of an "ancient crimson curse".[187] The poem "Louse Hunting" has soldiers "yelling in lurid glee", as well as "dark music"[188], and "Daughters of War" mentions "ruddy freedom" and "the young green days".[189] Other poems speak of "these pale cold days" and "these blond still days"[190], "some pale wonder", "turned and clawed like bronze"[191] and "our

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[180] P. 30.
[181] P. 111.
[182] Isaac Rosenberg, *The Collected Works of Isaac Rosenberg: Poetry, Prose, Letters and Some Drawings* Ed. Gordon Bottomley and Denys Harding (London: Chatto and Windus, 1937) p. 14.
[183]P. 22.
[184] P. 32.
[185] P. 130.
[186] P. 139.
[187] P. 127.
[188] P. 79.
[189] P. 85.
[190] P. 91.
[191] P. 63

pulses have no golden tremors".[192] Rosenberg's pre-war works are similarly preoccupied with synaesthetic perception, and lines such as "violet is the maddest colour I know", "a colour heard", "blue delight", "gold heat"[193] and "rose hue made of his thoughts a coloured fire"[194] are found frequently in poetry fragments. Indeed, even in his letters he describes Schubert's "Unfinished Symphony" as "a blur of sounds-sweet, fading and blending",[195] and speaks of Emerson's poems as having a "kind of beaminess, like a dancing of light in light ... though they always have a solid texture ... they sometimes seem thin in colour".[196] Finally, a line from his 1916 play *Moses* indicates a strong synaesthetic reaction: "Startlingly ... / Sprang an intelligence / Coloured as a whim of mine, / Showed to my dull outer eyes / The living eyes underneath".[197] Perhaps the fact that Rosenberg trained as an artist before the war could explain his extensive colour references. Sassoon's Foreword in *Rosenberg's Collected Poem's* describes the poet as "sculptural ... he did not carve or chisel; he modelled words with fierce energy and aspiration, finding ecstasy in form, dreaming in grandeurs of superb light and deep shadow; his poetic visions are mostly in sombre colours and looming sculptural masses".[198] Although Sassoon's mention of 'sombre' colours could be somewhat negated simply by the brief cataloguing of lines I have provided above, it is certain that Rosenberg approached his poetry, at least in some respects, similarly to his art. Whether this idiosyncratic use of synaesthetic metaphor arose from the mind of a synaesthete or simply from the mind of an artist is not especially relevant to my study. Whether he was a synaesthete himself or not, there is no doubt that his use of synaesthetic concepts was extensive, as it was for most of the war poets. The proliferation of such synaesthetic metaphors within all sensory domains establishes the significance of synaesthetic concepts within war poetry. They appear too widely and uniformly to be attributed only to true synaesthetes, yet they follow a pattern of resemblance that suggests that they are not a matter of mere coincidence. Rather, I have suggested they arose as a natural response to the shifting perceptive environment of the early twentieth century, with its literary innovation and changing poetic focus, combined with the severe sensory effects that war had on a generation raised within

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[192] P. 67.
[193] Pp. 5-8.
[194] P. 222.
[195] P. 365.
[196] P. 368.
[197] P. 49.
[198] P. ix.

such an environment. The pattern of metaphor and image within their poetry suggests a correlation between the sensory effects of war experience and a prevalence of synaesthetic expression which was not related to the soldiers' own synaesthetic status, but rather to the conduciveness of the period to synaesthetic expression.

CHAPTER FIVE: T.S ELIOT AND MUSIC

A large proportion of the poetry from the early years of the twentieth century focused on synaesthetic metaphors involving touch and taste, generally thought to be the lower, more bodily senses. These can be seen widely across the poetry of the period, beginning with Yeats's more traditional use around the turn of the century and moving to the Imagist focus on the visual expression of bodily experience, before culminating poignantly in the inherent tactility of the poetry written during World War I. I have suggested that this tendency arose mainly as an unconscious reaction to the environment of the time, particularly the sensory impact of new experiences such as war, which stimulated the latent universal synaesthetic capacity and led to the expression of perceptive experience through multi-sensory metaphors. Many of these metaphors remained dominant as the century continued, which shows both their incredible profusion and their significance to twentieth century poetry and poetics.

However, once the war was over I suggest that a new trend in the use of synaesthetic metaphors emerged, one which was characterised by an increasingly close engagement with the aesthetic theories being explored in the worlds of modernist art and music. As Daniel Albright notes,

> the twentieth century, perhaps more than any other age, has demanded a style of criticism in which, the arts are considered as a whole ... [they are] endlessly interpermeable, a set of fluid systems of construing and reinterpreting, in which the quest for meaning engages all our senses at once.[1]

The importance of this interdisciplinary interpretation of the arts is especially applicable to the early twentieth century, when art, music and literature were simultaneously developing in response to the demands of the modern world. In Chapter Three I briefly discussed the synaesthetic potential of the ideas being explored in these fields. I will now look in detail at the effects that these ideas had on the poetry of individual poets in the post-war period, starting with an examination of the presence of music in the work of one of the most undeniably important voices in the study of modernism and poetry in the early twentieth century, T.S Eliot (1888-1965).

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[1] Daniel Albright, "Foreword" in John Xiros Cooper (ed.) *T.S Eliot's Orchestra: Critical Essays on Poetry and Music*. (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000) p. viii.

The musical environment at the turn of the century was undergoing a rapid evolution alongside that of the arts and literature. Mathew Riley comments on the notion of aesthetic modernity in *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960*, suggesting

> it refers to a degree of autonomy in art ... implies an ambivalent stance toward social modernity that can range from affirmation to aggressive rejection ... [which] can result in heightened reflexivity, the questioning of normative poetics, the urge for artistic freedom, and ... disillusion, fragmentation, the destruction of tradition, and nihilism. Above all, the dimension of time becomes problematic ... These developments open the way for ugliness, caricature, incoherence and dissonance as legitimate aesthetic phenomena ... [as well as] reactions such as nostalgia and melancholy.[2]

These varied qualities characterise the broad focus of modernism, but they are as applicable to other art forms as they are to music. The broadness of notions of modernity that characterised all the art forms in this period meant that there was more interdisciplinarity than ever before. As Simon Shaw-Miller notes in the Foreword to *Art, History and the Senses*, "interdisciplinarity is concerned with synthesis, and unification, where two things merge to become a third. Here relationships are in concord although identity is transformed".[3] Shaw-Miller goes on to discuss the relevance of an interdisciplinary approach to music, suggesting that "when music is struggling to free itself from dependency on the other arts and senses ... it is nevertheless everywhere implicated in interconnectedness with other senses. This sensorium is so enveloping as to be best described as synaesthetic".[4] The interdisciplinarity of the arts in the early twentieth century encouraged a synaesthetic 'reciprocation' between literature and music, and this is perhaps most evident in the poetry of Eliot.

5.1 Eliot's Music of Imagery

Reading Eliot's poetry one often gets the sense of an underlying music (in fact, many of his most famous works have explicitly musical titles), which seems to recur intermittently as if the strains of a familiar song were occasionally wafting in from a

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[2] Matthew Riley, *British Music and Modernism, 1895-1960* (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010) p. 6.
[3] Simon Shaw-Miller, "Foreword: Disciplining the Senses: Beethoven as Synesthetic Paradigm" in Patrizia Di Bello & Gabriel Koureas (eds.) *Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*. (Surrey: Ashgate, 2010) p. xvii.
[4] P. xvii.

distant room, only to disappear again beneath the clamour of words. The links between Eliot's poetry and music have long been recognised. Eliot himself noted that

> the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from its meaning ... a 'musical' poem is a poem which has a musical pattern of sound and a musical pattern of the secondary meanings of the words which compose it, and ... these two patterns are indissoluble and one.[5]

For Eliot, the music of poetry is not solely concentrated in its sound but also embodied in the sense of it: in the words and images it incorporates. Simon Shaw-Miller discusses the inherent link between music and the visual: "music and image are linked and woven together with all the senses, as transcendence is achieved ... it exposes the visual shadow that always accompanies the sound of music".[6] Eliot believed that the inverse of this applied to poetry, that "the music of verse is not a line by line matter, but a question of the whole poem ... a music of imagery as well as sound".[7] Although Eliot's career and publishing practice underwent substantial changes over his lifetime, this musical imagery appears as a consistent thread throughout his works, and its significance is essentially synaesthetic.

For Eliot and the poets of the early twentieth century, a new kind of musicality in poetry came from the introduction of vers libre, or free verse. Pound's Imagist tenet of "compos[ing] in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in the sequence of a metronome"[8] encouraged poets to "behave as a musician, a good musician, when dealing with that phase of your art which has exact parallels in music. The same laws govern, and you are bound by no others".[9] Without the restrictions of a presupposed prosodical form, poets were free to explore the musicality of poetry and to directly correspond the sound and rhythm with the subject, or the emotion, that the poem establishes. This preoccupation with musical elements in poetry can be traced once again to the French Symbolists, to whom Eliot and the Imagists were greatly indebted. The Symbolist search for musical correspondences reached a peak with René Ghil's theory of *instrumentisme*, which emphasised music "as a physical phenomenon ... a series of vibrations" and "collapse(d) the distinction between language and music

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[5] T.S Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets* (New York: Farrar, Strauss & Giroux, (1957) 2009), pp. 21-26.
[6] Shaw-Miller in Di Bello and Koureas, p. xvii.
[7] Eliot, *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 30.
[8] *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 3.
[9] P. 6.

through the common feature of their possible reduction to physicality",[10] as Joseph Acquisto relates in his book *French Symbolist Poetry and the Idea of Music*. Ghil eventually took this theory further, identifying "scientific correspondences among vowels, consonants, colours, orchestral instruments and emotions".[11] Ghil's doctrine was, in essence, a theory of synaesthesia. While this theory was denounced as "patently fanciful"[12] and was ridiculed by critics for its dubious scientific assertions, it has at its base the fundamental idea of synaesthetic correspondences between music and language which the Symbolists, and later Imagists and Modernists like Pound and Eliot, were interested in exploring. Metaphor is, in some ways, the common denominator in the linguistic expression of musical and poetic meaning. In his book *Metaphor and Musical Thought*, Michael Spitzer states that "to think, talk, or write about music is to engage with it in terms of something else, metaphorically".[13] Music, formed out of purely abstract elements of sound, *gains* meaning through language and metaphor. Poetry, on the other hand, *creates* meaning through language (which is both aural and visual) and through metaphor. Both arise from the intrinsic human impulse to transform perceptual and affective experience into aesthetic expression, and that they should interact with each other is inevitable.

John Adames explores Eliot's debt to the Symbolist use of music in his essay "Eliot's Ars Musica Poetica: Sources in French Symbolism". Adames suggests that, in the manner of Baudelaire, "Eliot looks to music to help him articulate his vision of an ideal poetry",[14] a poetry that could incorporate the same synaesthetic and metaphorical relationships as the language-less art form of music. Shaw-Miller speaks of the development of this conception of music as an absolute medium for truth:

> Around 1800 [when] music became addressed as absolute ... Music turned its back not only on words, language and the world, but also turned away from sight. In doing so ... music, for the first time, became paradigmatic ... for other branches of cultural endeavour ... Musicality was something to aspire to. Music became thought and truth, and listening became a way of knowing.[15]

This conception of music as a higher art form was expressed most memorably by Walter Pater when he suggested that "All art constantly aspires toward the condition of

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[10] Acquisto, p. 83.
[11] P. 1.
[12] P. 85.
[13] Michael Spitzer, *Metaphor and Musical Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2004) p. 1.
[14] John Adames, "Eliot's Ars Musica Poetica: Sources in French Symbolism", in Xiros Cooper , p. 131.
[15] Shaw-Miller in Di Bello and Koureas, p. xvii

music".[16] In "T.S Eliot and Music: An Introduction", Robert Nicolosi suggests that Eliot's affinity with music did not arise from a consideration of Pater's famous assertion, because "then poetry, to be as pure and direct as absolute music, would have to renounce any explicit externalisation of abstract ideas ... [and] Eliot does not believe this to be a desirable goal".[17] Eliot, as a student of philosophy, rejected the vague Romanticism inherent in Pater's dictum. However, in some ways the tendency of poetry toward a similar 'absolute' form was realised in Pound's Imagism which did, in effect, renounce the explicit externalisation of abstract ideas by championing the image as the supreme form of expression. So perhaps Eliot did subscribe in some way to Pater's dictum; as Michael Spitzer suggests, "our understanding of music is permeated with cross-domain mappings"[18] which, as Baudelaire and the Symbolists believed, were vehicles for ideas in themselves. Shaw-Miller goes on to note that in

> searching out a language to express the newfound status of instrumental music as artistic paradigm; a language to express music's move beyond language [and] seeking to balance this paradox ... music [is reconnected] to the discourse of the other arts and develops a strong and distinctive synaesthetic methodology.[19]

Thus Eliot's poetry, influenced by the Symbolists, can be seen as aspiring not to the condition of music itself, but to its synaesthetic and metaphoric potential.

That Eliot's modernist poetic intentions were somewhat influenced by the music (and art) of this period seems undeniable. John Xiros Cooper notes that

> Eliot seems never to have lost sight of music as the source of his poetics. "Song", "rhapsody", "prelude", "nocturne", "rag"... Tristan und Isolde and Parsifal in *The Waste Land*, jazz, sonata form, quartet, the use of choral form ... suggest as much.[20]

Eliot's enduring love of music has been established through his letters and interviews and it would be unwise to ignore its influence and presence within his literary works. Although the poetic tendency in the early years of the twentieth century was a significant move toward the bodily tactile or gustatory metaphor, the post-war period was increasingly characterised by a use of synaesthesia which engaged with the 'higher' senses of sight and hearing, and which was related to the trend toward interdisciplinarity in the arts. The centrality of music and rhythm in Eliot's works and the recurrent trope

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[16] Walter Pater, *The Renaissance: Studies in Art and Poetry* (London: Fontana/Collins, 1961 (1873)).
[17] Nicolosi, Robert J. "T.S Eliot and Music: An Introduction". *The Musical Quarterly*, Vol. 66, No. 2, Oxford University Press, 1980, p. 193.
[18] Spitzer, p. 11.
[19] Shaw-Miller in Di Bello and Koureas, p. xviii.
[20] Xiros-Cooper, p. xv.

of synaesthetic musicality which accompanies many of his most central images (his 'music of imagery') was in many ways an exploration of the synaesthetic link between the aural and the visual.

i. "Street Lamps like Fatalistic Drums": Eliot's Synaesthetic Beat

> Every street lamp that I pass
> Beats like a fatalistic drum.[21]

These lines from "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" have a magnitude which moves beyond the purely visual, and they are characteristic of Eliot's fascination with synaesthetic visual-aural transferences. The image of street lamps standing like beacons, stretching off into the night and swallowed by the darkness can be seen with an undoubtedly vivid intensity, but it is the suggestion of the beating drums which makes this phrase so foreboding and thus gives it poetic resonance. Each beat of the street lamp echoes the beating of the heart in a disconcerting reminder of mortality. The synaesthetic potentiality of this idea obviously interested Eliot as it was echoed in many of his other works. In "Preludes" the showers "beat on broken blinds and chimney pots",[22] and similarly in "Burnt Norton" from "Four Quartets", "the moment in the arbour where the rain beat"[23] creates a sense of rhythmic, ongoing destruction, a constant corrosion both of the physical objects and the poetic persona's state of mind. In "Journey of the Magi" it is the "water mill beating the darkness",[24] an action which is both physical and metaphorical. It is interesting to note here that the connotations of the word 'beat' can be applied to multiple senses: a kinaesthetic sense of movement which could also be visual (the physical action of beating), and a rhythmic repetition (a musical or metrical beat, or beating heart), which is aural. The word in itself conjures up a range of sensory associations. Eliot's use of the word also invariably refers to multiple senses, incorporating both a beating action and a beating sound, which makes his synaesthetic comparisons all the more potent. In Part I of *The Waste Land*, he writes about the place "where the sun beats / And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief / And the dry stone no sound of water".[25] The sense of hearing in this passage is, again,

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[21] T.S Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London: Faber, 1969) p. 24.
[22] P. 22.
[23] P. 173.
[24] P. 103.
[25] P. 61.

inextricably connected with both visual and emotional experience. The barrenness and horror of such an inhospitable landscape is fortified by the absence of sound in the dry stone, and the lack of relief is emphasized by the ongoing noise of the cricket and the endless beating of the sun which once again echoes the beating heart. The metaphor of the 'beating sun' has, of course, become widely accepted in our own time, and the powerful synaesthetic nature of the phrase has gone unnoticed or unremarked. This is all the more unusual because the experience itself is neither aural nor particularly kinaesthetic in nature; in fact our perceptive experience of the sun involves mainly the tactile perception of heat (thermoception) and the visual perception of light. Thus the concept of the sun 'beating' incorporates multiple sensory perceptions within a synaesthetic metaphor, but is so ingrained within the English language that it has come to seem a natural mode of description.

Eliot's obsession with rhythmic beating arose not only from his consideration of mortality and the ever-present beat of the human heart, but also as an element of musical reference. I suggest that the aural/visual 'beating of nature' represents a dominant synaesthetic metaphor, so while its presence in Eliot's work is understandable, its intrinsic connection to ideas of rhythm in musicality highlights once again the impact that musical ideas had on his poetry. Eliot said in "The Music of Poetry" that "the properties in which music concerns the poet most nearly, are the sense of rhythm and the sense of structure".[26] G. Burns Cooper discusses the primacy of rhythm in modernist poetry and vers libre in *Mysterious Music: Rhythm and Free Verse*, suggesting that

> perceiving rhythm is a subjective, even interpretive, activity ... [but] much of this perception is done subconsciously: ... the beating of the heart is urgently rhythmic ... walking, too depends on a sense of rhythm in movement ... Thus rhythm is both a lower order, somatic kind of perception and an aspect of the most complex intellectual activity ... What is indisputable ... is that rhythm itself is certainly part of our nature. If that is so, then it must be present in free verse, and even prose.[27]

In his Credo for successful modern poetry, Pound also called for an "absolute rhythm, a rhythm, that is, in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed. A man's rhythm must be interpretive, it will be, therefore, in the end,

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[26] T.S Eliot, *Selected Prose* Ed. John Hayward (Middlesex: Penguin/Faber & Faber, 1963) p. 32.
[27] G. Burns Cooper, *Mysterious Music: Rhythm and Free Verse* (California: Stanford, 1998) p. 18.

his own, uncounterfeiting, uncounterfeitable".[28] This linking of our natural, "uncounterfeitable" bodily rhythms with the rhythms of language and poetry is particularly applicable to a discussion of the synaesthetic elements in Eliot's poetry for, as Pound suggested, it is the correspondences in these rhythms that make them poetic. Pound even turned to synaesthetic metaphor (despite his warnings against it) when discussing the concept of rhythm and beat in his own writing, aligning the aural concept of the beat with both instinctive bodily rhythm and tactile perception: "The sense of the real tempo may be instinctive and incommunicable. In affairs of tempo the beat is a knife-edge and not the surface of a rolling-pin".[29]

Just as the rhythmic 'beat' of nature and time underlies much of Eliot's work, so does the rhythmic movement of the body (representing life). The beat of wings can be heard in many of Eliot's poems, again acting as an echo of the beating heart, but now assuming a life and agency that the beating sun and rain could not. In Part V of *The Waste Land*, Eliot mentions how "bats with baby faces in the violet light / Whistled, and beat their wings"[30], echoing this with the image of "your heart ... / beating obedient"[31], and then in "Ash Wednesday" he writes of how "wings are no longer wings to fly/ But merely vans to beat the air".[32] The rhythmic and aural qualities of these beating wings in Eliot's bird imagery are embellished by the sounds of birdsong, the significance of which I will discuss shortly. There is a strong focus on time and rhythmic progression in *Four Quartets* which is expressed in synaesthetic terms that echo the constant beating associated with nature in his earlier works. This can be seen in lines such as "the sleepy rhythm of a hundred hours",[33] "Under the oppression of the silent fog / The tolling bell / Measures time",[34] and "time and the bell have buried the day"[35] which echo the "Tolling reminiscent bells, that kept the hours"[36] from *The Waste Land*. Rhythm in *Four Quartets* is also inextricable from life and the senses:

> His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,

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[28] *Essays of Ezra Pound*, p. 9.
[29] Schafer, R. Murray (ed.) *Ezra Pound and Music: The Complete Criticism.* (London: Faber, 1978) p. 471.
[30] *Eliot Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 73.
[31] P. 74.
[32] P. 90.
[33] P. 188.
[34] P. 185.
[35] P. 174.
[36] Part V, p. 73

In the rank ailanthus of the April dooryard,
In the smell of grapes on the autumn table,
And the evening circle in the winter gaslight.[37]

Here, the synaesthetic melange of sensory experience is held together by the rhythm of time, 'a time / Older than the time of chronometers"[38] that binds us to life, just as the rhythmic beating of our hearts does.

For Eliot, humans are always "keeping time, / Keeping the rhythm in their dancing / As in their living"[39] ("East Coker"). In "Burnt Norton", it is the intrinsic rhythms of the body, the "dance along the artery / The circulation of the lymph"[40] that keep us alive; rhythm is, in effect, life itself. Rhythm is certainly as central to the *Four Quartets* as the question of time, and they are intrinsic to each other. George Williamson suggests that in Eliot's poetry the image of the river, "the 'strong brown god' ... is time, and his rhythm runs through the nursery and the Missouri scene from spring to winter ... for the river is man's time, the microcosmic rhythm of life, but the sea is the earth's time, the macrocosmic rhythm of eternity; both are frontiers".[41] In this metaphor, time is but a tributary flowing unceasingly into the vastness of eternity: "we cannot think of a time that is oceanless / Or of an ocean not littered with wastage"[42] ("The Dry Salvages"). The water/ocean image was also central to Eliot's work, and I will discuss its synaesthetic significance in further detail shortly. His synaesthetic depictions of nature are interspersed with the rhythm of flowing water; like the beating of the sun, the natural rhythm of the tides and waves is analogous to the rhythm of life.

ii. "The Unheard Music": Eliot's Hidden Music

In his essay, "The Music of The Waste Land", Paul Chancellor suggests that the poem is full of "a kind of musicality not heard by the ear ... literally unheard music ... the unheard music of symbol play is combined with a sensitively corresponding aural

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[37] P. 184.
[38] P. 185.
[39] P. 178.
[40] P. 172.
[41] Williamson, George. *A Reader's Guide to T. S Eliot*. (London: Thames & Hudson, 1955) p. 223.
[42] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 186.

music of words".[43] The persistence of music in Eliot's poems can be seen immediately in their titles, just as it can be heard by reading them, or seen in analyses of their structure and prosody. It is not surprising, therefore, that Eliot should have incorporated musical references into his imagery, or that this use of imagery reflects musical structures. Eliot's references to music are quite often characterised by adjectives of suppression; the music is not so much heard outright as hidden, heard in snatches or mingled with other sounds. Prufrock hears "voices dying with dying fall / Beneath the music from a farther room"[44], and this Shakespearean reference is echoed again in "Portrait of a Lady": "this music is successful with a 'dying fall' / Now that we talk of dying".[45] The dying or fading strains of music that infiltrate Eliot's poetic worlds seem to act in the same manner as the 'beating' of nature; namely, they serve as ephemeral aural reminders of the transience of human existence. Leonard Unger discusses Eliot's music imagery in his book *T.S Eliot: Moments and Patterns*, suggesting that Eliot "present[s] music as an unwelcome invasion of awareness"[46], bringing the persona back into the world of human relations. Like the fatalistic beat of his streetlamps, Eliot's music intrudes upon romantic idealism and serves as a reminder of human inadequacy: it is "seize[d]/ to body forth our own vacuity"[47], as the poet/persona in "Conversation Galante" informs us, but it also hints at the possibility of an eternal life free from petty human miseries.

"Portrait of a Lady" is one of Eliot's most musically referential poems. Here, music is initially established as being connected with the tactile human body; the persona speaks of going to "hear the latest Pole / Transmit the preludes, through his hair and finger-tips", and of "the bloom / that is rubbed and questioned in the concert room".[48] The music then manifests itself physically within the narrator's body as pain: "Inside my brain a dull tom-tom begins / Absurdly hammering a prelude of its own".[49] The rhythmic insistence of the music becomes the beat of blood pulsing through the

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[43] Chancellor, Paul. "The Music of 'The Waste Land'". *Comparative Literature Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 1, Penn State University Press, 1969, pp. 24-31.
[44] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 14.
[45] P. 21.
[46] Unger, Leonard. *T.S Eliot: Moments and Patterns*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1956) p. 172.
[47] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 33.
[48] P. 18.
[49] P. 19

brain, and each is as inescapable as the other. The conception of music as a physically felt or sensed entity can be seen throughout the poem. The visual, aural and tactile merging of the "attenuated tones of violins / Mingled with remote cornets"[50] that constantly intrudes upon the conversation of the friends seems to infect the mind of the narrator, so much so that a woman's voice eventually becomes "the insistent out-of-tune / Of a broken violin".[51] This synaesthetic visual-aural-tactile link is reiterated at the end of the poem by mention of the art-form to which these three senses are most intrinsic, dance ("I must borrow every changing shape / To find expression ... dance, dance / Like a dancing bear"[52]). Again, through these images of music and dance, rhythm is centralised as a reminder of time and mortality.

"Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" both establish musical references immediately with their titles, yet both are curiously devoid of musical images aside from the beat of the fatalistic drum. John Xiros Cooper writes that

> the rhapsody was one of a number of free forms of music ... in which the display of a performer's emotional intensity ... a revelation of personality, was as much the purpose of the musical occasion as the making of music for its own sake ... if we read "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" in this context, we see that the central issue that the text raises is the matter of the speaker, of the poem's "I" and its negotiations with things, with others and with itself.[53]

For Xiros Cooper, the musical significance of this poem comes only from its whole, and not its parts. He suggests that

> meanings are not constellated around a psychologically constructed subjectivity but are like the chords and notes of a musical composition that has no key centre, no chromatic formula of completion ... the poem simply makes audible the dissonance, which is always already there, at the core of an old harmony.[54]

Thus, Eliot's images invoke the dissonance of modern life rather than simply rhapsodising on its harmonies, in the way that the Romantic poets might have done. "Preludes" can be read in the same way, as Xiros Cooper notes:

> "Preludes" is working toward the status of what is sometimes misleadingly called "atonality" ... the poem's bleakness and its discordant effects are as much a part of the prelude idea ... as Chopin's emotionally motivated pacing, the sudden contrasts and flights,

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[50] P. 18
[51] P.19
[52] P. 21.
[53] Xiros Cooper, pp. 93-95.
[54] P. 96.

> even the dissonances [but where these] are held together musically by the inevitable return of the dominant ... Eliot's poem is the antitype[55].

Its images are offered as separate entities; not held together by an idea, but presented in themselves as significant, as "the thousand sordid images / Of which your soul was constituted"[56] ("Preludes"). This is the "music of imagery" that Eliot talks about; the images themselves form chords and cadences, dissonances and harmonies in what is, in effect, a metaphorical transaction. This musical interplay of images is essentially synaesthetic, a fact which Chancellor comments on in passing within the appending notes of his essay: "The more complex phenomenon of synaesthesia is evident ... in many places throughout the poem. The rich colour in the visual imagery here enhances - even seems to transfer to - the sound as it is read".[57] The importance of this music of images in Eliot's work cannot be underestimated, and by looking at Eliot's recurrent images in light of this synaesthetic concept it may be possible to gain a greater understanding of his work in general.

5.2 The Sounds of Images

The recurring images in Eliot's poetry have been discussed many times: the natural imagery of the rose-garden and the sea, the fragmented arms, hands, eyes and hair of human bodies, the visions of urban decay enveloped in smoke or fog, among others, have all been recognised and thoroughly dissected by critics. Genevieve Foster, in "The Archetypal Imagery of T.S Eliot", employs the Jungian term 'primordial image' to a discussion of Eliot's poetry, suggesting that "the poet's sense ... contains the inherited potentiality of mental images that are the psychic counterpart of the instincts".[58] She quotes Jung's suggestion of a "possibility ... which from primordial time has been handed down to us in the definite form of mnemic images ... Recoiling from the unsatisfying present the yearning of the artist reaches out to that primordial image in the unconscious which is best fitted to compensate the insufficiency and one-sidedness of

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[55] Pp. 100-101.
[56] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 23.
[57] Chancellor, Notes 1, p. 32.
[58] Genevieve W. Foster, "The Archetypal Imagery of T. S Eliot". *PMLA*, Vol. 60, No. 2. Modern Language Assocation, 1945, p. 567.

the spirit of the age".[59] This idea of primordial imagery is particularly relevant to synaesthesia in light of research on neonatal synaesthesia and the "sensory primordial soup" (as Cretien Van Campen put it) of early perception.[60] In this respect, it could be suggested that these primordial images, arising as they do from the earliest preconscious parts of our brains, are essentially synaesthetic in nature. While Eliot's visual imagery is certainly prominent in his work, he often presents his images concurrently with other senses; most commonly, as I have previously suggested, with reference to sound and/or music. The synaesthetic coupling of the visual and the aural is especially evident in Eliot's early poems, and it often serves to emphasise the recurrent issues of human inadequacy and fallibility which plague his poetic personas.

i. "Till human voices wake us, and we drown": Songs of the Ocean

The image of the ocean in Eliot's poetry is, as I have already mentioned, a metaphoric analogy for time and eternity, and as such it is also continually associated with sound. Just as the rhythm and beat of the human heart manifests itself in natural images such as the 'beating sun', so the image of the ocean becomes an insistent, acoustic reminder of the echoing chasm of eternity, like the "voice descanting (though not to the ear, / The murmuring shell of time, and not in any language)"[61] from "The Dry Salvages". In Eliot's early poems, the ocean image represents the dichotomous opposite of the urban world, and this is reflected mainly through sound. In these poems, the irritating sounds of human indecision and doubt are synaesthetically reflected onto the urban landscape: in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night", the sputtering, muttering street lamps voice the same blustering hesitation as the "woman/ who hesitates toward you in the light of the door"[62], and J. Alfred Prufrock similarly struggles to escape the "muttering retreats"[63] and the "streets that follow like a tedious argument"[64] of this synaesthetic reciprocation. Overwhelmed by the aural onslaught, Prufrock longs instead for the vacant hush of primordial brainlessness, for an existence as "a pair of ragged

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[59] Jung quoted in Foster, pp. 567-568.
[60] Van Campen, p. 29.
[61] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 188.
[62] P. 24.
[63] P. 13
[64] P.13.

claws/ scuttling across the floors of silent seas".[65] Later in the poem this idea is connected with sound in the form of music, which again represents an escape from the harsh sounds of reality. Walking on the beach, Prufrock hears in the singing of the mermaids the vague promise of peace, an escape from the brutal realisation of his own inconsequential existence. But he knows that he is excluded from this, just as he is excluded from their song: "I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each. / I do not think that they will sing to me".[66] George Williamson writes:

> The imagery of the sea, begun with "oyster-shells" again emerges at this point ... [this] is the imagery of his suppressed self .. .the verse takes on a lyric or singing character where it has been talking verse before ... this watery, floating imagery involves the relaxation of all effort, offers a submerged fulfilment ... ended with the intrusion of reality, which drowns the inner life.[67]

Although he longs for silent seas, Prufrock realises that we cannot escape the insistent voice of our humanity, and we are condemned to linger "in the chambers of the sea ... Till human voices wake us, and we drown".[68] Like the insistent beat of nature, the ocean as an image provides a dichotomous paradox of both sound and silence. As opposed to the mutterings of the street-lamps in the urban world, the natural music of the ocean offers the suggestion of escape; a silencing of human doubt and insecurity which Prufrock will never be able to experience.

The coupling of sound with the image of the sea is repeated in "Mr Apollinax":

> His laughter was submarine and profound
> Like the old man of the sea's
> Hidden under coral islands
> Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence
> Dropping from fingers of surf.[69]

The line immediately before this extract describes Mr Apollinax "laugh(ing) like an irresponsible foetus"[70], and the image of the foetus is directly echoed by the image of the drowned men drifting, enclosed in the womb-like silence of the sea. Here, the synaesthetic associations of 'green silence' are again connected with human mortality. The sound of the human (laughter) is quelled only prior to birth or after death, which

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[65] P. 15.
[66] P. 16. Note the similarity of this image to the image of "an old crab with barnacles on his back" in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night", which shows that the juxtaposition between the tedious, noisy world of modern urbanity and the silent, primordial world of nature was a recurrent one in Eliot's poetry.
[67] Williamson, p. 65.
[68] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 17.
[69] P. 31.
[70] P. 31.

suggests peace can only be found in the absence of the consciousness of living. The connection is repeated in "Burbank with a Baedaker: Bleistein with a Cigar": "Defunctive music under sea / Passed seaward with the passing bell"[71]. The music of the passing bells has been said[72] to allude to Owen's "passing bells for those who die like cattle"[73] in "Anthem for Doomed Youth": a reference which illuminates the elegiac aspects of the metaphor, with its intimations of mortality, all the more potently.

In "Sweeney Erect"[74], the sea is "painted" as the desolate, unchanging background of primitive history, against which the primordial "silhouette / of Sweeney straddled in the sun" is thrown into sharp relief. In this image, the sea is again accompanied by sound; it snarls and yelps like a vicious prehistoric creature. Eliot, reducing modern humans to "withered root of knots of hair / Slitted below and gashed with eyes, / This oval O cropped out with teeth", transfers their agency to nature; to the snarling sea, the groaning rocks and the insurgent gales. These sounds are then echoed back by the "shriek" of the "epileptic on the bed", a shriek which carries both disturbing and erotic undertones. The character of Mrs Turner points out what Eliot has already established (with his imagery of rising steam, jack-knifing thighs and the clawing of a pillow slip): that this "hysteria / Might be easily misunderstood" as something more erotic and primal. Like Prufrock's longing for "ragged claws", the primordial image is powerfully juxtaposed with the modern in order to establish the fallacy of ideas of progress and innovation; even the seas have more agency over the earth than us, carving out the "cavernous waste shore" and "anfractuous rocks" over millennia while we, "pink from nape to base" like Sweeney, continue to be born, procreate and die. This same idea is continued in "Sweeney among the Nightingales"[75], where Sweeney is again emblematic of a primordial existence. The poem begins by establishing "apeneck Sweeney" as an animalistic figure, likening him to apes, giraffes and zebras, and juxtaposing these images against the vast expanse of nature and its implicit reminder of mortality: "The circles of the stormy moon / Slide westward toward the River Plate / Death and the Raven drift above". As in "Sweeney Erect", this imagery of primordial nature is

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[71] P. 40.
[72] T.S Eliot, *The Waste Land, Prufrock and other Observations* Ed. Valden Madsen (New York: Mud Puddle Books, 2007) p. 63.
[73] *Poems of Wilfred Owen*, 76.
[74] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, pp. 42-43.
[75] P. 56.

balanced with images of modernity, and characters who are mocked for their false assumptions of the superiority of modern life are reduced to "silent vertebrate[s]" with "murderous paws". The ocean in this poem is once again intrinsically aligned with the silence which represents death: "hushed [are] the shrunken seas". Eliot's synaesthetic treatment of the recurring image of the ocean and its aural significance, is implicitly connected with his exploration of mortality and the futility of modern existence.

ii. The Musical Waste Land

Chancellor suggests that "the reader of *The Waste Land* will move more readily toward its meaning if he approaches it *musicalement*- as he would listen to music and follow it"[76]. The musicality of this poem as whole, existing within its structure, rhythm and patterns, has been noted by a number of critics, including Chancellor. Yet a closer examination of the intricacies of the poem reveals the intrinsic link that Eliot draws between music and ocean imagery; again, the image of the ocean is repeated throughout *The Waste Land* in a variety of forms and allusions, its reappearance similar to a musical leitmotif. Chancellor suggests that such poetic 'leitmotifs' are "woven into the vast musical web of the work as consciously-placed points of reference"[77] and are used by Eliot in the same way they are used by Wagner:

> the literary allusions of *The Waste Land* are remarkably like Wagner's leitmotifs ... They too establish definite points of reference (and like the musical motifs are often of lyric interest themselves) ... woven into the poem as they are, like Wagner's leitmotifs they are also an integral part of its musical structure.[78]

In Part I "The Burial of the Dead", the first reference to the sea is obscured by foreign language: "Oed' und leer das Meer" ["desolate and empty the sea"].[79] It remains an elusive entity, not just for the poet or his poetic persona, but for the reader who must translate the line. Echoing the waste land of the title, this primordial image of the ocean refers, as Genevieve Foster suggests, to "earth-water symbolism ... [where] water [stands] for the psychological or spiritual values of the unconscious".[80] Thus, the implication of this oceanic image of emptiness is that our unconscious self, much like

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[76] Chancellor, p. 29.
[77] P. 28.
[78] P. 28.
[79] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 62.
[80] Foster, p. 570.

the conscious world, is also barren and desolate. Again, there is an implicit connection to music here as the line comes from Wagner's opera *Tristan und Isolde*. Margaret Dana's essay on the influence of Wagner in *The Waste Land* suggests that "the kind of music Wagner wrote is vital to its whole structure ... the transitions between images and mood resemble musical shifts in tone, exercises in a counterpoint of feelings and ideas".[81] The line, then, works on two musical levels: as a direct reference to Wagner's opera and as an image of the ocean that functions as a Wagnerian 'leitmotif' in the structure of the poem. The ocean image, with all its allusions and associations, is essential to the contrapuntal nature of the poem; it forms a counterpoint of ideas, at times harmonious and at times dissonant.

The image of the drowned Phoenician Sailor and the fear of death by water are introduced immediately after the Wagnerian reference, and both return periodically throughout the poem. The drowning motif here contains echoes of the drowning in Prufrock, which is caused by the incessant sound of human voices. Its reprisal in "Death by Water", reiterates the same conception of death as a silencing of incessant sound: "Phlebas the Phoenician, a fortnight dead, / Forgot the deep cry of gulls", as "A current under sea / Picked his bones in whispers".[82] Death brings silence and an escape from the sounds of living that we hear so consistently throughout Eliot's poems; it is in life (and noise) that we are drowning, not in death. Eliot reinforces this connection by weaving the image of drowning throughout the poem, so that it too functions as a musical, Wagnerian leitmotif. For example, the line "the pearls that were his eyes" echoes Ariel's famous song from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange.
> Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell (I, ii, 400-406).[83]

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[81] Margaret E. Dana, "Orchestrating The Waste Land: Wagner, Leitmotiv, and the Play of Passion" in Xiros Cooper, p. 272.
[82] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 71.
[83] Stephen Greenblatt (ed.) *The Norton Anthology of Shakespeare*, Second Edition. (London: W.W Norton, 2008 (1997)) p. 3076.

This same reference is repeated in "A Game of Chess" ("I remember / Those were the pearls that were his eyes"[84]), and similarly in "The Fire Sermon" ("This music crept by me upon the waters") which again refers directly to Ferdinand's lines in Shakespeare's play:

> This music crept by me upon the waters,
> Allaying both their fury and my passion
> With its sweet air; thence have I followed it,
> Or it hath drawn me rather (I, ii, 395-398).[85]

The image of the ocean and drowning is intrinsically connected with music here, but the implication is one of calmness and quiet; faint snatches of Ariel's song can be heard creeping by upon the numerous waters that constitute the waste land of the poet's journey. Dana suggests that "the Tempest line seems to be for Eliot a metaphor for the mysterious poetic process itself, likening it to a sea change that occurs too deep in the mind to be studied consciously ... the line surfaces at unexpected moments".[86] The multiple levels of meaning within this reference again suggest the "counterpoint of feelings and ideas"[87] that Dana talks about; the reference itself becomes another form of musical leitmotif in the poem.

In Part V, "What the Thunder Said", Eliot continues to explore the concept that he first introduced in Prufrock: the synaesthetic reflection of human sound on images of nature. Part V is haunted by the raucous sounds of living: shouting and crying, sneering and snarling, murmurs, singing, whistling, bells, cocks crowing and the voice of the thunder. Just as the rhythmic 'beat' of nature underlies much of Eliot's work, so does the persistent sound of living and the desire for silence in death. It is fitting, therefore, that although there are references to water and sound in "What the Thunder Said", the only reference to the ocean itself is "The sea was calm"[88], which suggests silence once again. The fear of death by drowning, which correlated to a fear of silence, has finally been assuaged, and after journeying through the wasteland, the poet has no further reason to "fear death by water". Here, the calm sea finally offers the silence of death as an alternative to the persistent noise of living in a wasted modern world; it offers a chance for salvation and redemption, or at the very least, escape.

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[84] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 65.
[85] *Norton Anthology of Shakespeare*, p. 3076.
[86] Dana in Xiros Cooper, p. 286.
[87] P. 272.
[88] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays* p. 74.

iii. Four Quartets

Although written more than a decade after *The Waste Land*, Eliot's *Four Quartets* are also continually haunted by sound reflected synaesthetically onto image. "Burnt Norton", the first of the quartets, starts out with faint echoes which slowly grow into the sounds of laughter and birdsong, before rising in a gradual crescendo from the mezzo-piano "twittering world"[89] to the fortissimo of "shrieking voices/ Scolding, mocking ... chattering", a world "Attacked by voices of temptation ... / the loud lament".[90] In the final lines of the poem there is a sudden decrescendo, and the pianissimo of "hidden laughter" again becomes the only sound heard in "sad time / Stretching before and after"[91]. Interestingly, the musical dynamics of "Burnt Norton" are also accompanied by a similar shift in light, which starts off bright, "glitter(ing) out of heart of light".[92] It then begins to fade from "light upon the figured leaf" to "a white light still and moving", before slowly diminishing to "a dim light", "only a flicker" and then "the darkness", "internal darkness", a "black cloud".[93] Then, just as the sounds of the poem undergo a sudden decrescendo in the final lines of the poem, the light comes back, "sudden in a shaft of sunlight".[94] The growing sound is mirrored by the failing light; as the ceaseless hum of the world grows louder, so the light of salvation grows dimmer. Here, darkness becomes "the crying shadow", the opposite of "Looking into the heart of light, the silence"[95] from *The Waste Land*. This synaesthetic coupling is repeated throughout the rest of the *Four Quartets*. In "East Coker" Part I the visual/aural link of light and silence is enhanced by an added tactile sense of heat: "the electric heat ... / In a warm haze the sultry light / Is absorbed ... / The dahlias sleep in the empty silence"[96] and "another day / Prepares for heat and silence". This is then inverted into a correlation between darkness, sound and coldness in Part II, with "O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark ... / cold the sense ... / A hollow rumble of wings, a movement of darkness on darkness"[97] which is reiterated in the final lines of Part V:

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[89] P. 174.
[90] P. 175.
[91] P. 176.
[92] P. 172.
[93] Pp. 172-174.
[94] P. 176.
[95] P. 62.
[96] P. 177.
[97] P. 180.

"the dark cold and the empty desolation, / The wave cry, the wind cry".[98] While the coupling of silence and light brings heat in *Four Quartets*, the coupling of noise and darkness invariably brings coldness.

In "The Dry Salvages" Eliot brings back the image of the sea, associating it now with human sound rather than music or silence. Part I suggests "The sea is all around us ... / The sea has many voices".[99] In fact, many of the sea's voices are echoes of those we have heard before: the "sea howl" and "sea yelp" echo those in "Sweeney Erect", and the "horseshoe crab" in "pools where it offers to our curiosity / The more delicate algae and the sea anemone" is an echo of the ragged claws in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and the barnacled crab of "Rhapsody on a Windy Night". Even the "tolling bell" that "clangs" is an echo of the passing bells in "Burbank with a Baedaker: Bleistein with a Cigar", and the tolling bells from *The Waste Land*. These voices of the sea, dredged up from past poems like the detritus tossed up on a beach, are emblematic in this poem of the fragments of our lives which are ceaselessly thrown up by memory. This concept, first introduced by Eliot in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" ("the memory throws up high and dry / A crowd of twisted things; / A twisted branch upon the beach"[100]) was reiterated in *The Waste Land*, where "A heap of broken images" represent "these fragments I have shored against my ruins".[101] In "The Dry Salvages", the vastness and constant flux of the ocean is, like that of the river, a metaphor for the constant, irreversible momentum of passing time. Eliot asks "Where is there an end to the drifting wreckage ...?" but the answer is "There is no end, but ... / further days and hours ... / Years of living among the wreckage".[102] The only end comes in death; the only place "the sound of the sea bell's / Perpetual Angelus"[103] cannot reach. In a reflection of this, the image of the sea only reappears once in the rest of *Four Quartets*, in the very final lines of the poem: "The voice of the hidden waterfall / And the children in the apple-tree / Not known, because not looked for / But heard, half-heard, in the stillness / Between two waves of the sea".[104] Once again, the sounds of living and the silence of death are implicit in this image. The voices of the sea persist, half-heard, and

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[98] P. 183.
[99] P. 185.
[100] P. 24.
[101] P. 75.
[102] P. 185.
[103] P. 189.
[104] P. 198.

will continue to haunt us until "the end of all our exploring": the final drowning which will bring us to total silence.

5.3 Other Leitmotifs

Just as he connected the image of the ocean to sound by a web of complex, interrelated ideas and allusions, Eliot repeated this trait with other synaesthetic metaphors throughout his poems. Many of these synaesthetic metaphors continue to have an aural-visual significance, and they are often used in the explication of philosophical concepts arising out of Eliot's intellectual interests. However, they also incorporate various tactile elements which reflect the trend toward synaesthetic tactile metaphors in the early twentieth century. Like the image of the ocean many of these metaphors reappear as a form of Wagnerian leitmotif, reflecting the fundamental importance of musical ideas to Eliot's poetry and working to create the 'music of imagery' that he wished to achieve.

i. "The bones sang chirping": Birdsong and Singing Bones

Among the various strains of music heard in Eliot's poetry, the intermittent sounds of birdsong appear consistently. In "Eliot's Ars Musica Poetica", John Adames suggests that "the music of bird song ... [functions] as a metaphor for various states of the human soul"[105], and is emblematic of "the "twittering" quotidian world of distraction ... (in which) salvation ... is too often precluded by the constant, tremulous chatter of humanity".[106] Thus, the leitmotif of birdsong in Eliot functions in a similar way to the 'beating' of nature (which, as I noted, included the beating of bird wings) and the musical voices of the ocean; it is a consistent reminder of our mortality and our lack of agency in controlling our own fate. It makes sense then, that birdsong is also expressed in synaesthetic terms in Eliot's poetry. The final lines in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales" form a synaesthetic connection: "The nightingales are singing near ... / And let their liquid siftings fall / To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud".[107] Although

[105] John Adames, "Eliot's Ars Musica Poetica" in Xiros Cooper, p. 140.
[106] P. 140.
[107] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 57.

Eliot is ostensibly referring to the nightingales' droppings[108] there remains an ambiguous suggestion that the 'liquid siftings' refer synaesthetically to the nightingale song.[109] The voice of the nightingale returns throughout many of Eliot's poems, appearing as an allusion to Ovid's tragic tale of Tereus and Philomela which suggests the possibility of the more sinister liquid: one which occurs in Ovid's work in the image of "a dove, with feathers dripping blood".[110] George Williamson (*The Reader's Guide to T.S Eliot*) notes the blood imagery of the poem, which "emerges with the fruit offering, for its colour runs from the grapes through the wisteria and the Sacred Heart to the bloody wood" and suggests that "the 'liquid siftings' of the nightingales ... pass from song to stain".[111] The return of the nightingales in Part III of *The Waste Land* echoes this violence, as their "twit twit twit ... [is] So rudely forc'd".[112]

The synaesthetic suggestion of birdsong as liquid can also be found in Part V of *The Waste Land*, "where the hermit-thrush sings in the pine trees / Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop",[113] which Eliot refers to in his notes as "water-dripping song".[114] In Part IV of "Ash Wednesday", where "the fountain sprang up and the bird sang down",[115] the implicit connection of birdsong with falling water is once again suggested. In "Marina", the synaesthetic qualities of birdsong are further enhanced by a melding of smell and sight, where the "scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog / What images return ... A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog".[116] Similarly, in one of Eliot's minor poems "Landscapes, Part V: Cape Ann", the "palaver" of birdsong overtakes the poem, but the sounds are experienced through taste. The cacophony of multitudinous birdsong ("song-sparrow ... vesper-sparrow ... the goldfinch at noon ... the Blackburnian warbler ... the shrill whistle ... of the quail ... the water-thrush ... the purple martin") is "delectable. Sweet sweet sweet", and the repetition emphasises the gustatory metaphor.[117] The leitmotif of synaesthetic birdsong

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[108] He substituted the word "siftings" for "droppings" in a revised draft. Madsen, p. 88.
[109] Williamson also notes this, p. 99.
[110] Ovid. *Metamorphoses.* (Book 6, lines 422-674) Tr. A. D. Melville. The World's Classics. (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1986) pp. 134-42.
[111] Williamson, p. 99.
[112] Eliot, *Complete Poems and Plays*, p. 68.
[113] P. 73.
[114] P. 79.
[115] P. 95.
[116] P. 109.
[117] P. 142.

reappears throughout Eliot's poetry as a reminder of mortality, its music sweet but ultimately deceptive. The elusive sound of the bird calling in the garden echoes throughout *Four Quartets*, and Eliot asks "shall we follow / The deception of the thrush?"[118] Yet it is the sound of the thrush that follows us, rather than we who follow it; it is we who are bound to "this twittering world".

The synaesthetic connections that Eliot seems to draw between water and birdsong are mirrored in another curious recurring image: singing bones. Where birdsong, a reminder of the 'twittering' mortal world of humanity, is synaesthetically (and deceptively) linked to the emblem of life-giving water, bones seem to take on an opposing function. Although consistently allied with a descriptive quality of dryness, the reverse of the 'liquid' song of the birds, the bones nevertheless have a song of their own. This is most obvious in *Ash Wednesday* Part II, where "the bones (which were already dry) said chirping", "the bones sang chirping" and "under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining".[119] These dry, singing bones are almost like the counterparts of the live birds from which they may once have come; they too are chirping constant reminders of the inevitability of death. In *The Waste Land,* Part II when the narrator says "I think we are in rats' alley / Where the dead men lost their bones. / What is that noise?"[120], what she hears is the sound of the bones calling her back to the earth, back to the "handful of dust" from whence she came. The sounds of the bones continue to haunt Part III ("at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of bones" and "bones cast in a little low dry garret, / Rattled by the rat's foot"[121]) and Part IV sees the ocean current pick the sailor's bones in "whispers". The song of the bones is also echoed by the dead, dry grass of Part V, an image which suggests that even the bones of the earth are singing: "the dry grass singing ... where a hermit-thrush sings", "the grass is singing / Over the tumbled graves ... dry bones can harm no one".[122] These dry voices of death also appear in "The Hollow Men": "Our dried voices, when / We whisper together ... As wind in dry grass / Or rats' feet over broken glass / In our dry cellar".[123] Interestingly, however, in *Four Quartets* the song of the bones is transformed

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[118] P. 171.
[119] P. 92.
[120] P. 65.
[121] P. 67.
[122] P. 74.
[123] P. 83.

into a song of prayer: “the prayer of the bone on the beach”, “the bone’s prayer to Death its God”[124], which perhaps suggests that our longing for redemption is in fact a longing for death. As Adames noted though, this form of salvation is inevitably precluded by the twittering world of humanity.

ii. “The laceration of laughter”: Visceral Laughter

Eliot’s synaesthetic aural associations are continued in another curious metaphor, which in some ways corresponds to the synaesthetic tactility of the Imagist and war poets: viscerally felt laughter. He expresses this connection most palpably in the prose-poem “Hysteria”, part of the Prufrock collection of 1917. The passage reads:

> As she laughed I was aware of becoming involved in her laughter and being part of it, until her teeth were only accidental stars with a talent for squad-drill. I was drawn in by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles ... I decided that if the shaking of her breasts could be stopped, some of the fragments of the afternoon might be collected, and I concentrated my attention with careful subtlety to this end.[125]

The synaesthetic intimacy of this laughter is such that it is felt physically by the narrator, who is drawn in, inhaled and bruised by the sound. Eliot here is exploring the concept of embarrassment and social propriety. The narrator, surely appalled by the unnecessary hysteria of his female companion, feels it as acutely and intimately as a physical sensation. Embarrassment and anxiety are, in fact, often expressed physically (e.g. blushing, nervous tics or fingernail biting) and Eliot expresses this sense of anxiety in his poems by reference to tactility. For example, Prufrock feels his social/sexual anxiety as a physical sense of being “pinned and wriggling on a wall”[126], and the narrator of “Portrait of a Lady” feels a “slight sensation of being ill at ease ... as if I had mounted on my hands and knees”.[127] The physical expression of anxiety, linked with aurality, is also commonly connected with issues of gender-related sexual apprehension. “Preludes” ends with the sound of laughter, which is connected with both physicality and the feminine: “Wipe your hand across your mouth and laugh; / The worlds revolve

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[124] P. 185.
[125] P. 32.
[126] P. 14.
[127] P. 20.

like ancient women / Gathering fuel in vacant lots".[128] The 'you' in "Preludes" is specifically identified as female ("You curled the papers from your hair"[129]), and the female laugh here is seen as dismissive and vacuous when juxtaposed with the image of the ancient woman toiling fruitlessly against ravaging time. The preludes of morning and evening in this poem also echo Chopin's preludes in "Portrait of a Lady", which were used to suggest the inanity of a female response to art ("So intimate, this Chopin, that I think his soul / Should be resurrected only among friends"[130]). This idea was also hinted at in "Prufrock" ("In the room the women come and go / Talking of Michelangelo"[131]). All three poems reveal the "false note" in the female, connecting it intrinsically with aurality and tactility. The female laugh, felt as a tactile perception, is an audible expression of female vacuity: as the narrator says in "Conversation Galante", "You madam, are the eternal humorist".[132] It is also, however, a reflection of the misogynistic sexual anxiety of the male poetic persona.

In "Hysteria", the social and sexual anxieties of the other Prufrock poems are re-established through the synaesthetic reference to female laughter; the narrator feels that if he can only stop "the shaking of her breasts" then he may be able to regain both his self-possession and "the fragments of the afternoon".[133] In "Mr Appolinax" male laughter is associated with femininity through images of teacups and female reproductivity: "His laughter tinkled among the teacups ... He laughed like an irresponsible foetus".[134] Here, the sound of laughter is again located physically, either outside the body (among the teacups) or inside the body (as in a foetus). The same metaphor of the synaesthetic physicality of aural laughter is repeated in *The Waste Land*, with "at my back in a cold blast I hear / The rattle of the bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear",[135] and in "Marina": "whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet / Under sleep, where all the waters meet".[136] Laughter in the first of the *Four Quartets* is linked to the images of the garden and birdsong, and is

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[128] P. 23.
[129] P. 23.
[130] P. 19
[131] P. 13.
[132] P. 33.
[133] P. 32.
[134] P. 31.
[135] P. 67.
[136] P. 109.

characterised (like the music of the poem) as hidden or unseen: "Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children, / Hidden excitedly, containing laughter"[137] and "Even while the dust moves / There rises the hidden laughter / Of children in the foliage".[138] Like Eliot's hidden music, this hidden laughter is essentially synaesthetic, taking on visual implications. However the laughter also takes on bodily implications here too; it is contained within the children as a bodily entity, just as it is in the experience of the narrator of "Hysteria". The childish laughter begins to be transformed throughout the poem, appearing within the dancers, who, "rustically solemn or in rustic laughter / Lifting heavy feet",[139] embody the rhythm of living, and then reappearing again in a darker version of the earlier lines, as "laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy ... pointing to the agony / Of death and birth".[140] Later, the laughter is literally transferred to the earth, becoming physically part of the garden itself ("the parched eviscerate soil / Gapes at the vanity of toil, / Laughs without mirth"[141]), before it becomes part of the human body, and is felt again as physical pain: "the laceration / Of laughter".[142] The return of this suggestion of the bruising physical pain of laughter, as seen in "Hysteria", exemplifies the cyclical and contrapuntal patterns of Eliot's poetry.

To conclude, Eliot sought to convey the chaos of the changing world and all its consequent effects through the realities of the senses. In doing so, he turned to a particularly potent form of metaphorical expression: synaesthetic metaphor. The bodily synaesthetic focus of the earlier poets, while still present in some ways, was augmented by a more aesthetic use of synaesthetic metaphor intrinsically connected with visuality and aurality. This trend toward visuality and aurality in synaesthetic metaphor was inevitably influenced by the ideas being explored in other areas of the Arts. In Eliot's poetry, this interdisciplinarity can be seen most evidently through his close engagement with music and Modernist musical ideas. As I have shown, Eliot's imagery is accompanied by an implicitly synaesthetic musicality which seeks to recall the intricacies of our own perception. His synaesthetic images often operate as a form of Wagnerian leitmotif, reappearing throughout his poetry and bringing certain sensory

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[137] P. 172.
[138] P. 176.
[139] P. 178.
[140] P. 180.
[141] P. 193.
[142] P. 194.

associations which create layers of meaning. Thus, the synaesthetic significance of Eliot's poetry has a double function; it works in an individualised way, as seen in the aural-visual-tactile metaphors of the beating sun, the music of the ocean, liquid birdsong and singing bones, and visceral laughter, but also in an overall manner, creating the 'music of imagery' which Eliot talked about. While his poetry incorporates synaesthetic metaphors which echo those of the Imagist and WWI poets (particularly the use of touch as a synaesthetic sense), it also involves a more aesthetic and interdisciplinary aural-visual interaction which is frequently used to address philosophical ideas of mortality and modern social existence. As one of the most influential poets of the early twentieth century period, T.S Eliot had a profound effect on the progression of modern poetry and his use of synaesthesia reflects his poetic style, incorporating complex philosophical themes, interdisciplinary allusions and a deep, intellectual curiosity.

CHAPTER SIX: POETRY AND ART

6.1 Ut Pictoria Poesis

Just as recognition of the role that music played in the poetic environment of the early twentieth-century is essential to a discussion of synaesthetic concepts, so is recognition of the role of the visual arts. The art world was experiencing the same rapid changes as literature and music were, and each fed off the inspirations and ideas of the other. Since the Impressionist movement of the late nineteenth century, artists had begun to question the traditional representational perspective of painting. Post-Impressionism, Cubism, Surrealism and the later movements that flourished from these changed the face of the art world irrevocably, championing abstraction, altered perspectives and fragmentation in painting and other visual art-forms. The 'welding' of fragments of experience that these entailed was inherently synaesthetic. Patricia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas note in *Art, History and the Senses* how "Notions of synaesthesia and the multi-sensorial were important to a series of art movements in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, from symbolism to abstraction, futurism and surrealism".[1] By focusing on the nature of perception, which is in itself primarily a multi-sensory experience, artists began to recognise that our visual sense of an object does not operate alone in our conscious acceptance of it, and that in representing an object a complete depiction of its visual aspects would be enhanced by consideration of the other senses. The interconnectedness of the artistic disciplines meant that this experimentation undoubtedly affected poets, and the influence of the visual arts can be seen in much of the poetry of the time.

The establishment of a link between poetry and painting was not exclusive to the twentieth century. Poetry and painting have long been recognised as kindred art forms, as Horace famously dictated in *Ars Poetica*, "Ut Pictoria Poesis" ('as in painting so in poetry'), as early as 18 BC. Horace suggested that painting and poetry were sister arts, linked by a means of interpretation.[2] The link, however, seemed to rely more on a general metaphorical connection between the effects of both than their aesthetic similarities. Gotthold Lessing approached the subject from the opposite angle in his

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[1] Di Bello and Koureas, p. 8.
[2] C. O. Brink, *Horace on Poetry: The 'Ars Poetica'* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1971).

Laocoön of 1766, recognising the intrinsic links between the two art forms but remaining sceptical about any reciprocal appropriation of devices between them.[3] The discussion of the connections between the high cultural forms of poetry and art continued, but became of particular concern in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Although the concept of visual poetry had existed for a long time, it was only in the mid-nineteenth century that poets began to directly consider the visual form of words on the page as an aesthetic concern. Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* are the principal example of this. A similar concern with the creation of visual image through metaphor arose in response to the work of the Symbolist poets. As Willard Bohn notes in *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry*, "poetry in general was becoming more and more visual ... [poets were] in favour of a poetics that stressed the similarities between poetry and painting ... Arresting similes and vivid metaphors became the order of the day as poets vied with each other in their quest for the ultimate image".[4] Imagism and Futurism, both stressing the primacy of the metaphoric image and the visual appearance of a poem, arose out of this tendency. In visual art, the Cubist movement and the idea of simultaneism impacted significantly on the understanding of the role of perception in representational art forms. David Lehardy Sweet discusses the impact that the aesthetics of simultaneism had on literature at the turn of the twentieth century in his book *Savage Sight/Constructed Noise*:

> Simultaneism [was] the cubo-futurist strategy of presenting multiple and contradictory aspects of modern life in a single composition ... simultaneist works administered a formal shock to the senses ... represent[ing] the spectacle of conflicting sensory data impinging on their separate domains.[5]

Simultaneist theories of representation relied on a fundamentally synaesthetic discourse derived from Symbolism, as Lehardy Sweet notes:

> Symbolist aesthetics thus contributed to the incipient anti-aesthetics of simultaneism, fuelled as Symbolism was by the contradictions of synaesthetic discourse. In its tendency to promote each art as a living body of sense-relations, synaesthesia gradually yielded a notion of culture as a competitive arena where each art attempted to appropriate the other's means according to certain rules.[6]

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[3] Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, *Laocoön* (London: Routledge, 1874).
[4] Willard Bohn, *The Aesthetics of Visual Poetry: 1914-1928*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.1986, p. 3.
[5] David Lehardy Sweet, *Savage Sight/Constructed Noise: Poetic Adaptations of Painterly Techniques in the French and American Avant-Gardes.* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2003) p. 44.
[6] P. 44.

While I agree with Lehardy Sweet's suggestion that synaesthetic discourse encouraged a reciprocal exchange of sensory ideas between the arts, I would not go as far as to say that this reciprocation encouraged the notion of culture as a competitive arena. Nor do I believe that this synaesthetic discourse was necessarily "appropriated"; rather, I would suggest that it arose naturally and simultaneously across the Arts as a response to the cultural environment. In any case, the promotion of alternative theories of perception, the interconnectedness of the arts and the influence of Symbolism certainly all played a part in the gravitation of poetry and poetics toward a more sensory, and thus synaesthetic, mode of expression. While Cubist painters were experimenting with the simultaneist notion of multiple viewpoints, poets were adopting similar painterly techniques and translating them into poetic forms.

i. Cubism and Simultaneism

The simultaneist aesthetics that inspired movements such as Cubism and Futurism had a profound effect on poetry and poetics in the early twentieth century, in a similar way to musical aesthetics. Cubism in poetry is defined by American poet Kenneth Rexroth as

> the conscious, deliberate dissociation and recombination of elements into a new artistic entity made self-sufficient by its rigorous architecture ... [Poetry comprising of] simple, sensory, emotional or primary informative objects capable of little or no further reduction ... certain projected physical responses [are] induced or transmitted in the person undergoing the poetic experience, whether poet or reader. Vertigo, rapture, transport, crystalline and plangent sounds, shattered and refracted light, indefinite depths, weightlessness, piercing odors and tastes, and synthesizing these sensations and affects, [offers] an all-consuming clarity.[7]

In my previous chapter I showed that musical ideas appeared intrinsically within Eliot's poetry and that these encouraged a particularly aural aesthetic, but the presence of visual aesthetics in his work should also be noted. David Tomlinson discusses the importance of Cubism in Eliot's work in his essay "T.S Eliot and the Cubists". Tomlinson outlines the principal components of the Cubist doctrine and suggests that these were reflected in a poem such as *The Waste-Land*:

> The subject was dissected, and the resulting fragments, painted from many different angles, were reassembled in overlapping planes in a design in which the different viewpoints were presented simultaneously ... [The Waste-Land] similarly circles around its subject, seeing it from many

[7] Kenneth Rexroth, *The Cubist Poetry of Pierre Reverdy*, 1969, Berkeley CA: Bureau of Public Secrets, Kenneth Rexroth Archive, updated 2010, accessed 2/2/10 at <http://www.bopsecrets.org/rexroth/essays/reverdy.htm>

> angles which are then intercut without transitions, the fragments being welded into a new conceptual unity in a complicated system of echoes, contrasts, parallels and allusions.[8]

Synthetic cubism introduced the notion of collage and the incorporation of other materials into paintings, highlighting the fundamental links between sight and tactility. In a literal rendering of the simultaneist practice of uniting fragments, the technique of *papiers collés* meant that the fragments of perceptive experience were given a physical, tactile presence. Tomlinson also suggests that Eliot incorporated similar techniques into The Waste Land:

> there are parallels with the collages and *papiers collés* of the synthetic cubism of 1912-14, where fragments of the real world- wallpaper, playing cards, newspaper – were incorporated into the painted representation of the subject. The most immediately striking feature of Eliot's poem is precisely this juxtaposition of autonomous fragments of the real world, whether nursery rhymes, bawdy songs, obvious pieces of actual conversation.[9]

Just as Cubist artworks suggested the multiplicity of perceptual experience by incorporating tactile elements and aural references as part of their visual aesthetics, Eliot's use of fragmentation and a metaphoric *papiers collés* enhanced similar tactile, aural and visual elements within his poetry. Tomlinson also notes "the appearance in Eliot's poetry of the characteristic motifs of analytical and synthetic cubism- the violins and mandolins, men with pipes, glasses of beer and brandy, grapes, cigarettes, teacups, and other objects from public bars and sidewalk cafes".[10] It is worth noting that the sensory implications many of these objects invoke arise not only from the visual, but also the aural, tactile, gustatory and olfactory senses. Both poet and painter express the fragmentary nature of reality in the form of a sensory montage; each object, perceived as it is by a different sensory organ, becomes part of a whole in which the synaesthetic nature of experience is prioritised. This tendency is related to the early twentieth century move toward the use of tactile and gustatory metaphors, as I have previously discussed.

The relationship between poetry and Cubism was a reciprocal one. Christopher Butler suggests in his book *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900-1916* that "The letters and numbers on the surface of the paintings also bring Cubist painting ever closer to the paradoxes to be found within a verbal language ... Such fragmented representations of things are no more to be considered reliable mimetic labels for reality than the words that denote them. Everything here is part of an

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[8] David Tomlinson, "T.S Eliot and the Cubists", *Twentieth Century Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 1, Hofstra University, 1980, pp. 64-65.
[9] P. 65.
[10] P. 65.

official language".[11] Artists, like poets, were using the concept of simultaneity in an attempt to synthesise all the fragmented elements of modern experience; they took the concept to its literal peak with *papiers collés,* integrating real physical fragments into their two-dimensional paintings. Just as Eliot and other poets were borrowing from the visual aesthetics of Cubism, the Cubist painters were borrowing from the semiotic concerns of the poets. Both were concerned with perception, but also with metaphor and the opposing ideas of mimesis and abstraction in the expression of fragmented modern experience.

ii. Marinetti and Futurist Synaesthesia

The Futurists, "whose multi-media extravaganzas sought to enmesh reality in a dizzying swirl of simultaneous acts of aesthetic aggression"[12] were also preoccupied with notions of fragmentation and representation, and their ideas were influential to the British and American poets of the early twentieth century. The Italian Futurist movement, spearheaded by Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (1876-1944), aimed to free art and aesthetics from the shackles of tradition by glorifying the future and expressing the sensory onslaught of modernity through dynamism, radical ideology and politicised manifestos. Visually, Futurist painters exemplified the dissociation between perceptual and representational reality, and they strove to express the motion and movement of real-time perception. Marinetti wrote in the essay, "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism", that

> Courage, boldness and rebelliousness will be the essential elements of our poetry. Up to now literature has exalted contemplative stillness, ecstasy and sleep. We intend to exalt movement and aggression, feverish insomnia, the racer's stride, the mortal leap, the slap and the punch ... Poetry must be conceived as a violent assault launched against unknown forces to reduce them to submission under man.[13]

The primacy and superiority of man in the Futurist aesthetic meant that perception was of foremost concern; as Marinetti himself put it, "The simultaneousness of states of

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[11] Christopher Butler, *Early Modernism: Literature, Music and Painting in Europe 1900-1916.* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994) pp. 65-67.
[12] Lehardy Sweet, p. 67.
[13] Lawrence Rainey, Christine Poggi and Laura Wittman (eds.) *Futurism: An Anthology*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009) p. 51.

mind in the work of art: that is the intoxicating aim of our art".[14] Their insistence on putting the spectator in the centre of the picture precipitated an examination of the assumptions of perceptive reality, encouraging notions of multiple viewpoints and intersensory stimulation. The technical manifesto of the Futurist painters explains this point:

> The gesture that we want to reproduce will no longer be a moment in the universal dynamism which has been stopped, but the dynamic sensation itself ... all things move, all things run, all things are rapidly changing ... The sixteen people around you in a moving tram are in turn and at the same time one, ten, four, three; they are motionless and they change places, they are coming and going, they leap into the street, are suddenly swallowed up by a flood of sunlight ... The time has passed for our sensations in painting to be whispered. We will make them sing and shout on our canvases, which will sound forth deafening and triumphant flourishes.[15]

The Futurists, in the wake of the Symbolists before them, were concerned with exploring the multisensory elements of perception, and in this quotation the synaesthetic implications (the visual transference of sound and tactility, for example) of their works are obvious. Lehardy Sweet notes: "Futurism represented the megalomaniacal incarnation of synaesthetic discourse itself ... the Futurists' intoxication with sensation allowed for a heightened synaesthetic confluence of experiences in which the living spectator was to be an active participant".[16]

Carlo Carrà, who along with Umberto Boccioni, Giacomo Balla, Luigi Russolo and Gino Severini was one of the leading exponents of Futurism in painting, wrote a manifesto on synaesthetic correspondence in Futurist Painting entitled "La Pittura dei Suoni, Rumori, Odori" ["The Painting of Sounds, Noises and Smells", 1913]. Carrà wrote,

> It is indisputably true that ... any continued series of sounds, noises and smells imprints on the mind an arabesque of form and colour ...We Futurist painters maintain that sounds, noises and smells are incorporated into the expression of lines, volumes and colours ... *From the formal point of view*: there are sounds, noises and smells which are concave, convex, triangular, ellipsoidal, oblong, conical, spherical, spiral etc. *From the colour point of view*: there are sounds, noises and smells which are yellow, green, dark blue, violet ... If we are shut up in a dark room ... with a strong smell, our shaping imagination will gradually eliminate remembered sensations and construct a very special plastic whole which corresponds perfectly, in its quality of weight and movement, with the smells contained in the room.[17]

With this extraordinary proposition, Carrà indicates the possibility of a universal synaesthetic tendency arising in response to the deprivation of a sense, which has in fact

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[14]P. 106.
[15]P. 65-66.
[16] Lehardy Sweet, p. 59.
[17] *Futurism: An Anthology*, p. 156-158.

now been shown to be at least partly correct (as shown for example by Merabet et al. in their 2008 study on "Rapid and Reversible Recruitment of Early Visual Cortex for Touch", which I referred to in my discussion of sensory transference among WWI poets[18]). In response to this idea of synaesthetic correspondence, Carrà suggests that Futurist painting demands

> 1. Reds, rrrreds, the rrrrredest rrrrrrreds that shouuuuuuuut.
> 2. Greens, that can never be greener, greeeeeeeeeeeeens, that screeeeeeeeam; yellows as explosive as possible; polenta yellows, saffron yellows, brass yellows.
> [...]
> 18. Abstract plastic wholes, that is, those which correspond not to sight, but to sensations which are generated by sounds, noises, and smells, and all the unknown forces involved in these.[19]

Just as the Cubists were attempting to synthesise the scattered fragments of reality into an integrated whole, the Futurists were similarly proposing the creation of aesthetic wholes which corresponded not only to sight, but to all the senses equally. The implicit synaesthesia in the Futurist canon was not limited to painting; much of Marinetti's Futurist poetry shows evidence of the synaesthetic confluence of experience. Marinetti proposed the idea of *mots en liberté*, or "words-in-freedom", which attempted to liberate words from the restrictions of grammar, syntax and order (see **Figure 1**).

Figure 1: F. T Marinetti
Après la Marne, Joffre Visita le Front en Auto
(After the Marne, Joffre
Visited the Front by Car) 1915

[18] Merabet et al. "Rapid and Reversible Recruitment of Early Visual Cortex for Touch".
[19] *Futurism: An Anthology*, pp. 156-158.

Francesca Bacci writes about this concept in her essay "In Your Face: The Futurists Assault on the Public's Senses", suggesting,

> The apparently simple art form of words-in-freedom presents, in reality, an ambitious multi-sensory aspect that grants its efficacy ... the full artistic actualisation of the printed page will be achieved by the performer experiencing simultaneously the visual stimuli, kinaesthetic sensation, auditory perception of his own reading voice intertwined with the meanings and associations evoked by the words.[20]

"Zang Tumb Tuuum" (or "Zang Tumb Tumb"), Marinetti's great Futurist montage, displays the multi-sensory effects of this technique very strongly. The poem is a form of sensory assault on the reader, and contains the same violent, synaesthetic use of colour that Carrà asked of painting. Marinetti writes of "**GREEDY SALTY PURPLE** ... / the sky sea / mountains are greedy salty purple"[21], of "**(plooom) +** a million sacks blue rotten / ceilings green doors yellow cabs ... tremors whiteness buzzing birth"[22] (all translations Richard J. Pioli). Colour, smell and sound are all given synaesthetic presence in "Zang Tumb Tuuum". Marinetti creates a montage of the sensory impressions in the section "Bombardment", speaking of

> scenarios of smoke
> forests applause smell of hay mud shit I no longer can feel
> my feet frozen saltpetre smell rotsmell
> Kettle-drums
> flutes clarinets everywhere low high birds chirping beati-
> tude shadows cheep-cheep-cheep breeze green flocks don-dan-
> don-deen-beee tam-tomb-tomb-tomb-tomb-tomb-tomb Orchestra
> [...]
> tuuumb orchestra of the noises of war swelling with anger
> under a note of silence
> suspended in the open sky.[23]

Like the war poets discussed in the previous chapter, Marinetti was attempting to express the sensory experience of war in synaesthetic terms, stating in his "Founding and Manifesto of Futurism" that "We intend to glorify war- the only hygiene of the world- militarism, patriotism, the destructive gesture of anarchists, beautiful ideas worth dying for".[24] He idealised it for its sensory implications. He even used in some of his poems the same synaesthetic light/wound metaphor that other poets of the period adopted: "And sunsets, then transforming / are mere bloody wounds which you've

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[20] Francesca Bacci, "In Your Face: The Futurists' Assault on the Public's Senses" in Di Bello and Koureas, p. 86.
[21] Richard J. Pioli, *Stung by Salt and War: Creative Texts of the Italian Avant-Gardist F. T Marinetti*. (New York: Peter Lang, 1987) p. 59.
[22] P. 63.
[23] P. 79.
[24] *Futurism: An Anthology*, p. 51.

delivered/ through time"[25] ("Prayer to the Almighty Sea to Deliver me from the Ideal"), "Sunsets with gold claws / beneath their manes of fire! ... / had torn my adolescent flesh"[26] ("Babel of Dreams") and "In the baying crash of your voice ... / the setting sun encases your speedy step / accelerating its blood-red palpitation"[27] ("To My Pegasus"). Richard Pioli suggests that

> *Zang tumb tumb* showcases a kind of literary terrorism, and extreme intransigence. Humanity at war is presented as the pinnacle of experience ... The battlefield as a Cubist playground, with aircraft and machine-gun parabolas, is regaled and reinvented for the page ... the degrees of the noise, the brightness of the light, the smell of the air, the altitude, the time, the temperature, air-pressure are all recorded ... *Zang tumb tumb* seeks to surface out from poetry's shadows and re-establish contact with a new sensorial idealism.[28]

This sensorial idealism was essentially synaesthetic. Just as the Cubist aesthetic emphasised simultaneism, the Futurists were propagating ideas of sensory immediacy and correspondence which would have influenced poets such as Eliot and Pound, both of whom were familiar with Marinetti's writings. As Bacci writes, "The synaesthetic experience of modernity was re-staged by the Futurists through carefully planned artistic assaults on the public's senses".[29] Using the analogy of war as the hygiene of the world, Marinetti attempted to scour literature and poetry of the accumulated filth which he believed traditionalism, sentimentalism and a focus on the past had left. His use of synaesthetic concepts reflects this; he did not express them merely as a technical or aesthetic device, but as a form of sensory assault on the reader.

In this sense, Marinetti's works do not prioritise one particular inter-sensory correspondence, just as they do not prioritise one particular perceptual capacity. In "Song of the Mendicant of Love" he mentions synaesthetic smell, sound and touch: "Night, swollen with stars and blue perfumes", "Bells rang in the sky, like monstrous/ mouths ... The invisible, fierce bells seemed to open / above me like inverted abysses in the silence" and "I felt the softness of twilight / upon the sea, when one goes there/ to the violet gulfs thoroughly damp / with silence".[30] In "Babel of Dreams" he speaks of the colour of sounds: "her thin dark voice ... / in the suffocating heat, / the woman's voice coloured the silence ... broken up with white laughter / and crowned with scarlet

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[25] Pioli, p. 20.
[26] P. 26.
[27] P. 34.
[28] P. 9.
[29] Bacci in Di Bello and Koureas, p. 83.
[30] Pioli, pp. 23-25.

feathers!"[31] Synaesthetic taste is indicated in "My Soul is a Brat": "breathing with my open lungs / the acid and honeyed odour of a fleece", and "the moon, white and juicy with light".[32] In the same poem he mentions "white fear", "red drunkenness /perforated by white laughter" and "the azure tears and sobs / with which the mourning bells / impregnate the landscape". In "Dunes" he writes of

> boring white derboukah + wool
> of the noise of thought sonor-
> ous stuffing of the sky
> [...]
> memories drums
> in the marrow tun-
> nel of black sounds in the in-
> candescent mountains of light

and mentions "ochre + brass + cinnamon", "noise + weight of the sun + orange scent of the sky", "concentric white howls".[33] Marinetti's use of synaesthetic metaphor and sensory amalgamation was obviously extensive. In "Yes, Yes, Like this, The Dawn on the Sea", he writes,

> an icy green
> skidding
> THEN
> NORTH an insolent red
> hard glassy noise
> THEN a stupefied gray
> [..]
> carmine fanfares scarlet explosions
> feeble no gray tomtoms of azure.[34]

Marinetti's constant use of synaesthetic correspondence seems to derive from his dictum that "Three elements which literature has hitherto overlooked must now become prominent in it: 1. **Noise** (a manifestation of the dynamism of objects); 2. **Weight** (the capacity for flight in objects); 3. **Smell** (the capacity of objects to disperse themselves)".[35] By emphasising sensory experience, Marinetti sought to create "a perpetual dynamism of thought, an uninterrupted flow of images and sounds, [which] can express the ephemeral, unstable and symphonic universe that is forging itself in us and with us".[36]

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[31] Pp. 27-28.
[32] Pp. 29-32.
[33] Pp. 81-93.
[34] P. 107.
[35] *Futurism: An Anthology*, p. 123.
[36] P. 95.

iii. Colour in Art and Poetry

The difference between Cubism (analytical and synthetic cubism in particular) and Futurism in a visual sense can be seen quite plainly by comparing paintings; Cubist paintings tend to be mostly monochrome, whereas Futurist paintings are often vibrantly and brightly coloured. The use of colour in poetry, as the abundance of colour references found in Marinetti's poetry shows, had links with the theoretical exploration of colour in art. Although Futurist art, along with the Fauvist, Expressionist and Der Blaue Reiter movements, dealt with colour as a means of expression, the multisensory potential of colour was perhaps most closely realised in two art movements which originated *c*.1912-1913 alongside Cubism and Futurism and which had an implicit connection to synaesthesia: Orphism and Synchronism (both are sometimes recognised as alternative forms of Cubism). Orphism, a term coined by the Symbolist poet Apollinaire, found its zenith in the art of Robert Delaunay and his wife Sonia Terk Delaunay. Lehardy Sweet outlines the Orphist emphasis on simultaneous contrasts of colour: "the notion of 'simultaneism' as a form of modern experience that assumed multifarious representational modes was transferred to a realm of pure visual sensation, of which colour, not abstract structure, was now the essence".[37]

Delaunay's theory of colour, inspired by the scientific discoveries of French chemist Michel Chevreul, proposes that a single colour calls forth all the other colours of the spectrum in a simultaneous harmony of visual perceptive experience, which he claimed was superior to auditory perception. Delaunay used the term simultaneism differently to the Futurists, suggesting "The simultaneous vision of the Futurists is of a completely different kind ... This word [simultaneity] is etymological in nature, thus classical and passé. Sequential dynamism is the mechanical in painting ... Futurism is a machinist movement. It is not vital".[38] For Delaunay, simultaneism is realised through an art of pure colour, as "an art of simultaneous contrasts consists in the forms of colour. Simultaneism in colour creates a total formal construction, an aesthetic of all the

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[37] Lehardy Sweet, pp. 61-62.
[38] Arthur A. Cohen (ed.) *The New Art of Colour: The Writings of Robert and Sonia Delaunay* (New York, Viking Press, 1978) p.48.

crafts".[39] The relevance of this concept to literature was noted by Delaunay himself in 1913:

> Simultaneism in literature only expresses itself ... through the voice (of the masses), parallel or divergent, harmonized or discordant, speaking together at the same time ... Literary simultaneism is perhaps achieved by contrasts of words ... a sensibility to substitute one or more words, a movement of words, which forms the form, the life of the poem, the simultaneity. In the same way visuality is achieved through colours in simultaneous contrast.[40]

Delaunay suggests that the concept of colour harmony can be applied to poetry in a metaphorical reciprocation of visual (colour), musical (harmony) and literary (words) elements. He believed that through "The simultaneous word ... through simultaneous colour and through contrast of simultaneous words there comes forth ... a new aesthetic, an aesthetic representative of our times".[41]

Figure 2: Robert Delaunay
Les Fenêtres Simultenées Sur la Ville
c. 1912. Oil on Canvas

This reciprocation between the visual, musical and literary aspects of simultaneism no doubt arose from the Orphist affiliation with the ideas of the French Symbolist poets. Lehardy Sweet suggests that "The colour harmonies of Delaunay's cityscapes, windows, and Newtonian disks are the plastic recapitulation and refinement of nineteenth-century poetics".[42] Apollinaire, who was an influential art critic in Paris at the time, and Delaunay were clearly influenced by each other's work, producing mutually inspired pieces in which they examined the concepts of colour and simultaneism. Appollinaire lauded Delaunay's use of simultaneous contrast in colour,

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[39] P. 48.
[40] P. 51.
[41] P. 51.
[42] Lehardy Sweet, p. 63.

claiming it was "the strongest means of expressing reality ... The 'synchronism of colour' by means of 'simultaneous contrast' ... is the unique reality structurable through contemporary painting ... Delaunay has reached ... pure painting, Reality"[43] (transl. Harry Buckley). Apollinaire's poem "Les Fenêtres", written in conjunction[44] with Delaunay's painting of the same name (see **Figure 2**), was an attempt to reach a similar state of purity and simultaneity in poetry. Lehardy Sweet writes that

> The poem's close association with the work of Delaunay has invited strong comparison with the painter's aesthetics of simultaneous contrasts, as if the poem were a kind of verbal colour wheel ... [this] can be attributed to a reconstituted symbolist yearning to affirm language's ideality through selectively emphasizing its affinities with abstract systems of colour and tone.[45]

Both the painting and the poem use colour in order to express an immediacy and simultaneity of perception, and to create a sense of internal harmony. Appollinaire intensifies his images of colour by appealing to the other senses, using the screeches of birds, the touch of silk thread or the taste of fruit to create a multisensory colour experience in the reader:

> Du rouge au vert toute le jaune se meurt
> Quand chantant les aras dans les forêts natales
> […]
> Tu soulèveras le rideau
> Et maintenant voilà que s'ouvre la fenêtre
> Araignées quand les mains tissaient la lumière
> Beauté pâleur insondables violets
> […]
> Le fenêtre s'ouvre comme une orange
> Le beau fruit de la lumière.
>
> [From the red to the green all the yellow dies
> When the macaws are calling in their native forests
> [...]
> Raise the blind
> And now see how the window opens
> If hands could weave light this was done by spiders
> Beauty pallor unfathomable indigos
> [...]
> The window opens like an orange
> The beautiful fruit of light.]
> (Transl. Oliver Bernard).[46]

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[43] Harry E. Buckley. *Guillaume Apollinaire as an Art Critic* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1981 (1969)), pp. 184-186.
[44] It provided the introduction to Delaunay's 1913 exhibition in Berlin. Timothy Matthews, *Reading Apollinaire: Theories of Poetic Language* (Manchester University Press, 1987) p. 128.
[45] Lehardy Sweet, pp. 80-81.
[46] Guillaume Appollinaire, *Selected Poems* Ed. Oliver Bernard (London: Anvil Press Poetry, 1986) pp. 104-107.

As in the painting, the colours and images here seem to reverberate with a quality of aliveness, their synaesthetic associations rendering them all the more vivid.

The Orphic impulse was inherently synaesthetic as well as interdisciplinary, and it is this synaesthetic impulse that aligns Orphic painting with poetry. Orphic colour theories were manifested through poetry in synaesthetic metaphor, and influenced many poets beyond Apollinaire (E.E Cummings and William Carlos Williams, whose poetry I will discuss shortly, are two such examples). Synchromism was a synaesthetic adaptation of Orphic colour theories, and although these two movements were concerned with similar concepts of colour and form, their proponents took care to point out that they were not, in fact, the same. Synchromism, spearheaded by American painters Morgan Russell and Stanton Macdonald-Wright, was based on an analogy between colour and music. The *Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century Art* defines it as "An abstract or semi-abstract movement in painting ... meaning literally 'colours together'... [based] on the analogy of symphony".[47] Like Orphism, Synchromism sought to achieve purity in art by means of colour harmony, but the Synchromists took the analogy between colour and music further, intending to achieve musical effect through the pure visual expression of colour. The inverse of this (colour music) was also being explored at the turn of the twentieth century, with composers such as Stravinsky, Scriabin, Schoenberg (and later, Messiaen) examining musical colour analogies. As I showed in Chapter 5, music theory and the aesthetics of music were very much intertwined with the poetry, and they were similarly connected to the visual arts. This mutual interest in the association of colour and sound led to a number of aesthetic interdisciplinary theories of synaesthesia, the most famous being Kandinsky's influential *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*.

iv. Kandinsky's Synaesthetic Theory

Kandinsky (1866-1944) has long been claimed as a true synaesthete, although such a statement is always difficult to verify. It is certainly true that his theories of art

[47] Ian Chilvers, *The Oxford Dictionary of Twentieth Century Art* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) p. 602.

were based primarily on synaesthetic concepts and their transcendental implications. Like the Orphists and Synchromists, Kandinsky was primarily concerned with the emotive and associational aspects of pure colour, writing in his 1914 manifesto *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*, that

> Colour ... makes a momentary and superficial impression on a soul whose sensibility is slightly developed ... vermilion stimulates like flame, which has always fascinated human beings. Keen lemon-yellow hurts the eye as does a prolonged and shrill bugle note the ear, and one turns away for relief to blue or green ... But to a more sensitive soul the effect of colours is deeper and intensely moving ... They produce a correspondent spiritual vibration.[48]

Kandinsky then goes on to write about the synaesthetic potential of colour:

> Sight has been known to harmonize not only with sense of taste but with the other senses. Many colours have been described as rough or prickly, others as smooth or velvety ... Some colours appear soft ... others hard ... The expression "perfumed colours" is frequently met with. The sound of colours is so definite that it would be hard to find anyone who would express bright yellow with bass notes, or dark lake with the treble ... The theory of association is no more satisfactory in the psychological sphere. Generally speaking, colour directly influences the soul. Colour is the keyboard, the eyes are the hammers, the soul is the piano with many strings. The artist is the hand that plays, touching one key or another purposively, to cause vibrations in the soul.[49]

It is observations such as this that have caused Kandinsky to be identified as a synaesthete, although the technicality with which he approached these theories has caused this to be questioned. His colour theories, however, were undeniably influential on poetics; like the theory of music as a 'pure' art form, the theory of pure colour could be conceptually applied to poetry.

The poetic significance of colour and its metaphorical, psychological and emotive power is noted by Richard Cronin in *Colour and Experience in Nineteenth Century Poetry*. Cronin's book looks at "those instances in which fact merges with value, in which words for colours, words for primary sense impressions, tremble on the verge of becoming metaphors"[50] and although he applies his examination to nineteenth century poetics, it is equally applicable to the early twentieth. Colour, like music, is almost always talked about in metaphorical terms. In order to discuss colour, Kandinsky turns to musical analogies (symphony, harmony, composition) and although he recognised the differences between the arts, he believed that the "the same internal tone may be achieved by the different arts; each art will bring to this general tone its own

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[48] Wassily Kandinsky, *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (New York: Wittenborn Art Books, 1947 (1914)), pp. 43-44.
[49] Pp. 44-45.
[50] Cronin, Richard. *Colour and Experience in Nineteenth Century Poetry* (London: Macmillan Press, 1988) p. 6.

special characteristics, thereby adding to it a richness and power which no one art form could achieve".[51] The poetic application of Kandinsky's aesthetic theory was undertaken by Ezra Pound, who claimed "The image is the poet's pigment; with that in mind you can go ahead and apply Kandinsky, you can transpose his chapter on the language of form and colour and apply it to the writing of verse".[52] Pound's use of visual concepts in poetic theory derives from the abstraction, simultaneism and colour-centrism of modern art. It is the synaesthetic discourse of Kandinsky, however, that provides the ultimate synthesis, and indeed, the gaps inherent in the transposition of art and poetic theory seem to be bridged by music, which provided both art forms with a common goal in attaining a language of pure perception.

Kandinsky himself explored sound and language in conjunction with art, producing an album of poetry and engravings in 1912 entitled *Klänge* [Sounds] which goes some way toward a literary illustration of his aesthetic theories. Kandinsky's use of language in these prose poems betrays a typical painter's eye, reflecting his theories of colour and synaesthetic correspondence. Primary colours abound in Kandinsky's writing as much as they do in his painting, a trait which echoes Pound's idea of the literary primary image as being comparable to pigment. Kandinsky's prose poem "Bassoon" displays a complex use of colour which begins as purely visual, before moving on to a synaesthetically inspired description of sound:

> A thick, hard, egg-shaped orange cloud suddenly hung above the town ... and radiated violet. A bare barren tree stretched out to the deep sky ... quite black, like a hole in a white sheet of paper ... the orange cloud disappeared. The sky became a piercing blue. The town plangent yellow ... By virtue of distended, long drawn-out, rather inexpressive, indifferent tones of a bassoon, moving a long while in the depths of the void, everything gradually turned green. First deep and rather dirty. Then lighter and lighter, colder, more poisonous ... Only the bassoon strove to designate this colour.[53]

Other poems use colour just as prolifically: "Early Spring" describes how "A gentleman took his hat off in the street. I saw black and white hair ... I saw a large pink, rather greasy pate, with a bluish reflection ... crooked grayish-yellow teeth"[54] and the poem "That", depicts a "giant cloud that is like a cauliflower. You can chew its snow-white hardness ... it weighed heavily on the deep blue air ... [below] stood a burning house. It

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[51] Kandinsky, p. 64.
[52] As quoted in Edward Brandabur, "Ezra Pound and Wassily Kandinsky: A Language in Form and Colour". *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1973, p. 94.
[53] Kandinsky, pp. 82-83.
[54] Kenneth C. Lindsay and Peter Vergo (eds.) *Kandinsky: Complete Writings on Art*, Volume One (1901-1921), (London: Faber, 1982) p. 302.

was strongly, oh, strongly built of dark red bricks. And it was a mass of yellow flames".[55] In "Seeing", Kandinsky uses a music/colour association:

> Blue, blue arose and fell.
> Sharp, thin, whistled and penetrated, but did not pierce through.
> Everywhere a rumbling.
> Thick brown hovered seemingly for all eternity.
> [...]
> White chink after white chink.[56]

He repeats the same sound/sight inter-sense correspondence in "Song" ("Of the red sound/ Of the sun's globe / He can perceive no trace"[57]), where colour is used once again to enhance the aural (sound), visual (shape) and tactile (heat) qualities of the image.

As he does in his paintings, Kandinsky uses colour juxtaposition in his writing to achieve certain effects or 'vibrations'. The lines from "Bassoon" in which "The sky became a piercing blue. The town plangent yellow", express linguistically a visual effect which he describes in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*:

> The colours that cause in another colour a horizontal movement while they are themselves affected by it have another movement of their own, which acts as a violent separative force. This is therefore the first great antithesis in internal value ... Yellow and blue have another movement which affects the first antithesis- an eccentric and concentric movement. If two circles are drawn and painted respectively yellow and blue, a brief contemplation will reveal in the yellow a spreading movement out from the centre, and a noticeable approach to the spectator ... the blue on the other hand, moves into itself, like a snail retreating into its shell, and draws away from the spectator ... the eye feels stung by the first circle while it is absorbed into the second.[58]

Kandinsky juxtaposes yellow and blue to this purpose in many of his paintings, and his literary use of the colours seems to reflect this; the yellowness of the town contrasted with the blue sky brings it toward the spectator, enhancing the sense that "the buildings grew upward and became narrower. They all inclined toward a point ... [the town] made itself felt as a striving toward the dawn".[59] He does a similar thing in "That", where the "burning house ... strongly built of dark red bricks ... was a mass of yellow flames" which, seen against "the deep blue air", moves forward, so that the spectator can place themselves "in front of this house on the earth".[60]

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[55] P. 304.
[56] P. 85.
[57] P. 333.
[58] Kandinsky, p. 57.
[59] Lindsay & Vergo, p. 300.
[60] P. 304.

Conversely, Kandinsky includes a synaesthetic sense of sound in "Bassoon" which, interestingly, inverts the colour-sound associations he discussed in *Concerning the Spiritual in Art*. He states in his writing that "yellow has a disturbing influence; it pricks, upsets people ... The intensification of yellow increases the painful shrillness of its note, like that of a shrill bugle" and that "depth is found in blue ... The deeper its tone, the more ... we feel a call to the infinite, a desire for purity and transcendence ... When it sinks almost to black, it echoes a grief that is hardly human ... In music a light blue is like a flute, a darker blue a cello".[61] In his prose poem however, it is the blue that takes on a piercing quality, and the yellow that takes on a resonant or mournful tone; the aural synaesthetic effects of each colour have been transferred. The answer for this puzzling inversion lies, perhaps, a few lines later, in the line which describes how "everything became green".[62] As Kandinsky notes,

> A well-balanced mixture of blue and yellow produces green; the horizontal movements cancel each other, and so do movements from and towards centre. Calm ensues ... yellow and blue have an active effect corresponding to man's participation in continuous and perhaps eternal cosmic motion, whereas green represents the passive principle ... In music, absolute green is represented by the placid, middle notes of the violin.[63]

Thus, the dichotomous extremes of yellow and blue, both actively corresponding to cosmic motion, become almost interchangeable. They move from being separate, contraindicative entities to becoming one, as it were, in the form of green: the middle ground. Kandinsky also experiments with symbolism and metaphor using other colour combinations. In "Spring" he speaks of "this rotting wooden cross ... its head has pierced a hole in the sky. And from its edges creep stifling red-blue clouds", which is enhanced by his suggestion that

> the use, side by side, of red and blue- colours in themselves with no physical relation but from their spiritual contrast of strong effect ... was so beloved by the primitive both in Germany and Italy that is has survived until today, principally in religious carvings ... it seems the artists wished to express the grace of heaven in terms of humanity, and humanity in terms of heaven.[64]

Fittingly, this is exactly what he does himself in his image of the rotting cross.

Many of Kandinsky's paintings attempt to create a sense of musical composition using colour (see **Figure 3**), and I argue that he does this in his writing as well. Aural

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[61] Kandinsky, p. 58-59.
[62] Lindsay & Vergo, p. 300.
[63] Kandinsky, p. 59.
[64] P. 66.

and musical qualities are inherent in poetry, and the title of his collection ("Sounds") suggests that Kandinsky certainly considered these qualities important.

Figure 3: W. Kandinsky
Composition VII, 1913, Oil on Canvas

Yet he seems not to have been content to rely purely on the aural element of language and, like Eliot, he uses visual imagery to enhance the aural complexity of his work. The poem "Open" reads

> Now vanishing slowly in the green grass.
> Now sticking in the gray mud.
> Now vanishing slowly in the white snow.
> Now sticking in the gray mud.
> Lay long: thick long black reeds.
> Lay long.
> Long reeds.
> Reeds.
> Reeds.[65]

The musical quality in this poem is immediately discernible; the rhythmic repetition of words and alliteration, the gradual decrescendo and ritardando. Yet the visual imagery and in particular the colour imagery also contribute, I would suggest, to the musical sense of the poem. To understand this, one must read Kandinsky's ideas about the aural qualities of white and black. Kandinsky suggested that "White ... acts upon our psyche as a great, absolute silence, like the pauses in music that temporarily break up the melody. It is not a dead silence, but one pregnant with possibilities".[66] Black, on the other hand, he suggested as "a silence with no possibilities ... The silence of black is the silence of death ... In music it is represented by one of those profound and final pauses, after which any continuation of the melody seems the dawn of another world".[67] Gray,

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[65] Lindsay & Vergo, p. 301.
[66] Kandinsky, p. 60.
[67] P. 60.

too is "silent and motionless ... desolate", and is "spiritually similar"[68] to green which is placidity, suggesting middling sounds which "[lack] any undertone of joy or grief or passion".[69] In light of these observations, Kandinsky's poem can be seen as a musical composition of sound and silence; the sounds of the words are tempered by the silences of the colours they depict. The blackness of the reeds, interspersed between the green, grey and white, pictorially forms a sort of rhythmical beat, and the echoing and diminishing of the black "Reeds/ Reeds" at the end of the poem resonates with the "silence of death".[70] Kandinsky's poem, as simplistic as it seems, is actually a complex synaesthetic web of interrelations between words, sounds, colours, and emotions. Clearly, Kandinsky's theories of synaesthetic correspondence applied not only to his painting, but to his poetic use of language and metaphor. Whether he was a synaesthete or not, it seems that his experience as a visual artist led him to an increasingly multisensory form of expression.

6.2 E. E Cummings and the Synaesthetic "poempicture"

In a similar manner, another famous twentieth century poet and painter used the 'pigment' of words to paint 'poempictures' which resonate with synaesthetic significance. An incredible trove of synaesthesia can be found in the poetry of E.E Cummings (1894-1962), and in many ways this stems from his rigorous engagement with visual and aesthetic theory, sensory ideas, and modern art.

i. "A Draughtsman of words": Painter and Poet

A mere glance at any one of E.E Cummings' famous poems illustrates the nature of his preoccupation with visual qualities. Cummings the poet continually overshadows Cummings the painter, but he was in fact a proficient and talented painter with a prodigious output, as Milton Cohen notes in his comprehensive book *Poet and Painter: The Aesthetics of E.E Cummings' Early Works*: "Cummings' reputation as a poet has, in itself, distorted a deceptively complex artistic career ... Two other pursuits together

[68] P. 57.
[69] P. 59.
[70] P. 60.

attracted most of Cummings' professional labours throughout his life: painting and aesthetics".[71] Cummings painted and exhibited throughout his life but while his poetry began to gain critical recognition at the end of the 1920's, his paintings, after a promising start, failed to achieve any significant critical acclaim.[72] Yet recognition of his self-identification as poet *and* painter is particularly important to a discussion of his poetry. Cummings' aesthetic theories of art often focused on perception. Cohen writes:

> From the outset, Cummings distinguished between perception and recognition. Perception originates in raw sensations ... As one feels these stimuli separately, that is, as one becomes sensuously aware of them, one perceives them. Recognition follows these perceptions and depends on thinking to make "sense" of them by joining and filtering them through memory.[73]

For Cummings, the *feeling* in perception was superior to the thinking; he prioritised the immediacy of sensation, of feeling as "the path to wholeness and the spirit", and he emphasised this in many of his poems ("since feeling is first / who pays any attention / to the syntax of things / will never wholly kiss you"[74]). Cohen notes that Cummings felt an affinity with childlike perceptivity, which he believed "restores that wholeness; it "unites'' and 'integrates' "[75]. While "thinking analyzes and 'discriminates' ... [and] separates 'a' from 'b' and thus destroys the homogeneity of 'ab'... the child '*feels* ab as a chord'".[76] This identification with a childlike fusion of the senses suggests a synaesthetic view of the world; and indeed, Cohen suggests that in his poetry Cummings used "delightful synaesthetic couplings ... [to] reaffirm the primacy of sensation: colour sound and motion".[77] Like Kandinsky, Cummings used synaesthesia widely and for a variety of purposes. Cohen suggests that "Cummings believed that the arts, in both their aesthetic underpinnings and practice, could be integrated, just as he felt that the data of the senses could be ... [and] he imagined synaesthesia to work to intensify felt experience".[78]

As a proficient painter, Cummings was particularly concerned with ideas of visual aesthetics, and he was influenced by the synaesthetic theories of Kandinsky, the

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[71] Milton A. Cohen. *Poet and Painter: The Aesthetics of E.E Cummings's Early Works*. (Detroit: Wayne State University Press. 1987) pp. 13-14.
[72] Cohen, pp. 15-16.
[73] P. 88.
[74] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems 1910-1962* Ed. George James Firmage (revised edition). (London: Granada, 1981) p. 291
[75] Cohen, p. 67.
[76] P. 67.
[77] P. 89.
[78] P. 195-196.

Futurists and the Synchromists. Like Kandinsky, he was fascinated by the motion inherent in colour, writing in his notes,

> Every hue bears a relation to every other hue, Purple IS BEHIND Yellow [...] moreover, Yellow is only a degree of forwardness in relation to purple. YELLOW PUSHES the eye. MADDER PULLS (resulting in subjective depth).[79]

Cummings was interested in both the interaction of colour and line in creating motion, and the effects created by the juxtaposition of colours; he was almost certainly aware of the theories of Chevreul and the Orphic painters, and his notes explore the idea of after-image, complementary colours and colour harmony.[80] He also explored the synaesthetic correspondence of colour and shape in creating texture and 'percussive' qualities:

> Is one hue firmer than another?
> Square grey is rigid
> [square] lemon is fragile
> " crimson is solid
> " green is stable
> " violet is frail
> Has every hue a shape intrinsically which expresses its percussive value or is the percussive value of any hue due to its shape and is the percussive value the same for all hues of a given shape[?][81]

He was similarly fascinated by the colour-music analogies of Scriabin and A. Wallace Rimington, outlining in his notes his own colour-sound comparisons:

> timbres Flute- Y[ellow]
> trumpets- R[ed]
> harp- G[reen] (cool, water transparent)
> DRUMS- GREY
> [...]
> Timbre= Colour
> (impossible,- lilac shriek ... Scarlet Bellow)
> drums.
> snare- black rattle of sparks) or, Grey rustle
> kettle- lilac thuds
> bass- purple booms
> a cello is dark [...]
> the highest not[e] on a violin squeaks
> (squeal of thinness
> piccolo- scarlet chirp
> flutes are Chrome, Opaque, luminous
> horn- ochre blare, snarl.[82]

The specificity of Cummings' pairings suggests that he may have been a colour-sound-texture synaesthete. Cohen notes that

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[79] From Houghton Notes, I[59], no. 13, quoted in Cohen, p. 163.
[80] Cohen, p. 122.
[81] From Houghton notes, I[39], quoted in Cohen, p. 170.
[82] From Houghton notes, I[39] no. 294, quoted in Cohen, p. 205

> Besides instrumental timbre, Cummings also considered tonality and its relationship to colour ... [he] compared not only individual tones to colours but also intervals, chords, and accidentals to pairs and triads of colours, noting the resulting 'consonances' or 'dissonances' ... For Cummings to entitle the major works of his early period 'Sound' and 'Noise' suggests how profoundly music inspired his early painting.[83]

Whether Cummings was in fact a true synaesthete, or simply formulating his own aesthetic theories of colour and sound based on the influences of Symbolist writings and the interrelatedness of modern art and music, is not clear. Cummings was certainly fascinated by ideas of inter-sensory correspondence and his poetry and painting were both informed by his aesthetic theories of music, colour and perception.

Another interesting factor in Cummings' synaesthetic explorations lies in the connections he made between colour and language. Cohen writes of how,

> In punctuation, for example, Cummings saw not only pictorial and kinetic possibilities, but also colours: commas were somewhere between yellow and red, periods between black and white, colons between Veronese green (in one note) and blue (in another) ... Grammatical voice, case, number, and person all find analogous colours in Cummings' early notes ... Apparently Cummings' analogies remained fairly stable, even if his preferences for certain colours and lines changed.[84]

This grapheme-colour synaesthesia was also extended to vowels, which Cohen notes are "more precise than Scriabin's, less fanciful and more technical than Rimbaud's"[85] and his notes suggest that his colours remained consistent; he mentions OO corresponding to violet, EE white, AY yellow, O cobalt blue, and AI as green on at least two separate occasions.[86] The presence and idiosyncrasy of these unusual analogies, strengthened by the assertion that they remained stable throughout his life, provides the strongest evidence yet that Cummings may have in fact been synaesthetic. They could also go some way toward explaining the abundance of grammatical, typographical and punctuation-based experimentation in his poetry. Cohen suggests that "The pairings ... may have found their way into some of his published poems, not in determining structure, but in guiding the choice of a particular adjective to discover colour imagery. If the theory obtains, then an adjective will not be chosen for its semantic, visual, or musical contribution, but also for the specific colouristic effect of its vowels"[87], which raises some interesting questions. If Cummings' synaesthetic perceptions were genuine,

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[83] Cohen, pp. 207-208.
[84] Pp. 210-211.
[85] P. 228.
[86] Pp. 228-229.
[87] P. 230.

did they unconsciously affect the choice of words, images and metaphors in his poetry? Although Cohen suggests that "if Cummings followed his theory of vowel-colour, he did so sporadically and unsystematically",[88] he focuses on the fact that Cummings formulated these correspondences as an aesthetic theory rather than the possibility that they arose as a result of genuine synaesthetic perception. He notes the lines, "the mouth that sits between her cheeks / utters a thud of scarlet" (from "she sits...", Sonnets & Realities, XI), as evidence of Cummings' haphazard employment of the vowel theory:

> The lines ... nicely match the vowels and onomatopoeia of 'utters a thud': a dull sound with a recessive vowel. But Cummings completes the clause with a bright, advancing colour: scarlet. While scarlet might, in turn, have determined the long 'a' of 'always', it is an inappropriate colour for 'thud' if Cummings were linking the kinetic potential of colours, sounds and vowels.[89]

I would suggest that what Cohen failed to note here is the fact that colour-vowels were most likely not Cummings' only form of synaesthetic perception (presuming he was a synaesthete); from his notes, he is likely to have also experienced colour-sound synaesthesia which possibly renders his choice of scarlet more comprehensible, and in keeping with the suggestion that his synaesthetic correspondences had an effect on his choice of words. Although synaesthetes tend to adhere strongly to their associations, if he did in fact experience the instantaneous synaesthetic perception of colour and sound, or colour and letters, there is no reason why, as an artist, he would have to strictly follow these in his work. However if he had constructed them theoretically, it is possibly more likely that these theories would have been corroborated.

The abundance of synaesthetic expression in Cummings' poetry, whether it arises from true synaesthesia or not, is undoubtedly significant to any discussion of his work. Cummings' poems are immediately identifiable by their unique visual structures, and the visual aspects of poetry were certainly a concern of his. The interdisciplinarity of his poetry and painting cannot be understated; Cummings referred to himself as "an author of pictures ... a draughtsman of words".[90] In this respect he resembled the Imagist poets, and he certainly derived inspiration from them, inventing the term "poempicture" to describe the poetics of visuality that he was so interested in. Rushworth Kidder's article "Cummings and Cubism: The Influence of the Visual Arts on Cummings' Early Poetry" suggests that the painterly influence on Cummings' poetry

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[88] P. 231.
[89] P. 231.
[90] P. 33.

extends to more than colour references, depictions of scenes and mention of painterly techniques, although these undoubtedly increase the visuality of his work. Kidder proposes that the formal features of fragmentation, fusion, simultaneity and bilateral symmetry, technically deriving in many ways from Cubist theories of art,[91] are primary constituent elements to consider in the discussion of the visual significance of Cummings' poetry. There are, in fact, numerous elements that constitute this visual significance, and many of them are inextricably concerned with ideas of synaesthesia.

Beginning my discussion of the visual, and synaesthetic, significance of Cummings' poetry, I must inevitably start with colour. Cummings' paintings, prose writing, notes and poems all bear out his intense preoccupation with colour properties; for Cummings, colour was implicitly representative of pure sensation or 'feeling' in perception, and he asserts that "a colour cannot be recognised. Only a shape", or as Cohen puts it, "Colour, in other words, is what the eye sees before the mind discerns boundaries or edges".[92] The immediacy of colour, as well as its emotive and inter-sensory qualities clearly appealed to Cummings, and Cohen claims that in order to "sharpen and intensify his viewers' and readers' sensuous perception, he [gave] them something to see and hear first ... He replenish[ed] the sensuous, pictorial content of words and g[ot] colour planes to interact freely".[93] His use of synaesthetic metaphors reflects this aim of replenishing the sensuous content of words, and his poetry, like his art, is unrelentingly colourful.

ii. "The Dark Long Cool Tunnel of Raving Colour": Colours of the Senses

Cummings' most common use of synaesthetic colour is coloured sound, which is understandable in light of the extensive exploration of the analogy in both his artwork and his writings. His poem "my eyes are fond of the east side" is a veritable melting pot of synaesthetic perceptions, with each stanza (distinguished by the capitalised lines) focusing on a different sense. The first stanza is centred on the synaesthetic experience of colour:

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[91] Rushworth Kidder, "Cummings and Cubism: The Influence of the Visual Arts on Cummings' Early Poetry", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1979, p. 281.
[92] Cohen, pp. 90-91.
[93] P. 92.

as i lie asleep my eyes go into Allen street the dark long cool tunnel
of raving colour, on either side the windows are packed with hardslippery
greens and helplessbaby blues and stic-ky chromes and prettylemons and
virginal pinks and wealthy vermilion and breathless-scarlet, dark colours
like 'cellos keen fiddling colours colours cOOler than harps colours
p r i c k i n glike piccolos thumPing colours like a bangofpiano colours
which,are,the,flowery plucking of a harpsichord colours of Pure percus-
sion colours-like-trumpets they(writhe they, struggleinwierd chords of
humorous,fury heapingandsqueezing tum-bling-scratchingcrowd ingworming
each by screeching Each)on either side the street's DarkcOOllonGBody
windows,are. Clenched. Fistsoftint.
TUMTITUMTIDDLE.[94]

The effect of this section of the poem is overwhelming; a maelstrom of unrelenting sensation, it exemplifies Cummings' dictum of feeling before thought. Colour and sound are woven together inextricably, along with sensations of coolness, darkness, taste, touch and rhythm. Like Cummings' paintings, this poem is a musical composition of colour which echoes the literary theories of the Symbolists and the Futurists, the musical theories of Scriabin and Rimington, and the artistic theories of Kandinsky, the Synchromists and the Orphists equally; it is in such a poem that the interdisciplinarity of Cummings' works is most acutely realised. Many of the synaesthetic metaphors in this poem match Cummings' own colour-sound analogies (dark cellos, the violin squeal of thinness, the cool, water transparent green of the harp), and knowledge of his vowel colours also adds to the painterly effects (for example, the emphasised OO sound in "cool" was purple to Cummings, a dark, recessive colour which heightens the image of the "dark long *cool* tunnel" which leads into and out of the section). Cummings has also embellished his colour-sound associations with tactile and gustatory references. The greens are "hardslippery", yellow becomes "prettylemon", the colour of the piccolos (a 'scarlet chirp' according to his notes) pricks; colours writhe, heaping and squeezing, tumbling, scratching and screeching.

The third stanza of this poem explicitly represents the aural sense:

is there anything my ears love it's
to go into the east side in a. dark street a hurDy-gurdY with thequeer
hopping ghosts of children. my,ears know the fuZZy tune that's played
[...]
the bigtwittering
zither-and the mealy,ladies dancing thicklyfoolish,with,the,tam,bou,
rine,s And the violin spitting squeakysongs into the cuspidor-col our-
edRoom and,my ears bend to the little silent handorgan
[...]
The L's roar tortures-pleasantly myears it is,like the,Jab:of a dark
Tool. With a cleverjeRkin itlike the motionofa Sharp Knife-sN ap-

[94]E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, Post Impressions, VII, p. 187.

Pingof fadeadf ish' shead.[95]

Here, sound is expressed in synaesthetic tactile terms: the "fuzzy tune", the spitting of the squeaky violin and the roar of the hand-organ like the jab of a knife. It is also represented visually in the typography of the poem itself; the onomatopoeic sound of fuzzy is emphasised by the capitalisation of ZZ, just as the cranking handle of the hand-organ is echoed in the capitalised L of "L's roar". The visuality of the poem is also fuzzy, with words bleeding into each other and lines beginning and ending haphazardly. Similarly the sound of the tambourine is created through the use of commas, "with,the,tam,bou, / rine,s", which beat out the rhythm both visually and aurally. The imagery and language have a synaesthetic self-reflexivity which works to enhance the implicit 'feelings' of the poem.

Cummings repeats the synaesthetic expression of colour as sound in other poems. "my mind is" (Portraits, XXV) also refers explicitly to the immediacy of the sensory 'feeling' that Cummings extolled in his notes:

my mind is
a big hunk of irrevocable nothing which touch and taste and smell
and hearing and sight keep hitting and chipping with sharp fatal
tools
in an agony of sensual chisels i perform squirms of chrome and ex-
ecute strides of cobalt
nevertheless i
feel that i cleverly am being altered that i slightly am becoming
something a little different,in fact
myself
Hereupon helpless i utter lilac shrieks and scarlet bellowing.[96]

Cohen suggests that this poem refers to the nature of the artistic process, and that

> the speaker has been chiselled into 'something a little different' by his senses: into his real self as an artist ... as the speaker's mind is changed from a hunk of inert 'nothing' to a vibrant receptor of sensory flashes- as it acquires an artist's sensibility- so also do the sensory responses change from the 'normal' to the 'impossible' that are only possible to the artist's sensibility.[97]

In his notes, Cummings specifically identified lilac shrieks and scarlet bellows as impossible couplings due to their innate synaesthetic characteristics, so his use of them here is interesting. I agree with Cohen's suggestion that the transition from possible to impossible is instigated by the artistic process, however I believe that it could also refer to the immediate and un-elicited nature of the synaesthetic response; the poet-persona

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[95] P. 187.
[96] P. 97.
[97] Cohen, p. 206.

feels helpless to control his sensory responses, but he recognises that they are altering him and transforming him into, in fact, himself, or at least a more perceptive (artistic) version of himself. Cohen notes how "curiously, the speaker has no control over these changes- in fact, the 'shrieks' and 'bellowings' expressing 'agony' in the poem, convey the pain of his involuntary metamorphosis and unconventional responses".[98] Even though these "lilac shrieks and scarlet bellowings" are, according to his notes, impossible, Cummings uses them to represent the lack of control that he has over his automatic and reflexive synaesthetic responses. The tactility of many of Cummings' synaesthetic metaphors suggests that perhaps he did experience involuntary synaesthetic responses such as colour-pain, colour-texture or colour-movement. Thus, the "agony" of his "unconventional responses" may well have been physical as well as mental.

Cummings uses this multi-modal form of synaesthesia again in "when my love comes to me", from Sonnets-Actualities, I:

> when my love comes to me it's
> just a little like music,a
> little more like curving colour(say
> orange)
> against silence,or darkness
>
> the coming of my love emits
> a wonderful smell in my mind.[99]

Cummings' use of orange here seems relevant considering his associations with the colour; in his notes he suggests that it is has advancing characteristics ("my love comes to me"), and it is connected with the optative verb, indicating a wish or desire ("we are I and She"). The suggestion of the curve is also significant. Cummings was interested in the visual and kinetic effects of lines, and for him the curve represented movement but no direction, as opposed to the angle which represented direction and speed. In his drawings, Cummings experimented with curves and angles, and Cohen notes "Many of the early works ... employ curves either as a dominant motif or in conjunction with straight lines ... [for example] a finger-snapping 'red-hot momma' from the twenties glides to music, her body a flowing euphony of curves ... [curves] undulate in a relaxed fluency".[100] As such, Cummings often used curves in his drawings of dancers (see

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[98] P. 206.
[99] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 154.
[100] Cohen, p. 166.

Figure 4), and he also believed that "The important thing is to establish a relation between (a) colour [and] (b) line e.g. [to determine] if yellow curves".[101]

Figure 4: E. E Cummings
Female Dancer c. 1920's
Pencil on Paper

Thus, his use of curve in this poem is connected to both the colour orange (the qualities of which will be enhanced by the curving line) and to the sensuous, undulating movement of the female body.

Colour-movement appears again in "Paris;this April sunset" (Post-Impressions, III):

> Paris;this April sunset completely utters;
> utters serenely silently a cathedral
> [...]
> spiral acres of bloated rose
> coiled within cobalt miles of sky
> yield to and heed
> the mauve
> of twilight(who slenderly descends,
> daintily carrying in her eyes the dangerous first stars)
> people move love hurry in a gently
>
> arriving gloom and
> see!(the new moon
> fills abruptly with sudden silver
> these torn pockets of lame and begging colour).[102]

The painterly images of this poem are hinted at in the title of the collection (Post-Impressions) and again in the first two lines, where the image of the French cathedral at sunset contains echoes of Monet and the Impressionist painters (see **Figure 5**).

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[101] As quoted in Cohen, p. 168.
[102] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 183.

Figure 5: Claude Monet
Rouen Cathedral Facade- Sunset
1894. Oil on Canvas.

Cohen suggests that "the slower, cyclical motions of nature ... caught [Cummings'] eye: winter melting into spring, evening yielding to twilight, twilight fading into night. Typically his method is imagistic, rendering the most subtle changes of a twilight sky ... in precise, painterly notation".[103] The coupling of shape and movement with colour in this poem ("spiral acres of bloated rose / coiled within cobalt miles of sky") echoes both the painterly technique of Impressionism (which was similarly concerned with representing the subtle effects of changing light), and also the cyclical movement (spiral, coil) of nature, time and the seasons with which the poem is concerned.

The poem "this is the garden" (Sonnets-Unrealities, IX) also uses colour metaphorically:

> this is the garden:colours come and go,
> frail azures fluttering from night's outer wing
> strong silent greens serenely lingering,
> absolute lights like baths of golden snow.
> This is the garden: pursed lips do blow
> upon cool flutes within wide glooms,and sing
> (of harps celestial to the quivering string)
> invisible faces hauntingly and slow.
> [...]
> the slow deep trees perpetual of sleep
> some silver-fingered fountain steals the world.[104]

Again, the colours correspond to Cummings' notes; green, writes Cummings, is "indicative [of] (rest, peace, quiet)"[105] and the "harp- [is] G[reen] (cool, water,

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[103] Cohen, p. 176.
[104] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 144.
[105] Houghton Notes, I[39], as quoted in Cohen, p. 170.

transparent) ... cellos-[are] green".[106] The green of the harps is, for Cummings, the green of nature and divinity, which is echoed in the 'celestial' harps of the poem. Green for Cummings also represents the AI sound, which foreshadows the word "silent", and then "lights" of the next line. As in Kandinskian theory, green and azure are recessive colours, lingering behind the advancing of the "golden" lights. The cool flutes ("Chrome, Opaque, luminous"[107] in Cummings' notes) are also recessive; for Cummings, the OO sound of "cool" is violet, a recessive colour which matches green and blue. The cool, watery luminosity of the flutes/harps also heralds the "silver-fingered fountain" of the final line. The poem is thus rendered a synaesthetic harmony of sound, colour and movement, in which harps and flutes are intermingled with the greens and silvers of the garden in moonlight.

iii. Synaesthetic Lust and "The Dirty Colours of her Kiss"

Many of Cummings' poems are concerned with the idea of lust and sensuality, which he often represents in confusingly contradictory terms. Cohen comments on the vacillation inherent in Cummings' representation of women, suggesting

> these poems reveal, in varying degrees of balance, a disturbing tension between the speaker's lust for his partner (often a prostitute) and his aversion to her ... both the speaker's delight in her body and his attendant or subsequent disgust are conveyed in incisive - and often shockingly repugnant – metaphors.[108]

I suggest that it is the synaesthetic associations of these metaphors that make them so repugnant. The poet-persona is both attracted and repelled by the sensuality of perceptive experience; despite "the trivial stink of rich / frail firm asinine life" he still proclaims "i pant / for what's below ... / i want / the perpendicular lips the insane teeth / the vertical grin".[109] As he did in the line quoted earlier ("the mouth that sits between her cheeks / utters a thud of scarlet"[110] from "she sits dropping..."), Cummings repeatedly used synaesthetic metaphors of sound and colour in descriptions of the female form, which are at once pure and erotic. In "i spoke to thee" he repeated the

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[106] Houghton Notes, I[39], no. 123, as quoted in Cohen, p. 205.
[107] Houghton Notes, I[39], no. 294, as quoted in Cohen, p. 205.
[108] Cohen, p. 133.
[109] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 119.
[110] Sonnets-Realities XIV: Chimneys, p. 128.

same mouth-sound metaphor but gave it a much more sensuous and sublime connotation: "thy mouth is as / a chord of crimson music".[111] The two poems are concerned with the female form, yet they represent this form as polar opposites. The female in "i spoke to thee" is seen as divine and unearthly, and Cummings' use of synaesthetic metaphor reflects this: the red of her mouth is a chord of music, her "eyes are as a vase / of divine silence" and her "face is as a dream locked / in white fragrance".[112] The synaesthetic associations of music, divine silence and white fragrance convert the sight of the woman into a multi-sensory experience of divinity or profound beauty. Conversely, the poem "she sits dropping" uses synaesthetic associations to engender a feeling of commonness and earthly imperfection. The music of her mouth (with its suggestion of sublimity, the music of the spheres) is transformed into the 'thud' of reality, and the divine associations of fragrance and silence are converted into metaphors of tactility (touch traditionally being the most morally dangerous of the five senses). Her eyes are now "frozen", her face "delicately elephantine", her body grotesque; a "belly / whose deep squirm nibbles" and a "fattish leg leaks / obscenely from the dress" as "another couches, / weary, upon a flabby mattress of jelly".[113]

Cummings uses the same associations throughout Sonnets-Realities. The poem "when you rang at Dick Mid's Place" describes a prostitute:

> the madam was a bulb stuck in the door.
> a fang of wincing gas showed how
> hair, in two fists of shrill colour,
> clutched the dull volume of her tumbling face
> scribbled with a big grin. her sow-
> eyes clicking mischief from thick lids
> [...]
> her handless wrists did gooey severe shapes.[114]

Again, the grotesqueness of her body is described in synaesthetic terms; the colour of her hair is "shrill" and "clutching", her eyes "clicking" and her wrists "gooey". The tactile associations are emphasised by the "fang of wincing gas", echoing the wince of the poet-persona who is acutely aware of the physicality of the madam's body, and the "chunklike nose on which always the four / tablets of perspiration erectly sitting".[115] He

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[111] "Orientale I", p. 32.
[112] P. 32.
[113] P. 128.
[114] "Sonnets-Realities V", p. 120.
[115] P. 120.

does a similar thing in the poem "Cleopatra built" (Portraits, XXII), comparing music to lust and the female body in tactile synaesthetic terms:

> she was a silver tube of wise
> lust whose arms and legs
> like white squirming pipes
> wriggle upon the perfumed roman
>
> strength who how
> furiously plays the hot
> sweet horrible stops of
> her
> body
> [...]
> Thick slim warm moist
> built like an organ
> [...] hear
> the purple trumpets
> blow.[116]

Whereas in other poems Cummings uses tactility as a synaesthetic metaphor in the description of music, music in this poem is a metaphor for bodily sensation. Cleopatra's body is likened to pipes, a trumpet and an organ; the lust of the lovers is heard as synaesthetic music. This reflects once again the increasing tactility of the early twentieth century period and shows how it can even be seen in the work of poets, like Cummings, whose concerns were often visually-oriented.

The sensory experience of lust seemed to fascinate Cummings. Cohen notes how he

> delights in describing the sensations that his lover - or rather parts of his lover - arouse in him. But at the same time, he degrades her humanness: the colours of her kiss are 'dirty', her heart can only 'chatter', her eyes have a 'brittle crust' ... [T]he speaker watches his lover with the aesthetic detachment and acuity of a painter ... she remains ... only an agglomeration of parts: a 'yellow yawn', a 'brain', 'mussed' hair, undone strings. These sexual polarities derive from the same sources as the verbal and colour complementaries and address the same aesthetic goal of 'seeing around'.[117]

Cohen is referring here to Cummings' poem "the dirty colours of her kiss" (Sonnets-Realities III), in which the violence of synaesthetic tactility is once again coupled with lust. The poet-persona relates how "the dirty colours of her kiss have just / throttled / my seeing blood", "i bite on the eyes' brittle crust", "the alarm tore / two slits in her cheeks" as "she got up / with a gashing yellow yawn".[118] The visceral violence of these synaesthetic metaphors, the throttling/biting/tearing/gashing of the visual, is

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[116] P. 91.
[117] Cohen, p. 135.
[118] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 205.

characteristic of Cummings' representation of sexual polarity. He repeats the association in many of his poems. "Babylon slim" (Portraits V) displays the same "aesthetic detachment and acuity of a painter" that Cohen noted, but here Cummings transforms the visual by its synaesthetic associations:

Babylon slim
-ness of
evenslicing
eyes are chisels

scarlet Goes
with her
whitehot
face, gashed

by hair's blue cold

jolts of
lovecrazed abrupt

flesh split "Pretty
Baby"
to numb rhythm before Christ.[119]

Figure 6: E. E Cummings, *Figure Sketch* c. 1920's, Tempera on cardboard

It is interesting to look at this pictorial poem in conjunction with Cummings' art. *Figure Sketch*, c. 1920's (see **Figure 6**), echoes the associations of the poem: the blue gash of hair intruding into the paleness of the face, the roughly chiselled eyes and the intensity of the scarlet splitting the flesh. Cummings claimed early in his career that "Art is capable of expressing everything abstract. Motion, sound, smell, taste, syncopation etc."[120] and like Kandinsky he used colour as a means of expressing these abstract qualities. Thus the painting, in light of Cummings' theories of colour harmony, becomes a synaesthetic dissonance of sound, rhythm, and movement, the multiplicity of colours clashing with each other visually and aurally, advancing and receding around each other.[121] The poem strengthens the synaesthetic associations of the painting. The 'recessive' shade of blue opens up a void in the face, the 'advancing' shade of scarlet is heralded in the capitalisation of "scarlet Goes" and the rhythmic and aural colours splitting the painted body are literally converted into words: the words "Pretty Baby"

[119] P. 73.
[120] As quoted in Cohen, pp. 36-37.
[121] Cohen suggests that Cummings "preferred the dissonant excitement of lines that crossed, harmonies that clashed, and colours (not black and white) that opposed each other", p. 208.

(referring to a popular song) split the last stanza, thus, music splits the flesh into "numb rhythm" just as the colours have done.

Another interesting nexus between the painterly and the poetic occurs in Cummings' use of juxtaposition. Cohen explains the dreamlike logic of Cummings' conjunction of opposing adjectives:

> Such a yoking of opposites is necessary to capture the wholeness of 'pure form' and complete meaning, to 'see around' an object or word. A word, for example, might really possess two 'sides': a front, or conventional meaning that one sees and hears (e.g. Bad) and a back, or antithesis, unseen and unheard (e.g. Good). The front may leave a semantic trace of the back on the mind, just as the colour red leaves a fleeting afterimage of its complement, green, on the retina. Placed side by side, red and green intensify each other; would complementary adjectives ('good bad') do likewise? Would their juxtaposition form a meaning more potent than that of either alone? The possibilities must have intrigued Cummings, for he developed them into techniques in both his poetry and painting.[122]

Cummings certainly does this in "Babylon slim", where the red and green are vividly juxtaposed to create movement and vibrancy. The poem presents a similar "yoking of opposites", not only pictorially (scarlet and blue), but conceptually and sensorially: hot is followed by cold, jolts are followed by numbness, even the "whore of Babylon" associations in the first line are juxtaposed with an image of Christ in the last. Cummings uses the yoking of opposites poetically just as he uses the yoking of colours artistically. By yoking these opposing colours, words and concepts together to produce a sense of 'wholeness', Cummings is following an essentially synaesthetic paradigm which becomes clear through his choice of metaphorical language.

In discussing the yoking of opposites, it is interesting to note that for every poem that associates lust and femininity with a brutal sensuality there is another that does the opposite, and the synaesthetic metaphors Cummings uses in these dichotomous depictions of the female follow certain patterns. Where lust is coupled with violence or repulsion, the female body is expressed in tactile metaphors. Where the female body is the source of beauty or sublimity, the associations are often aural or olfactory in nature; as though the physicality of the female body is a threat, but the intangible aspects of her femininity (her voice, her smell) are sublime. Cummings uses the idea of white fragrance again in the love poem "if i believe": "i have offered up each fragrant / night,

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[122] P. 69.

when all my days / shall have before a certain / face become / white / perfume / only".[123] In "unto thee i", the poet rhapsodises on smell:

> unto thee i
> burn incense
> the bowl crackles
> upon the gloom arise purple pencils
>
> fluent spires of fragrance
> the bowl
> seethes
> a flutter of stars
>
> a turbulence of forms
> [...]
>
> i think
> thou lovest incense
> for in the ambiguous faint aspirings
> the indolent frail ascensions,
>
> of thy smile rises the immaculate
> sorrow
> of thy low
> hair flutter the level litanies
>
> unto thee i burn
> incense, over the dim smoke
> straining my lips are vague with
> ecstasy my palpitating breasts inhale the
>
> slow
> supple
> flower
> of thy beauty.[124]

The fragrance of incense, flowers and the beloved mingle here into an image of poignant, spiritual beauty. Smell becomes associated with religious reverence; the "spires" of incense, with the underlying symbolism of "ascension", are transformed into prayer ("litanies"). The poet is still haunted by the physicality of lust (the repetition of "flutter" echoes the poet's bodily palpitations throughout the poem) but attempts to overcome the "straining ... ecstasy" of bodily lust by reaching for the sublime. The burning of incense is a ritual of purification as well as veneration, and the poet-persona burns incense for himself as much as for the beloved. Lust is tempered by sublimity, a state represented not in metaphors of tactility, but through synaesthetic smell.

In "your little voice" Cummings similarly praises the voice of the beloved and its synaesthetic qualities:

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[123] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems,* Amores, VII, p. 47.
[124] "Orientale, IV", p. 35.

your little voice
Over the wires came leaping
and i felt suddenly
dizzy
With the jostling and shouting of merry flowers
wee skipping high-heeled flames
[...]
floating hands were laid upon me
I was whirled and tossed into delicious dancing
[...]
over time
and tide and death
leaping
sweetly
your voice.[125]

The female voice, as devoid of the humanising aspects of physicality or tactility as her smell is, becomes sublime and synaesthetic; experienced simultaneously as movement, heat, sound, touch and taste. In "Lady of Silence" (Impressions I) Cummings also couples female fragrance and voice: "tenderly upon / the dark's prodigious face / thy / voice / scattering perfume-gifted / wings"[126] in another synaesthetic depiction of divine femininity which opposes the idea of the female body as a corporeal embodiment of lust. Cummings' depictions of lust, or love, despite their differing associations, are mutually synaesthetic, reflecting his prioritisation of feeling over thinking. In "my naked lady framed" (Sonnets-Actualities, XV) the poet laments art's deficiency in expressing the conjoined beauty and sensuality of the lady: "painting wholly feels ashamed / before this music, and poetry cannot / go near because perfectly fearful".[127] For all their aesthetic intent, art and poetry can only "speak her wonderful": it is the sensory experience only that can pay her the proper homage, and the poet says

But i(having in my arms caught

the picture) hurry it slowly

to my mouth,taste the accurate demure
ferocious
rhythm of
precise
laziness. Eat the price

of an imaginable gesture

exact warm unholy.[128]

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[125] "Amores I", p. 41.
[126] P. 59.
[127] P. 168.
[128] P. 168.

The “picture” of the lady framed by twilight, though beautiful, is only a picture. It is only through the senses that her true essence can be experienced.

iv. Geometric Taste and Smell

Interestingly, particularly in light of the gustatory metaphors which recurred in the early twentieth century period, Cummings’ poetry also uses visual representations of taste quite extensively. His poem “the sky was candy luminous” (Impressions, VI) centres on the visual expression of taste:

```
the
   sky
        was
can  dy   lu
minous
            edible
spry
     pinks shy
lemons
greens   coo   l choc
olate
s.

un   der
  a   lo
co
mo
    tive    s   pout
                      ing
                        vi
                         o
                         lets
```
[129]

The quirky taste impressions of this poem give it a dreamlike, childish quality; the suggestion of a candy world and edible colours is enhanced by the playful fragmentation of the lines. The next poem, “i was considering how”, also uses this fragmentation in order to enhance the suggestion of nibbling:

```
a star’s
nibbling in-

fin
-i-
tes-
i
-mal-
ly devours
```

[129] P. 64.

darkness[130]

Both poems, fragmented like little bits of candy, encourage the words to be almost literally 'nibbled' on by the reader; the sense of taste in these poems is enhanced by both the visual images of colour and the visuality of the poem itself. Cummings also plays on his own synaesthetic associations here. Green is coupled with the tactile adjective "cool", and the repetition of his coloured vowel sounds, especially green AI and blue O, enhances the colours of the earth and sky in contrast to the *spry*, *shy* pinks and lemons and the *lo-co-mo*-tive spouting violet. Other poems also use taste in this synaesthetic manner. "spring omnipotent goddess" declares "you sing in your whiskey-voice",[131] a voice-taste metaphor that is echoed in "sonnet entitled how to run the world" with "drink and / E eat of her voice in whose silence the music of spring / lives".[132] The poem "conversation with my friend" speaks of "some delicious image"[133] and poems III and IV of Sonnets-Actualities both use synaesthetic expressions of taste as sensual pleasures: "Bit into you as teeth, in the stone / of a musical fruit. My lips pleasantly groan / on your taste"[134] and "The last thing he saw was you / naked amid unnaked things ... He suddenly tasted worms windows roses".[135] In these poems the focus of the synaesthetic taste metaphors is the figure of "you", the lover (or the reader). Taste is perhaps the most personal of the senses; for example, something can be seen, smelt, heard and touched simultaneously by large groups of people, but it is unlikely that it could be tasted concurrently by the masses. Thus the synaesthetic taste metaphor speaks to something personal in the reader; it functions as a personal invitation to 'taste' the poem, the images and the sensations, to 'nibble' on the words themselves.

Some of Cummings' taste metaphors are inherently multi-sensory; for example, "of this wilting wall" opens with the lines "of this wilting wall the colour drub / souring sunbeams, of a foetal fragrance",[136] a succinct synaesthetic image involving simultaneous colour, taste (sour), touch (sun) and smell (foetal fragrance). The second stanza of the poem discussed earlier, "my eyes are fond of the east side", focuses on the sense of taste specifically:

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[130] VII, p. 65.
[131] "Portraits, XX", p. 89.
[132] "No Thanks, 7", p. 390.
[133] "Portraits, XXIV", p. 96.
[134] P. 156.
[135] P. 157.
[136] "Sonnets-Realities, XVII," p. 131.

if sometimes my eyes stay at home
then my mouth will go out into the East side, my mouth goes to the peddlers,
to the peddlers of smooth, fruits of eager colours of the little,huddling
nuts and bad candies my,mouth loves melons slitted with bright knives,
it stains itself, with currants and cherries it (swallow s bun chesofnew
grapes like Gree n A r e b u b b l e s asc end-ing inthecarts my,mouth
is,fond of tiny plums of tangerines and apples it will,Gorge indistinct
palishflesh of laZilytas tingg OO seberries,it,loves these better than,
cubesandovalsof sweetness but it swallow) s greedily sugaredellipses it
does not disdain pickles,once,it,ate a scarlet pepper and my eyes were
buttoned with pain.[137]

The associations here are primarily visual: fruits of eager colours are scattered throughout, the poet's mouth is stained with currants and cherries, bunches of grapes are gathered like green bubbles. The visuality of shape is reinforced here (as in many of Cummings' poems) by the typography; the globular form of the gooseberries (echoing that of the grapes/bubbles) is visually realised in the capitalised "OO", just as the floating bubbles themselves are hinted at by the floating letters of the word "b u b b l e s" itself. The phrase "bunches of grapes" is literally transformed into bunches of letters, and the word swallows becomes first "swallow s" and then "swallow) s"; the physical gulp of a swallowing motion represented by the separation of the letter 'S'. Cohen, describing such typographical 'tricks', suggests that the capitalised OOs of the poem "are also an ideograph of the narrator's eyes- a natural enough image in a [poem] devoted to seeing".[138] In this way, Cummings highlights the synaesthetic visuality of taste (and sound) by using language and typography as a form of 'painting'.

The most interesting synaesthetic metaphor in the stanza though, is that of geometric taste: the "cubes and ovals of sweetness" and the "sugared ellipses". Geometric taste is a curious form of synaesthesia which came to the public attention primarily through Richard Cytowic's iconic 1993 book *The Man Who Tasted Shapes*. Despite the peculiarity of the metaphor Cummings uses it in a few of his poems, although whether he experienced some form of geometric taste himself is debatable. Associated primarily with taste, this geometric metaphor is also used within a multi-sensory context. The poem "at the ferocious phenomenon of 5 o'clock" (Post-Impressions, IX) introduces a taste-touch-image metaphor, "In the soft midst of the tongue sits the Woolworth building a serene / pastile-shaped insipid kinesis or frail

[137] P. 187.
[138] Cohen, p. 97.

swooping lozenge".[139] The poem then goes on to elaborate this synaesthetic correspondence into a multi-sensory conglomeration of geometricity:

> a ruglike
> sentience whose papillae expertly drink the docile perpendicular taste
> of this squirming cube of undiminished silence,supports while devour-
> ing the firm tumult of exquisitely insecure sharp algebraic music.[140]

Here, silence and music (and the image of the building, by association) are transformed into geometric shapes - perpendicular, cubic, sharp and algebraic - which are experienced through taste. These poems distinctly portray the Cubist influence in Cummings' aesthetic and artistic theories. Cohen says of the poem

> These perpendiculars convey not only motion but shape: a rectangular plane or cube. Indeed, the poem's genius is to fuse the two: to find motion in matter, describe matter in motion ... Poems about motion, however, could not sufficiently express this cosmic kinesis. The poems themselves had to move. And as he had done with his perceptual techniques, Cummings looked to the structural elements of language to generate this motion: to parts of speech, capital letters, punctuation, rhythm and tempo, context, narrative line, and textual shape.[141]

As Cohen suggests, geometricity is not confined only to taste or sound, but becomes part of language itself. The shapes and structures of the buildings are echoed on the page; Cummings literally builds images, both on the page and in the minds of the readers. Thus, the typographical structure and the visual elements of his poems fulfil a synaesthetic function themselves, expressing motion, taste (nibbling), tactility and even sound and synaesthetic colour (in, for example, the capitalised OO's in cOOl representing violet).

Cummings also uses geometric metaphors for other senses, notably, the sense of smell which is intrinsically connected to taste. In "I have seen her stealthily frail" (Sonnets-Unrealities, XII), he says

> I have seen her stealthily frail
> flower walking with its fellows in the death
> of light,against whose enormous curve of flesh
> exactly cubes of tiny fragrance try
> [...]
> Across the important gardens her body
> will come toward me with its hurting sexual smell
> of lilies ... beyond night's silken immense swoon
> the moon is like a floating silver hell

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[139] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 111
[140] P. 111
[141] Cohen, p. 177.

a song of adolescent ivory.[142]

This short poem displays other synaesthetic comparisons (smell is pain, the moon is an ivory song), but it is the suggestion of geometric smell, "cubes of tiny fragrance", that is so metaphorically unusual and appealing. It is interesting that Cummings seems to associate pleasant odours with 'tininess' and unpleasant odours with 'largeness'. In the poem "I remark this beach has been used too" (Post-Impressions, IV) he writes

> my Nose puts on sharp robes of uncouth odour,for an onion!for
> one-onion for. putrescence is Cubical sliced-nicelybits
> Of, shivers ofcrin Ging stink.dull, globular glows and
> flatchatte ringarom a .s
> [...]
> a booming smell waddles toward me.[143]

Here, smell is still cubical, but it has lost the sense of delicacy inherent in "cubes of tiny fragrance"; now, the putrescence is "booming", it "waddles". It also attains synaesthetic sound (which Cummings uses similarly in "–GON splashes-sink" when he speaks of "the stink of perfumed noise"[144]), and tactility in Sonnets-Realities VII, where "an amiable putrescence ... / purrs against my mind, the eyes' shuddering burrs / of light stick on my brain harder than can twitch / its terrors; / the mouth's, swallowed, muscle (itch / of groping mucous) in my mouth occurs".[145] Just as noise and largeness are coupled with unpleasant odour, silence and smallness are coupled with pleasant fragrances; "she smelled of silence"[146] ("the poem her belly marched through me as") and "how silently / emit a tiny violetflavoured nuisance: Odor?"[147] ("POEM, OR BEAUTY HURTS MR. VINAL"). This last line brings smell, coloured taste and silence together with the geometric quality of diminished size, creating a multisensory visual image which is bolstered in its painterly associations by the line which immediately follows it in the poem: "ono. / comes out like a ribbon lies flat on the brush".[148]

To conclude this discussion, it is clear that synaesthetic concepts played a huge part in Cummings' poetry. His interest in perception, colour and the sensory associations of the visual image arose from his painterly ambitions, and he transferred

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[142] E.E Cummings, *Complete Poems*, p. 147.
[143] P. 184.
[144] "Sonnets-Actualities, XVII", p. 170.
[145] P. 209.
[146] "Sonnets-Realities, VI", p. 208.
[147] "One, II", p. 229.
[148] P. 229.

these preoccupations to an examination of language, metaphor and the technical intricacies of poetics. Fundamental to Cummings' poetic work is the interaction of language and the senses, and his critics have pointed out that the abundance (some would say over-use) of typographical and visual experimentation in his poems means he sometimes ignores the fundamentally abstract nature of words, using them almost as 'tools' to build a particular poetic effect. Thus, many of his techniques can be seen as overly 'technical', more reliant on visual or theoretical effects than on the examination or expression of complex ideas. This visual preoccupation no doubt extends in some way from his painting background, but I suggest that synaesthesia may also go some way to explaining these shortfalls. Whether Cummings was a synaesthete is not integral to my study as a whole, although I would venture to suggest that the sheer volume and detail of his synaesthetic associations go some way to suggesting that he did experience at least one form of synaesthesia, if not multiple forms. If this was the case, it could be suggested that his visual and technical preoccupations were in some ways the result of the intense, un-elicited sensory impressions that characterise true synaesthetic perception. His constant focus on visuality within the physical typography of the poem could perhaps be a response in some way to the demands of his synaesthetic perceptions which being necessarily idiosyncratic, may not have translated in precisely the way he presumed they would. Synaesthesia, particularly multi-modal synaesthesia, has been shown to have unusual cognitive processing effects[149] which could perhaps explain Cummings' almost obsessive fixation with certain elements of poetry. In any case, whether he was a synaesthete or not, his poetry undoubtedly incorporates synaesthetic ideas which derive in some way from the visual and aesthetic theories being explored within the visual arts. Similarly, the abundance of synaesthetic metaphor in his work and the creativity with which he explored ideas of synaesthetic perception make it clear that his poetry was both influenced by, and had an influence on, the progress of modern poetics. For the painter of the 'poempicture', the pigments of poetry left a deep and indelible stain.

In the same way, the visual arts left a deep and indelible stain on the poetry and poetics of the early twentieth century. This was very much related to their mutual focus on synaesthetic ideas. I have suggested in this chapter that art movements such as

[149] See for example the case of Solomon Shereshevskii in Luria's *The Mind of a Mnemonist*.

Cubism, Futurism, Orphism and Synchomism, as well as the aesthetic theories of such artists as Kandinsky, played a significant role in the use of synaesthetic metaphors and synaesthetic ideas within poetry and poetics just as music did. Colour in particular was an integral element in the interaction of visual art and poetry and this can be seen most noticeably in the poetry of someone like Cummings, who was practised in both fields. It also encouraged a greater focus on visual theory in all areas of the Arts, which is evident by the interdisciplinary nature of many of the cultural movements of the time, as well as the interdisciplinary focus of theorists like Kandinsky. This interdisciplinarity naturally encouraged the integration of all the senses, and certainly contributed to the influx of synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphor that can be seen in the British and American poetry of this period.

CHAPTER SEVEN: POETIC COLOUR

7.1 William Carlos Williams, Poet of Contradictions

Another important poet dealing with visual art and perception was William Carlos Williams (1883-1963), the physician and poet famous for his dictum 'no ideas but in things'.[1] Williams' poetry certainly abounds with 'things'; the famous red wheelbarrow and plums in the icebox, a plenitude of flowers, trees, landscapes, cityscapes and, very often, works of art. A number of critics have noted his close link with the visual arts, including his associations with artists such as Cezanne,[2] Duchamp,[3] Demuth,[4] Gris[5] and Pollock,[6] as well as his connections with the writings of Kandinsky.[7] Many of his poems are ekphrastic[8] and others contain direct references to painting and art terms. Like Cummings, Williams was also a painter[9] (although he eventually abandoned this path for medicine and poetry) so his use of the visual, both in reference and poetic form/structure, is quite understandable. In order to ascertain the extent of synaesthetic concepts in Williams' poetry I will be looking at the work he wrote between 1909 and 1939, when synaesthetically-connected art movements were flourishing. I will build on Peter Halter's study by examining the mutual reciprocation between Williams and Kandinsky, to show how Kandinsky's theories had a particularly synaesthetic significance to his use of poetic colour. I will also look at some of the curious synaesthetic dichotomies Williams explores across his works, in order to establish how these may have been influenced by the culturally and technologically innovative period in which he was writing. Williams' use of synaesthesia follows a

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[1] William Carlos Williams, *Paterson* (New York: New Directions, 1946, 1948), p. 14.
[2] Charles Altieri, "Ponderation" in Cezanne and Williams, *Today*, Vol. 10, No. 2, Duke University Press, 1989, pp. 373-399.
[3] Henry M. Sayre, "Ready-Mades and Other Measures: The Poetics of Marcel Duchamp and William Carlos Williams", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 8, No. 1, Indiana University Press, 1980, pp. 3-22.
[4] James E. Breslin, "William Carlos Williams and Charles Demuth: Cross Fertilization in the Arts", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 6, No. 2, Indiana University Press, 1977, pp. 248-263.
[5] Michel Oren, "Williams and Gris: A Borrowed Aesthetic", *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 26, No. 2, University of Wisconsin Press, 1985, pp. 197-211.
[6] Joan Burbick, "Grimaces of a New Age: The Postwar Poetry and Painting of William Carlos Williams and Jackson Pollock", *boundary 2*, Vol. 10, No. 3, Duke University Press, 1982, pp. 109-123.
[7] Peter Halter, "Expression in Color: The Theory of Wassily Kandinsky and the Poetry of William Carlos Williams", *SPELL*, 1985, pp. 137-153.
[8] See his poetry collection of 1962 which was entitled *Pictures from Brueghel and Other Poems*. A number of critics, including Brian Dijkstra and James E. Breslin, have also commented on the ekphrastic relationship between Williams' poems and the paintings of Charles Demuth.
[9] Brian Dijkstra, *Cubism, Stieglitz, and the Early Poems of William Carlos Williams: The Hieroglyphics of a New Speech* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969).

peculiarly idiosyncratic path which is suggestive of his own personal style; he was a poet of contradictions.

i. Kandinskian Colour as 'Moving' Pigment

As I have previously discussed, Kandinsky developed a number of artistic theories incorporating multi-modal correspondences and synaesthetic colour. Williams was certainly familiar with these, and subscribed to them to some extent.[10] Peter Halter discusses the similar intentions of both Kandinsky and Williams in creating

> a more immanent or empathetic treatment of the object-world ... found, for instance, among the early 'physiognomists', the artists and critics in the wake of Cezanne (who was often praised as a 'primitive') as well as the Gestalt psychologists of the early twentieth century ... in this century the attention paid to the expressive dimension reaches a new climax ... expressive properties [relate] to a more primordial experience of reality.[11]

This 'primordial' experience of reality was very much related to synaesthetic ideas. The "expressive qualities of colours- the warmth of yellow and the coolness of blue, for example, with their inherent movement ... the ex-centric or concentric movements which are also characteristic of warm and cold colours"[12] are all synaesthetic concepts at their origins. Even Kandinsky's view, which Halter suggests Williams also ascribed to, that "the artist has above all to be susceptible to this expressive dimension of colours and forms; he has to revert back to that primary sensitivity to the impact of all things which children and the so-called primitives alone seem to possess"[13] is inherently synaesthetic, suggesting the synaesthetic perceptive capacity of childhood in the "primary sensitivity to the impact of all things".[14] In light of these influences it seems natural that Williams would use synaesthetic references, particularly to colour, within his work. I suggest that Williams utilised the synaesthetic qualities of colour, particularly its capacity for movement, in a similar aesthetic manner to Kandinsky, but he also used these qualities in order to enhance their emotive and expressive potential, as Cummings often did; the 'moving' quality of his colours helps to 'move' the reader towards a poetic epiphany.

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[10] Halter, p. 138.
[11] P. 143.
[12] P. 144.
[13] P. 144.
[14] P. 144.

The synaesthetic moving quality of colour most often involves the transition between the Kandinskian idea of 'advancing' warm colours (red, yellow) and 'retreating' cool colours (blues and purples), and Williams employs this idea for emotive purposes. In "Idyll" he writes:

> I lie here, warm
> Watching the blinding white
> That was saffron
> Change to steel blue
> Behind shaking trees.[15]

This technique, as well as being painterly in its associations, serves to create a pensive, intimate sense of moving from outside world to interior thoughts. The narrator retreats into his own cosy domestic interior and the outer world becomes distant and cold, just as the movement of colours recedes through the spectrum from blinding white, to yellow, to distant blue; from warm to cool. The movement, as well as being visually suggestive of the setting sun (with its own tactile implications of warmth to coldness), is emotive; the ideas are in the things (the sun, the colours) themselves. In "Conquest" the movement is in the opposite direction: "Lie there, blue city, mine at last- / rimming the banked blue-grey / and rise, indescribable smoky-yellow / into the overpowering white".[16] With this reverse movement comes the reverse sentiment; now it is the city which is treasured and held close ("mine at last") and which moves from distance to intimacy just as the colours advance from blues and greys, through yellows, to a once again blinding ("overpowering") white. The colours, with their intrinsic synaesthetic movements and temperatures, are used to enhance the emotive power of the images; the receding or advancing movement, coupled with warmth to coldness or vice versa, is equated to emotional 'movement'. Williams links Kandinsky's 'receding' cool colours with emotional distance again in "A Portrait in Greys": "Will it never be possible / to separate you from your greyness? / Must you always be sinking backward ... always in the distance, always against / a grey sky? / Must I be always / moving counter to you?"[17] Here, the Kandinskian coolness and recessive quality of the colour grey (suggestive of a bluish-grey by the mention of the sky) is representative of coolness and recession in both tactile and emotional quality.

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[15] William Carlos Williams, *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams: Volume I 1909-1939* Eds. A. Walton Litz & Christopher MacGowan (New York: New Directions, 1986).
[16] P. 90.
[17] P. 99.

Conversely, colour movement is related to closeness and passion in IX of *Spring and All*: "Everything- / windows, chairs / obscenely drunk, spinning- / white, blue, orange- / hot with our passion".[18] Here, the disoriented spinning is enhanced by the chaotic (and, in terms of the spectrum, non-sequential) 'movement' of the colours from white to blue to orange. A similar movement is echoed in "Virtue": "whirlpools of / orange and purple flame / feather twists of chrome / on a green ground ... it is the smile of her / the smell of her / the vulgar inviting mouth of her",[19] and again in "Spring Strains", where the "circles, angles / swift converging to a point that bursts / instantly!" are coupled with "rifts [of] rock blue / and dirty orange".[20] As Brian Djikstra notes, the poem "is in fact an elaborate attempt at painting a cubist picture in words. It represents a visual plane, a visual field of action".[21] The juxtaposition of the contrasting colours orange and blue/purple gives to Williams' poems the same sense of movement that the colours do in Kandinsky's paintings, and they are also reminiscent of Cummings' colour-filled poems. However, while Kandinsky's colours were essentially abstract, non-meaningful entities (although he believed they had universal significance), Williams' words were not: their synaesthetic effects are intensified by their linguistic and metaphoric associations as well as their sounds. In "Spring Strains" the visual is concentrated energy; the juxtaposition of the contrasting colours is full of movement, and even "the blinding and red-edged sun-blur" is "creeping energy, concentrated / counterforce ... rivet[ting] them in one puckering hold".[22] The repeated alliteration here increases the intensity of the colour movements. Just like poem IX in *Spring and All*, the imagery in "Spring Strains" is connected with passion, although it is now depicted not as corporeal but as more organic and earthly, and found not in the female body but in the erotic masculine imagery of the "blue-grey buds / crowded erect with desire against / the sky ... Vibrant bowing limbs / pull downward, sucking in the sky".[23] Nature takes on erotic and masculine qualities which are heightened by their synaesthetic implications, a technique which Williams continued in other poems. Passion, whether based on the female body or on the erotic and gendered qualities of nature, was linked to moving synaesthetic colour just as greys were linked to distance and retreat. These

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[18] P. 201.
[19] P. 89.
[20] P. 97.
[21] Djikstra, p. 64.
[22] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, p. 97.
[23] P. 97.

synaesthetic colour movements help to intensify the emotional qualities of the poems themselves in ways which coincide with the synaesthetic effects of colour that Kandinsky expounded.

Williams also links colour with multiple sensory faculties in a variety of other synaesthetic ways. Coloured words or speech are often paired with images of flowers in his poems, suggesting fragrance and texture as well as colour, as in "his verse is crimson when they speak of the rose"[24] ("La Flor"), "the red, the yellow, the purple-blues- / So do my words catch and bear / Both leaves and flowers that are fallen"[25] ("Offering") and

> in violent disarray
> of yellow sprays, green spikes
> of leaves, red pointed petals
> and curled heads of blue
> and white
> [...]
> the flowers remain composed.
> Coolly their colloquy continues
> above the coffee and loud talk
> grown frail as vaudeville.[26]

With these synaesthetic qualities Williams enhances the emotive and expressive qualities of his images; flowers "seem no longer flowers alone / but colour and movement- or the shapes / of quietness".[27] Words are similarly linked to trees in "The Botticellian Trees":

> The alphabet of
> the trees
> is fading in the
> song of the leaves
> the crossing
> bars of the thin
> letters that spelled
> winter
> and the cold
> have been illuminated
> with pointed green.[28]

In these poems flowers and trees, especially in their colour properties, are given intensity and poetic significance by being likened to words or speech. They become voluble and eloquent in their colour, and also self-reflexive in the sense that it is the

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[24] P. 38.
[25] P. 38.
[26] "The Disputants", pp. 167-8.
[27] "Flowers by the Sea", p. 352.
[28] P. 348.

words of the poem creating these images and colours in the first place, which then in turn respond with their own synaesthetic 'words'. Williams' use of synaesthesia here has an emotive capacity but also a self-reflexive one, reminding the reader that their senses are being stimulated only by the words they are reading. This form of semantic/linguistic synaesthesia also represents another unusual synaesthetic trope which arose alongside the pervasive metaphors of tactility and taste from this period, so its presence in Williams' poetry should be noted.

Williams extends the self-reflexive use of synaesthetic colour to other metaphors. Colours are linked to qualities such as touch: as, for example, in "Colour of flower, / Blood-bright berry none, nor flame rust / On leaf, nor pink gall-sting on stem"[29] and "The birches are mad with green points / the wood's edge is burning with their green / burning, seething".[30] This technique is used often in *Spring and All* (1923), where the colours of flowers are again given Kandinskian properties of movement and energy:

> pink confused with white
> flowers and flowers reversed
> take and spill the shaded flame
> darting it back
> into the light's horn
> [...]
> petals radiant with transpiercing light
> contending
> above
> the leaves
> reaching up their modest green
> from the pot's rim.[31]

Williams continued to use the technique in his later work, as seen in "The Crimson Cyclamen" (from *Adam & Eve & The City*, 1936):

> White is suffused with red
> more rose than crimson
> --all a colour
> the petals flare back
> from the stooping craters
> of those flowers
> as from a wind rising—
> and though the light
> that enfolds and pierces
> them discovers blues
> and yellows there also
> [...]

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[29] "Man in A Room", p. 123.
[30] "Portrait of the Author", p. 172.
[31] *Spring and All*, I, p. 184.

The effect against
this winter where
they stand—is crimson.[32]

Here, the painterly effects of the poems also remind the reader that it is not in fact a painting, or an image, that they are viewing. The quality of tactility which is given to the colours enhances this as it too is an imagined quality. Unlike Kandinsky, who was working with pure colour pigment, Williams was painting his poetic pictures with words which he used as 'pigment', and his synaesthetic metaphors serve to emphasise that.

As would be expected from a poet so interested in contradictions, Williams' use of synaesthetic metaphor did not follow one clear path. Coloured music/ sound was also linked to touch in the same way as movement was linked to colour, a technique which can be seen in the lines, "Ecstatic bird songs pound / the hollow vastness of the sky / with metallic clinking- / beating colour up into it ... stirring into it a warmth ... bursting wildly against it".[33] Here, the sounds of birdsong are intensified by the qualities of colour and touch; their 'ecstasy' is made palpable through the other senses. A similar intensification happens in "Hermaphroditic Telephones", where,

demonic bells
piercing the torpid

ground

have filled with circular
purple and green
and blue anemones

the radiant nothing
of crystalline
spring.[34]

The emotive and sensory impact of the "demonic bells" is intensified by their synaesthetic associations. This occurs again in "Trees":

the few grey stars
draw upward into a vague melody
of harsh threads
[...] how easily the long yellow notes
of poplars flow upward in a descending
scale, each note secure in its own
posture—singularly woven.[35]

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[32] P. 419.
[33] "Dawn", p. 85.
[34] "Hermaphroditic Telephones", p. 252.

By endowing colours with sound, as with movement, Williams is giving them a greater sensory and emotive potential; the yellow trees become long, yellow notes, clear and distinct against the "vague melody of harsh threads" that is the grey of night.

Williams also relates images and ideas to the sensory quality of taste, and I would suggest that for him, as for Cummings, this arose out of the trend toward gustatory synaesthesia which began with Yeats and the Imagists. Some of Williams' synaesthetic metaphors are enhanced by the suggestion of taste alongside other multisensory qualities; for example, "a dark vinegar-smelling place / from which trickles / the chuckle of / beginning laughter",[36] or the "souring flowers of the bedraggled / poplars: a festering pulp on the wet earth"[37] in the poem aptly titled "Smell". Even the lines,

> Cold, greenish, split grapefruit, its juice
> on the tongue, the clink of the spoon in
> your coffee, the toast odours say it over and over
> [...]
> sting of the snow, the burning liquor of
> the moonlight, the rush of the rain[38]

from "A Goodnight", part of the equally aptly titled collection "Sour Grapes" of 1921, indicate the primacy of taste metaphors amongst a conglomeration of sensory impressions. Showing the pervasiveness of the taste metaphor, Williams even used it when referring to his own work and life:

> A thin thread of narrative remains - a few hundred pages - about which cluster, like rock candy, the interests upon which the general reader will spend a few hours, as might a sweet-toothed child, preferring something richer and not so hard on the teeth. To us, however, such hours have been sweet.[39]

Taste, then, was seemingly as important to Williams as the visual, aural and tactile qualities of perceptive experience. As would be expected by the predominance of natural images in Williams' poetry, synaesthetic taste metaphors are linked to images of nature and natural states, giving the images an unusually vivid complexity. Taste is indirectly attributed to light by the metaphors used in "A Love Song":

> Yellow, yellow, yellow,
> It eats into the leaves,
> Smears with saffron

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[35] P. 98.
[36] "Keller Gegen Dom", pp. 91-92.
[37] P. 92.
[38] "A Goodnight", pp. 144-145.
[39] William Carlos Williams, *Selected Essays of William Carlos Williams* (New York: Random House, 1954).

The horned branches
[...]
There is no light—
Only a honey-thick stain
That drips from leaf to leaf
And limb to limb
[...]
See me!
My hair is dripping with nectar.[40]

The images of saffron, honey and nectar in this poem play a dual role; not only do they suggest an intensity of colour (yellowness), but they also suggest thickness/viscosity, staining/tinting and an intensity of flavour, all of which enhance the qualities of the depicted light by synaesthetic association. In "Idyll" Williams does a similar thing, with wine being the metaphoric link between the intoxicating effect of the visual sky and the feeling of happiness: "Wine of the grey sky / Wine of happiness".[41] The link between the sky and liquid is repeated in "Self Portrait I" ("You tissue out / You drink light / And go in clouds"[42]), and that of liquid and ecstasy is repeated in Seraph ("Gleaming with light! / The miraculous vision / Flaming, flashing itself / Upon me, an acid / To quench thirst"[43]); interestingly, all three poems are clustered together in *Poems 1914*, suggesting this particular metaphor may have had special significance for Williams at this time. Yet these few examples of the linking of synaesthetic taste with images of nature are directly contradicted by what I would suggest is a much more prominent theme in his work: the gendering of the city and the country, and the subsequent gustatory and tactile synaesthetic attributes he gives him.

ii. Feminine Taste, Masculine Touch: The Dichotomy of City and Country

The rift between city life and country life was increasingly significant in the early twentieth century. With increasing industrialisation and growing ease of travel cities were expanding rapidly, and the rural way of life was being overshadowed in many ways by this urban-centrism. The dichotomy of city and country (in some ways representative of past versus future, or natural versus artificial) held a great fascination for many artists, and Williams was no exception. There is undoubtedly a profusion of natural imagery in Williams' poems, but this natural imagery is juxtaposed with images

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[40] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, pp. 53-54.
[41] P. 43.
[42] P. 62.
[43] P. 44.

of city life and industrialisation which echo those found in much of the art of the time. Henry M. Sayre writes in *The Visual Text of William Carlos Williams* that

> For Williams, whose poetry seems to be based completely upon a collision of values - art and reality, design and detail, the multiplicitous and the single - the city would seem the ideal image ... But the city is a source of confusion in Williams' art ... By treating modern constructions ... as natural organisms, Williams is able, for a while, to feel at home with them.[44]

It is clear that Williams does indeed represent the city in natural and organic terms (see "The Flower" or "Perpetuum Mobile: The City" from 1930, for example) but he also aligns the city with images of femininity, as Sayre suggests:

> The city as woman maintains, furthermore, the sense of conflict and opposition with which Williams approaches the city in the first place. She is, after all, the male poet's opposite. But as woman the city is suddenly accessible; it even projects the creative union of the poet and his subject, mind and matter.[45]

Sayre implies that the gendered association of city with female stems from the intrinsic confusion and conflict that Williams had towards both. I will show that not only is Williams' image of the city aligned with the feminine, but it is expressed specifically through synaesthetic metaphor, and this was used by the poet in an attempt to alleviate this internal conflict. Furthermore, I suggest that he extended the metaphor to its dichotomous opposite, not only aligning the city with the feminine but also aligning the country/nature with the masculine. In these dichotomies lie contradictions, but also rich sensory implications which are enhanced by the use of synaesthetic metaphor.

Williams' association of the city with the feminine is unexpected and seems somehow contradictory; it could be assumed that the city, with its phallic buildings, its iron and steel, and its might and physical stature, would be more analogous to masculinity. While critics such as Sayre have touched on the reasons behind Williams' curious analogy, they don't discuss the fact that he also inverted the metaphor by relating nature, particularly the countryside, to masculinity. Again, this is also not a traditionally expected metaphor; nature is much more commonly associated with fecundity and female deities such as Gaia, Demeter or Mother Earth, and Williams was clearly familiar with such ideas as he titled his 1920 collection of poems *Kora in Hell*; a reference to the figure of Persephone (or *Korē,* daughter of Demeter). There are certainly a few instances in his work where these traditional implications come into

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[44] Henry M. Sayre. *The Visual Text of William Carlos Williams*, University of Illinois Press, 1983, p. 54.
[45] P. 62.

play. Rose Lucas suggests as much in her essay "The Great Sex Spiral: The Poetics of William Carlos Williams":

> Speaking from the male perspective, Williams identifies the entire 'otherness' of his experience with the female and the female principle; thus, woman is nature, the earth, the nurturer - and indeed, all of the stereotypical attributes of 'femininity' with which the poet is unable or unwilling to identify himself.[46]

While Williams does on occasion represent the female in these terms, I don't believe he subscribes to them consistently; in fact, he often consciously overturns them. The methods that he uses to subvert these traditional associations, such as equating the city with the female body and the country with the masculine, therefore bear careful examination. I believe Williams was challenging these traditional associations as a response to, and an indication of, his own anxiety about the rapid changes of the early twentieth century. Through these metaphorical connections he was attempting to make sense of the conflict by finding perceptual links which work to familiarise and placate, at least poetically, the contradictory emotions the city incited.

My theory is that Williams used specific synaesthetic metaphors to represent the masculine and the feminine, which he in turn applied to images of the country and the city, with the femininity of the city being represented through taste and the masculinity of the country through touch and tactility. This idea is introduced in the poem "Grotesque", where Williams constructs the metaphor of 'female city' and 'male country' through taste and touch: "The city has tits in rows ... The city is full of milk" but "The country is in the main- male, / It butts me with blunt stub-horns".[47] He then goes on to use these associations in many of his later poems. "Portrait of the Author"[48] represents country and city through the opposing senses of touch and taste. In the countryside, the trees are "burning, seething ... Black is split into flowers. In / every bog, ditch, flares of / small fire, white flowers! ... The world is gone, torn into shreds". This description of the countryside sounds more like a description of a World War I trench; it is unusual in its overt violence and masculine undertone. Yet when the poem moves to the city, the perceptual focus moves to taste; "My rooms will receive me. But my rooms / are no longer sweet spaces where comfort / is ready to wait on me with its crumbs". The gustatory metaphors here are subsequently linked to a suggestion of the

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[46] Rose Lucas, "The Great Sex Spiral: The Poetics of William Carlos Williams", *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, Vol. 4, No. 2. 1985, pp. 21-33.
[47] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, p. 49.
[48] Pp. 172-173.

erotic (and by extension, the female): "Your face! ... your hands, your lips to drink! / Give me your wrists to drink- I drag you, I am drowned in you, you / overwhelm me! Drink!" Thus, the country is linked to touch and the city is linked to taste in this poem, but by extension both are also linked to gender.

"The Lonely Street" continues this theme. Again, the setting is a town or city rather than a natural environment, and again the focus is placed on the female and the sense of taste, which becomes erotically charged: "they walk the streets...touching their avid mouths / with pink sugar on a stick- / like a carnation each holds in her hand- / they mount the lonely street".[49] The erotic female and the sense of taste are linked again by their placement in the urban environment of a street which is then also made erotic; the girls begin by "walking" the street but end up "mounting" it. A similar erotic association can be seen in other urban-situated poems including "The Moon" ("through roofs ... it is the night / waking to / smells of lechery"[50]), "The Men" ("The Church-of-the-Polaks' / bulbous towers / kiss the sky just so sternly / so dreamily / as in Warsaw, as in Moscow"[51]) and "History":

> Lay your hands
> upon the granite as a lover lays his
> hand upon the thigh and upon the
> round breasts of her who is beside
> him
> [...]
> I have walked naked into the street,
> now I have scattered my heavy beauty
> in the open market.[52]

Here, the streets become female, and it is a male who walks as though naked through them; the city is thus linked to the woman as sexual object.

Williams' use of the sense of taste in the female/city metaphor was not only linked to erotic qualities. Taste, drinking and mouths are intrinsically connected to the idea of pregnancy and motherhood, and Williams uses the image of milk in order to establish this link. Williams' use of the pregnancy metaphor as an emblem for femininity is not surprising considering his professional life as a physician. He must have attended births frequently, and he wrote about the experiences in poems such as

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[49] P. 174.
[50] P. 326.
[51] P. 278-9.
[52] Pp. 83-84.

"Complaint"[53] and "The Cold Night".[54] In this version of the metaphor, the city which he conceived as "full of milk ... tits in rows"[55] becomes the source of nourishment, but the image of "tits in rows" suggests that this nourishment is somehow artificial and impersonal; a factory-line rather than the comfort of a mother. Kerry Driscoll suggests in *William Carlos Williams and the Maternal Muse* that Williams' "fascination with women stemmed from recognition of their essential otherness- the fact that a female, while closely akin to the male, was nonetheless a distinct entity, a creature at once familiar and inexplicably foreign".[56] He had similar feelings about the city, a place also familiar yet foreign, and his use of the synaesthetic taste metaphor ostensibly arises from his desire to understand and neutralise the source of this conflict. For Williams, the city seemed to resemble at times motherly nourishment and at times a sterile feeding-ground; the implication of nourishment by drinking, and by extension breastfeeding, as connected with the 'female' city occurs more than once. His early poem "The Wanderer: A Rococo Study" suggests the metaphor when the narrator proclaims "I went sucking the air! Into the city!" The city itself is then described in peculiarly misogynistic terms:

> Below the skirt the ugly legs of young girls
> Pistons too powerful for delicacy!
> The women's wrists
> [...] And barrels and milk cans
> [...]
> Sagging breasts and protruding stomachs,
> Rasping voices, filthy habits with the hands.
>
> Nowhere you! Everywhere the electric!
> Ugly, venomous, gigantic!
> Tossing me as [a]
> [...]
> helpless
> Infant till it shriek with ecstasy
> And its eyes roll and its tongue hangs out--![57]

The poem treats the 'ugly, venomous, gigantic' city as grotesque and deformed, mechanising it in the same way as the women with their "piston" legs. It consumes identity and individuality ("Nowhere you! Everywhere the electric!"), transforming everything into a malformed version of itself. The mention of infants alongside

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[53] P. 153.
[54] P. 154.
[55] P. 49.
[56] Kerry Driscoll, *William Carlos Williams and the Maternal Muse*, (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987) p. 1.
[57] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, p. 31.

protruding stomachs and sagging breasts (a visual echo of the "barrels and milk cans") also suggests pregnancy and birth, depicting them by association as similarly grotesque and ugly. In another poem, "Wind of the Village", the urban space is described as a "village of the same milk as I", and once again the implications of industrialisation are linked with pregnancy and birth:

> I have issued from a womb
> wretched and impoverished
> [...]
> the people wakened
> naked and with nothing to wear,
> hungry with nothing to eat
> and today has dawned
> heavily tormented
> bleeding in fact
> [...]
> life is drunk over and over.[58]

The references to wombs, drinking and birth in these poems are implicitly connected with urbanity, but also to a sense of terror and apprehension; as natural as they are, they are also somehow 'grotesque'.

In some of Williams' poems the pregnancy/city metaphor is not expressed quite so negatively. "Stillness" (from the same collection as "Grotesque") describes the urban in peaceful, and I would suggest inherently prenatal, terms:

> Lean above their beds tonight
> Snow covered rooves;
> Listen;
> Feel them stirring warmly within
> And say—nothing.[59]

Here the urban image, the "heavy white rooves / of Rutherford / sloping east and west", is represented in maternal, comforting terms and the houses provide womblike protection from the "great smouldering distance / on all sides / that engulfs you". The mother/nurturer figure, although sometimes aligned with a sense of misogynistic disgust, is also afforded the recognition of a central place in the existence of the human race which is perhaps indicative of the way Williams felt about the city, the 'birthplace' of modernity. Once again, Williams is playing with the inherent contradictions of the urban city; it can be alternately a place of terror and a place of comfort.

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[58] P. 447.
[59] P. 52.

To counteract the negative implications of many of his female/city metaphors, Williams sometimes uses the image of flowers to connect the city and the female body. This is most obvious in the poems "The Flower", "A Marriage Ritual" and "Perpetuum Mobile: The City". As Sayre notes, these poems highlight the contrast between organic and synthetic by comparing the city to a flower.[60] They are also subtly suggestive of the erotic: "a petal, colourless and without form / the oblong towers ... small in the distance, have appeared / pinkish and incomplete- / It is the city".[61] Although the flower image suggests beauty and delicacy, all three poems betray conflicted emotions. When the poet-narrator proclaims "Nothing of / it is mine, but visibly / for all that it is a petal of a flower- my own"[62] and "the city: / This is my own! a flower ... it is my own / and my heart goes out to it / dumbly"[63] he feels drawn to it and repelled from it simultaneously. The flower stands as a symbol for beauty, but it is something he can never truly 'possess'. Again, the dichotomy of the city is highlighted by the dichotomy of the female as alternately beautiful or disgusting, erotic or maternal; in its female associations it becomes the complex of Madonna and the whore, as Driscoll and Lucas suggest.[64] The flower image is thus suggestive of a marriage or integration of male and female, it represents natural growth (thus, in Williams' terms masculine) but is used as a metaphor for the city (and by extension the feminine). The sexual connotations of flowers were certainly being artistically explored in the period Williams' was writing[65] which perhaps explains why he chose the image as representative of a reproductive 'joining' of female and male, of pregnant city and virile country.

In contrast to the synaesthetic gustatory metaphors which characterised the feminine city in Williams' work, the metaphorical representation of the country as male was expressed through tactility, perhaps because of the inherent 'violence' of its natural order (or disorder). In "Grotesque" the image of country as bull is described in destructive terms, threatening the female with its masculine violence ("These crack skulls / And spill brains / Against her stomach"[66]). Williams' poetry often seems to return to the country, constructing it as a retreat from the onslaught of modernity, yet I

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[60] Sayre, p. 60.
[61] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, p. 322.
[62] P. 322.
[63] P. 349.
[64] Driscoll, p. 4. Lucas p. 32.
[65] Georgia O'Keeffe represents the most widely-known of these, and Williams was certainly familiar with her work.
[66] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, p. 49.

would suggest he also feels threatened by its lack of control and disengagement compared to the order and human-imposed structure of the city. Lucas notes the masculine implications of lines such as "the horizontal landscape with the upward thrusting of the organic growth of trees and shrubs ... stand[ing] phallus-like by the road, bearing secretly the seeds of the new growth".[67] The word "thrust" suggests the violent connotations of this metaphor; the masculine is hard, strong, dominant, and these qualities are synaesthetically transferred to the country landscape. Tactile associations can be seen quite clearly in "Wild Orchard" ("It is a broken country, / the rugged land is / green from end to end ... the bare sky / has stood there day and night"[68]) and again in "Young Sycamore":

> this young tree
> whose round and firm trunk
> [...] rises
> bodily
> into the air with
> one undulant thrust
> [...]
> eccentric knotted
> twigs
> bending forward
> hornlike at the top.[69]

Here, as in "Grotesque", the country and its characteristics are compared to a bull or a horned animal, representing strength as well as a threatening dominance. This bull-as-country metaphor is compounded by its suggestion of masculinity, but also by its lack of femininity. Just as the sense of taste characterises the 'female' urban environment, the 'male' natural environment is characterised by its *lack* of taste; if the taste of milk as it relates to the mother and the feminine is representative of the city "full of milk", then the country as male must, in effect, be milk-less. In fact, Williams suggested just as much in his poem "The Bull"[70]: "the round sun ... the glossy pinetrees / his substance hard / as ivory or glass- / through which the wind yet plays- / Milkless".[71] The synaesthetic emphasis here is also very much centred on touch and tactility, as opposed to taste: the bull is "ringed, haltered, chained ... he kneels, lies down". The country scene represents captivity as opposed to freedom, and masculinity and barrenness as opposed to femininity and fecundity. The bull, for all its masculine strength and

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[67] Lucas, p. 24.
[68] *The Collected Poems of William Carlos Williams*, p. 239.
[69] P. 267.
[70] Pp. 240-241.
[71] P. 241.

violence, is made impotent and barren by its lack of milk, perhaps in the same way the country was being made barren by the rise of the city as the breeding ground of modernity. Williams describes the country in these terms in "Contemporania": "We are not curst together, / The leaves and I, / Framing devices, flower devices / And other ways of peopling / The barren country".[72] Perhaps, by using such metaphors, Williams was making a prescient comment on the future of industrialisation and technology as they relate to the city and country; by being aligned with the female, the urban environment become a place of birth, beauty, and eroticism, but also in some respects a place of repulsion and disgust. It must also be noted that the metaphor of woman/city, male/country, which I have shown is clearly present in Williams' early work, was directly contradicted in his later poems. This is most evident in *Paterson*, his homage to the city, where he states:

> A man like a city and a woman like a flower
> --who are in love. Two women. Three women.
> Innumerable women, each like a flower,
> But
> Only one man—like a city.[73]

For whatever reason, Williams completely inverted the metaphor over the course of twenty to thirty years of writing, as he seemed to do with many of his metaphors and concepts. Whether this reflects the conflicted nature of his perception of the modern city, or perhaps his complicated feelings toward the sexes, it is clear he was a poet of contradictions who used synaesthetic concepts in order to strengthen and emphasise his poetic metaphors. For a poet so immersed in the modern art, colour theory, technology, medicine and aesthetics of the early twentieth century, this is not surprising.

7.2 Wallace Stevens and Synaesthetic Symbolism

> "The senses paint by metaphor"
> -"Poem Written at Morning"[74]

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955), another quintessentially modernist poet, was an enigma of a man: philosophical poet by night, insurance executive by day. His work is similarly enigmatic, suggesting the visual immediacy of the Imagists, combined with a deep

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[72] P. 16.
[73] Williams, *Paterson*, p. 15.
[74] Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Knopf, 1954) p. 219

philosophical concern about the nature of reality and a playful, witty and sometimes obfuscating adoration of sounds and words. Like Cummings and Williams, Stevens was interested in modern visual art in itself as well as for its relevance to poetry. He suggested in his essay "Relations Between Poetry and Painting" that "The paramount relations between poetry and painting today, between modern man and modern art is simply this: that in an age in which disbelief is so profoundly prevalent or, if not disbelief, indifference to questions of belief, poetry and painting, and the arts in general, are, in their measure, a compensation for what has been lost".[75] For Stevens, "modern reality (was) a reality of de-creation" and poetry, like painting, was (in Picasso's words) "a horde of destructions".[76] His poems seem to search continually for those lost elements which he believed could be redeemed by the 'supreme fiction' of poetry.

The link between painting and Stevens' poetry is immediately evident. Who can read "Sea Surface Full of Clouds" without picturing a Monet, or a Seurat, within the shifting hues of lines such as "ocean, which like limpid water lay ... in that ambrosial latitude / Out of light evolved the moving blooms"?[77] "The Man with the Blue Guitar" calls to mind Picasso, as "Sunday Morning" does Matisse.[78] Michel Benamou's 1959 essay "Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Poetry and Painting" explored the influence of modern art on Stevens' work, suggesting,

> One feels in the poetic universe of Wallace Stevens a sort of pulse that alternately dilates and narrows the field of vision. At its widest it resembles the world of an open-air landscapist; at the other extreme, it has the limits of a painter's studio. One pole corresponds to the broad landscapes of the impressionists, its opposite to the still-lifes and the compositions of decorative cubism.[79]

That Stevens admired the Impressionist, Cubist and Expressionist aesthetics is obvious from his focus on sight, multiple viewpoints and the effects of light. A number of critics after Benamou have noticed and discussed these associations, including Daniel Schwarz[80], Bonnie Costello[81] and Charles Altieri[82], among others. Stevens' affinity with

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[75] Wallace Stevens, "The Relations Between Poetry and Painting" from *The Necessary Angel* (1951), in *Collected Poems and Prose*. (New York: Penguin, 1997) p. 748.
[76] Pp. 741-750.
[77] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, p. 99.
[78] As noted by Michel Benamou, "Wallace Stevens: Some Relations Between Poetry and Painting", *Comparative Literature*, Vol. 11, No. 1, Oregon: Duke University Press, 1959, pp. 35-63.
[79]Pp. 47-60.
[80] Daniel R. Schwarz, "The Serenade of a Man who Plays a Blue Guitar": The Presence of Modern Painting in Stevens Poetry, *The Journal of Narrative Technique*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1992, pp. 65-83.
[81] Bonnie Costello, "Effects of an Analogy: Wallace Stevens and Painting", in Albert Gelpi (ed.) *Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985) pp. 65-85.

art is relevant to any discussion of his use of synaesthetic concepts and metaphor for their dual focus on perception and colour.

As well as the visual arts, Stevens was interested in the interaction of language and the senses, particularly the function of language in transforming sensory perceptions; he believed that "words add to the senses".[83] He was particularly interested in metaphor and the transformative power of the metaphoric potential of the imagination upon reality. Many of his poems play with ideas of multiple perspectives, or multiple metaphors, for single objects or landscapes.[84] This focus on multiple viewpoints has roots in both Impressionism and Cubism (for example, Monet's haystacks, or Picasso's distorted faces) but is also very much at the crux of the poet's dilemma of how to utilise language to portray non-linguistic things. The answer to this dilemma is, for most poets, metaphor. Where Monet and Picasso used oil paint, Stevens used metaphor to "paint the senses" and to change "things as they are".[85] His focus on metaphor and sensory perception made him particularly open to the use of synaesthetic concepts. I suggest that Stevens focused on visual and aural synaesthetic comparisons in his work. The cerebral and aesthetic nature of his approach implies that such connections in Stevens' work did not arise as a form of true synaesthetic perception, but rather as a product of the intersection of three areas of interest: his focus on modes of perception, the exploration of the philosophical nature of reality and his fascination with modern art (and modern music). Thus Stevens' use of synaesthetic concepts is not a result of any synaesthesia of his own but was a natural response to the multi-sensory stimulations of the environment he was writing, living and working in. However, there is a minor aspect of Stevens' work which does suggest to me a peculiarly and idiosyncratically synaesthetic approach, and I will address this at the end of my discussion.

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[82] Charles Altieri, "Why Stevens Must be Abstract, or What a Poet can Learn from Painting" in *Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism*, pp. 86-118.
[83] P. 232.
[84] See for example "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird", "Sea Surface Full of Clouds", "Six Significant Landscapes" and "New England Verses".
[85] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "The Man with the Blue Guitar", p. 166.

i. Stevens "The Scholar, Whose Green Mind Bulges with Complicated Hues"

Reading Stevens' collected poetry, one is immediately struck by the abundance of colour references. Even browsing the titles of his poems incites an array of peculiarly exotic colours in the mind: images of lilac, banana, peacock, violet, watermelon, orangeade and grape appear alongside blacks, blues, greys and yellows. Perhaps this incredible profusion of colour arose from his aforementioned interest in Cubist and Impressionist art; in any case, it is clear that Stevens, for all the seeming drabness of his daytime job, was both a colourist himself and possessed of a vast visual imagination. Costello discusses the importance of the eye in Stevens' work:

> Anterior to the metaphor of painting in Stevens is the very privileged metaphor of the eye, which is a more substitutive term for consciousness of reality ... The figure - the agent of the eye - haunts all conceptualisation ... And yet the imagination must experience some freedom from the eye to validate itself ... In addressing this central problem, painting offered a direction - a liberation from the visual reality that nevertheless made a truce with the eye.[86]

If Stevens sometimes seems philosophically preoccupied with the concept of reality, his continual focus on visual perception, painterly abstractions and colour is the counterpart for this. Colour, for Stevens, was attractive for its Cartesian principles; it is the property of the perceiver rather than what is being perceived. Thus it abounds in his works as a link between reality and imagination. George McFadden discussed Stevens' use of colour in his 1961 essay "Probings for an Integration: Colour Symbolism in Wallace Stevens"[87], suggesting that

> Two principles are fundamental to Stevens. One is what might be called plastic perception: we make our own worlds according to the way we perceive them. The second principle is that the imagination, by a symbolic process, develops the forms that govern our ordinary perception. A change in the formal structure of one's perceptions would amount to a change in one's mode of living. The poet's function is to bring about such changes.[88]

This is an important idea in regards to my suggestion of synaesthesia and synaesthetic concepts arising naturally from the changing nature of perception. Stevens' interest lies in the intersection of perception (that which constitutes our ideas of reality) and imagination, and the way that perception can be altered by imagination through poetry

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[86] Costello, p. 69.
[87] George McFadden, "Probings for an Integration: Colour Symbolism in Wallace Stevens", *Modern Philology*, Vol. 58, No. 3, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961, pp. 186-193.
[88] P. 186.

and metaphor. Thus the appearance of synaesthetic metaphor[89] in Stevens' work is quite fundamental.

Colour, for Stevens, seems to hold numerous synaesthetic properties. At times it takes on temperature, as in the "glacial pink",[90] "the burn/of colours",[91] or "the gold's maternal warmth",[92] and other times texture: "thick with sides and jagged lops of green"[93] or "the red / flicked into pieces, points of air".[94] Colour also takes on olfactory qualities, and Stevens speaks of "inhal(ing) the purple fragrance",[95] "the mustiest blue"[96] or "squeezing the reddest fragrance".[97] Continuing the trend toward gustatory metaphors in the early twentieth century, Stevens sometimes plays with the inherent synaesthesia of colour and taste adjectives, where one word can refer to both a colour and a taste, as in "the window's lemon light".[98] My brief list of the colour references in his titles exemplifies this; the watermelons, bananas and grapes are interchangeable as both visual and gustatory signifiers. Thus his colours often take on taste associations and vice versa, as in "tints/ of spiced and weathery rouges",[99] "musky muscadines / The melons, the vermillion pears",[100] "the peaches ... / full of juice ... / full of the colours of my village",[101] and "the yellow glistens ... / with various yellows, / Citrons, oranges and greens / Flowering over the skin".[102] Some of his inter-sense transferences are more consistent than others. Greens are often associated with touch, as in "The green smacks in the eye, the dew in the green / Smacks like fresh water in a can",[103] "bulging green" or "the green falls on you as you look".[104] Metallic colours seem to have a peculiarly liquid form: "a dithery gold falls everywhere / wets the pigeons",[105] "smeared with gold

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[89] Which in non-synaesthetes is in some sense the product of an intersection between the perception and imagination; an *imagining* or *recognition* of correlations between the senses, as opposed to an actual perception in synaesthetes.
[90] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "The Comedian as Letter C", p. 34
[91] "Bouquet", p. 231.
[92] "The Comedian as Letter C", p. 32.
[93] P. 32.
[94] "Woman Looking at a Vase of Flowers", p. 246.
[95] "The News", p. 264.
[96] "Sailing", p. 120.
[97] "God is Good", p. 285.
[98] "Anything is Beautiful if You Say It Is", p. 211.
[99] "The Comedian as Letter C", p. 44.
[100] "The Reader", p. 147.
[101] "A Dish of Peaches in Russia", p. 224.
[102] "Study of Two Pears", p. 196.
[103] "The Man on the Dump", p. 202.
[104] "Phosphor Reading by His Own Light", p. 267.
[105] "Gray Stones", p. 140.

by the opulent sun",[106] "the leaves leaked gold"[107] or "the bronzes liquid through gay light".[108] Blues and dark colours are often associated with sound or music, most famously in the "blue guitar" of the poem, but also in such lines as the "dark voice of the sea / that rose, or even coloured by many waves",[109] "dark, pacific words"[110] and "night's undeciphered murmuring".[111]

McFadden suggests that Stevens employed intentional colour symbolism:

> During forty years he worked out a palette rationalised (or capable of being rationalised) according to a natural spectrum ... [which] runs from red, the colour of the ageing stars and of time as measured by the sun, through green, colour of vital force and change, and blue, the colour of nature composed by the imagination, to ultraviolet or "total blue", where the sounds of poetry are shaped out of the creative dark ... Stevens' use of colours is abstract in that he embodies a wide range of attitudes toward experience ... Obviously, the colours here are symbolic: we sense they mean more than appears on the surface.[112]

McFadden proceeds to elaborate on the symbolic associations for all of Stevens' colours, suggesting that "his spectrum of colours is a poetic adaptation of physical phenomena first disclosed by Newton and by now familiar to us all. He has organised the associations of colours and charged them with pertinent feeling".[113] He suggests that Stevens' use of particular colours corresponds to certain philosophical ideas which stem from a more 'universal' colour symbolism, one that perhaps indicates a nascent synaesthetic response to colours and their non-visual properties. The idea of colour symbolism is certainly not a new one but it was one that was, perhaps, particularly pertinent to the time in which Stevens was writing. Donald A. Mackenzie wrote a paper on Colour Symbolism in 1922, a year before Stevens' *Harmonium* was published, establishing the presence of colour symbolism from "even before man began to record his ideas by means of pictorial or alphabetic signs".[114] Symbolist poets also used systems of colour symbolism in their work, a technique which was tied up in synaesthetic ideas of universal correspondence and sensory transcendence. Stevens does seem to use similar colours repeatedly in his poetic examinations of certain ideas; blue,

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[106] "Postcard", p. 158.
[107] "The Pure Good of Theory", p. 329.
[108] "A Thought Revolved", p. 186.
[109] "The Idea of Order at Key West", p. 128.
[110] "Academic Discourse at Havana", p. 142.
[111] "Montrachet-le-Jardin", p. 260.
[112] McFadden, p. 187.
[113] P. 193.
[114] Donald A. Mackenzie, "Colour Symbolism", *Folklore*, Vol. 33, No 2, Taylor & Francis, 1922, pp. 136-169.

for example, seems to be linked to imagination, as McFadden and others suggest.[115] The symbolism is most pronounced however, in the use of the colours (or non-colours) of black and white, which were interesting to the poet perhaps because of their stark polarity, their associations with modern art (the Impressionists used a lot of white and light colours but rarely used black, and the Cubists tended to do the opposite) and their intrinsic associations with dichotomies of good/evil, day/night and life/death. Furthermore, taking into account McFadden's suggestion of Newtonian principles at work, perhaps the colours black and white were interesting to Stevens because they represented *all* the colours and *none* of the colours simultaneously.

Black occurs frequently in Stevens' poems. McFadden suggests that "black, the colour of death ... serves as the outline of our images; death serves as the border of life ... Death is black and fearsome because, of all things, it is the most meaningless, most inhuman, most in need of the colours of the imagination of man ... death as the frontier or threshold of the imagination, its black outline".[116] Black stands for death, or the absence of perception, but black absorbs all colours so it also stands for the imagination, the frame of reality. In his famous poem "Domination of Black"[117] from 1923's *Harmonium*, the interaction of black and colour (of death and imagination) becomes entirely, and almost threateningly, synaesthetic. The poem is bookended with an image of consuming darkness, against which is set "the colours of the bushes / And of the fallen leaves / Repeating themselves". As the poem progresses the colours become increasingly intertwined with other sensations, including the heavy hemlocks (suggestive of smell and perhaps bitterness), the cry of the peacocks, the wind and the "loud" fire. The narrator is left questioning his senses, unsure of himself ("Loud as the hemlocks / Full of the cry of peacocks? / Or was it a cry against the hemlocks?"). The repetition of the colours is also echoed in the repetition of ominous words (turned/turning, loud, heavy, cry, striding) which alternately apply to different entities; leaves, hemlocks, peacocks and finally, night. The effect is one of disorientation and fear, and when the narrator states "I felt afraid", it is not of any one of these entities in

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[115] McFadden (p. 192) notes that "Commentators upon the poems of Stevens have observed his use of blue to represent the imagination But, if one goes no further than this, little has been said, because blue so obviously, as the colour of the sky, stands for castles in the air and for fiction in general".
[116] P. 188.
[117] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, pp. 8-9.

themselves, but of their synaesthetic amalgamation, the effect of imagination upon reality.

The image of the colours against the black is kaleidoscopic and almost hallucinatory. The greens of the leaves, the reds and yellows of fire, the pinks of twilight, and the blues and purples of peacocks take on an intense and jewel-like quality in the poem, despite the fact they only exist in the mind of the reader. Stevens uses their synaesthetic qualities to enhance them further; they take on heat, noise, movement and possibly even smell, all of which increase their metaphoric significance in the poem. As the focus of the poem moves gradually outwards from the flickering fire in the dark room to the turning of giant planets gathered in the endless darkness, this is mirrored by an alternate movement, enhanced by these increasingly synaesthetic impressions, further inside the narrator's mind. A more obvious reading of this poem suggests as its theme a fear of death, as represented by the domination of 'black', in opposition to the colours, sounds and sensations of lived experience (life). Undoubtedly Stevens was implying some sense of this. Yet the intensity of the synaesthetic impressions that Stevens gives us suggests that for him, imagination was at least as dominating (and in some ways as terrifying) as mortality. The domination is not just of black as a semantic symbol of darkness and death but as a colour symbol of the amalgamation of perception and imagination; the black of the poem absorbs and consists of all the colours, just as the Newtonian black does. In the same way, imagination absorbs all things, even death, and the space inside the mind of the narrator (or poet, or reader) is just as wide as the endless black of the universe, and just as full of colour and sensation.

"Domination of Black" is unusual in its profusion of synaesthetic impressions, although other poems also contain synaesthetic references relating to black: "The Public Square" opens with a synaesthetic touch/colour metaphor of black as "A slash of angular blacks / Like a fractured edifice / That was buttressed by blue slants / In a coma of the moon",[118] and this idea is repeated in "the pointed night",[119] "the rugged black"[120] and "the barb of night"[121] of other poems. It is interesting that this particular touch/pain

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[118] P. 108.
[119] "Evening Without Angels", p. 137. This phrase is also used in *Chocorua to its Neighbour*: "he breathed the pointed dark", p. 296.
[120] "Prelude to Objects", p. 194.
[121] "Dutch Graves", p. 290.

metaphor is equally applicable to white in Stevens' poetry, as when he writes "sharp as white paint in the January sun"[122] and "By light, the way one feels, sharp white".[123] As he did with black/darkness, Stevens continues the metaphor with white/starlight, writing of being "star-impaled"[124] and of "the trace of burning stars / In the frosty heaven",[125] of the stars at Tallapoosa "bright-edged and cold",[126] and suggesting "Not all the knives ... / Not the chisels ... / Nor the mallets/ ... Can carve / What one star can carve / Shining through the grape leaves".[127] White and black are also associated more often with coldness and iciness (think of the pervasive whiteness of "The Snow Man", or "the gusty cold ... abysmal night ... their icy Élysée" in "Of Heaven Considered as a Tomb"). Perhaps this is because of the obvious association of snow and ice with whiteness, and the coldness that comes with lack of light for black (although the idea of white-hot is also relevant, and the burning pain of extreme cold is quite similar to that of extreme heat). It is interesting that both black and white take on these similar associations of touch (pain) in Stevens' poetry, and both are particularly associated with night-time rather than daytime (darkness and starlight).

In fact, as I have established, a lot of Stevens' colours have haptic associations, which is interesting for its connection with the war poets' tactile metaphors and the Imagist poets' 'bodily image'. A possible explanation, or indication, of the pervasiveness of the colour-touch/pain metaphor, especially as it relates to light and dark, could be put forward by the growing reliance on electricity and electrical lighting in the early 20th century, and perhaps relates to the internalisation of modern technologies which I outlined in Chapter Three. Stevens' synaesthetic colour metaphors go further than this by incorporating both symbolic and philosophic aspects as well, and often incorporating olfactory or gustatory elements, but they also stem partly the root of the modernist colour/light/touch association and this was conceivably a facet of the response to the introduction, and rapid proliferation, of artificial and electric lighting which was changing the face of the modern city, and night-time itself.

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[122] "Holiday in Reality", p. 312.
[123] "Sailing", p. 126.
[124] "Academic Discourse at Havana", p. 144.
[125] "The Reader", p. 146.
[126] "Stars at Tallapoosa", p. 71.
[127] "Six Significant Landscapes", p. 74.

ii. Verses Full of Din: Sound Symbolism

> "There is a sense in sounds beyond their meaning"
> -"Pieces"[128]

Stevens' work is equally as full of sounds as of colours: alliteration, assonance and onomatopoeia, the rhythmic play of words and phrases, witty word-games and numerous references to music and musical themes. His poems have a playful obsession with sounds and syllables, sometimes including nonsense words ("zay-zay and a-zay ... ti-lill-o!"[129], "ki-ki-ri-ki ... rou-cou-cou"[130]) and often obscure, colloquial or archaic words and expressions. Stevens was clearly fascinated by the aural aspects of poetry, and strove to examine and express them in unusual and poetically innovative ways. As such, many of his sound and music references have a synaesthetic component, often of shape or colour, as in "sounds blown by a blower into shapes",[131] "red-coloured noise",[132] "metal music",[133] "his colours, the epi-tones of the ears",[134] "transparence in which we heard music",[135] "a point in the fire of music where / dazzle yields to a clarity"[136] and "the music / will be motion and full of shadows".[137] Some reference touch or smell together with music, as in "the feeling heavy in cold chords ... / the smell of the undertaker's song in the snow"[138] and others incorporate synaesthetic visual similes such as "the suave egg-diamond / That had flashed (like vicious music that ends / In transparent accords)",[139] and "the leaves were falling like notes from a piano".[140] Stevens' interest in music and musical references seems to have a philosophical or symbolic root in the same way that his use of colour does. Music shares with colour a certain 'ineffable' quality difficult to adequately express in language, which perhaps partly explains Stevens' use of synaesthetic metaphor in association with them both.

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[128] P. 351.
[129] "The Ordinary Woman", p. 11.
[130] "Depression Before Spring", p. 63.
[131] "Parochial Theme", p. 191.
[132] "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction", p. 382.
[133] "Dutch Graves", p. 290.
[134] "Two Tales of Liadoff", p. 346.
[135] "Esthetique du Mal", p. 313.
[136] "Description Without Place", p. 337.
[137] "Sad Strains of a Gay Waltz", p. 122.
[138] "The Man with the Blue Guitar", p. 166-174.
[139] "Thunder by the Musician", p. 220.
[140] "Contrary Theses II", p. 270.

There is one aspect of Stevens' use of sound, however, which is implicitly synaesthetic in its origins, and that is his prolific use of sound symbolism. Sound symbolism and its links with the origins of language, semiotics, phonetics and etymology have been explored by synaesthesia researchers as well as linguists. Janis Nuckolls, who evaluates the case for sound symbolism in her 1999 article,[141] defines it as "when a sound unit such as a phoneme, syllable, feature, or tone is said to go beyond its linguistic function as a contrastive, non-meaning-bearing unit, to directly express some kind of meaning"[142] and mentions its relevance to both synaesthesia and poetics. Synaesthesia researchers Ramachandran and Hubbard summarise the sound symbolism experiments of Kohler, Werner and others in their article "Synaesthesia: A Window into Perception, Thought and Language", explaining the *bouba/kiki* (or *takete/maluma*) effect, where bulbous, rounded shapes are almost universally paired (by synaesthetes and non-synaesthetes alike) with the nonsense word *bouba*, and pointed, spiked shapes with the word *kiki*.[143] These experiments show that even for non-synaesthetes, the sound properties of words are often intrinsically associated with other properties of size, shape, and perhaps texture, in the same way that colours are associated with temperature (warm, cool) and musical tones are often associated with colour and size (high=small & light, low=large & dark). They indicate that these spontaneous pairings occur as the result of the same cross-activation in the brain that synaesthetes experience, suggesting a possible synaesthetic capacity at the root of the formation and understanding of language.

The symbolic properties of sounds and phonemes are of particular interest to poets, and Stevens was especially enamoured with the idea. Even Ramachandran and Hubbard's *bouba* and *kiki* sound like the sort of words that Stevens himself would have used (in fact, "ki-ki" can actually be found in "Depression Before Spring", as quoted above). If words, and the sounds or phonemes which make up words, can have sensory properties beyond their semantic meaning, then the scope for poetic expression through word choice is made much larger. Stevens' poetry suggests that he identified with the concept of synaesthetic sound symbolism. He mentions the synaesthetic properties of

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[141] Janis Nuckolls, "The Case for Sound Symbolism", *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol. 28, 1999, pp. 225-252.
[142] P. 228.
[143] V.S Ramachandran and E.M Hubbard, "Synaesthesia: A Window into Perception, Thought and Language", *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol.8, No. 12, 2001, pp. 3–34.

words and sounds a number of times: in "the clashed edges of two words" and "watery syllable" of "Le Monocle de Mon Oncle",[144] "dusky words ... darken your speech",[145] "words of the fragrant portals, dimly-starred",[146] "the softest word",[147] "dark, pacific words",[148] "sodden with his melancholy words",[149] "milky lines",[150] "syllables that rise/ from the floor",[151] "the words they spoke / Were mere brown clods, mere catching weeds of / talk"[152] and "words in a storm / that beat around the shapes".[153] It is clear from these examples that words, like colours, have the potential to suggest properties other than their semantic ones in Stevens' poetry, and I suggest that these synaesthetic properties are most obviously paired with the *sounds* of the words, rather than the *sense*. Thus, sounds in Stevens' poetry become both symbolic and synaesthetic.

Marie Borroff's 1981 article "Sound Symbolism as Drama in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens" addresses "sound-symbolic words as a contrastive and significant feature of Stevens' diction ... groups of sounds form(ing) a sort of phonetic repertory company, a roster of players whose members are again and again subjected to type-casting in the Stevensian drama".[154] Borroff explains that Stevens uses labials or lip-sounds (*p, b, f*), gutturals or throat-sounds (*g, t, k*),[155] and resonants or liquid sounds (*m, w, l*), in a symbolic way by employing specific words to give multi-sensory connotations.[156] She suggests that his use of these words have either *acoustic* or *articulatory* sound-symbolic significance, a distinction which I will also utilise in my discussion of their synaesthetic significance in his poetry. Borroff defines acoustic sound-symbolism as a

> word that has acoustic significance in my sense to the degree that its phonetic shape, the sequence of consonants and vowel sounds making it up, is felt to resemble some aspect of its

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[144] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Steven*, p. 13.
[145] "Two Figures in Dense Violet Night", p. 86.
[146] "On the Idea of Order at Key West", p. 128.
[147] "Two at Norfolk", p. 111.
[148] "Academic Discourse at Havana", p. 142.
[149] "The Man with the Blue Guitar", p. 166.
[150] "Asides on the Oboe", p. 250.
[151] "Creations of Sound", p. 310.
[152] "An Ordinary Evening at New Haven", p. 486.
[153] "Sketch", p. 355.
[154] Marie Borroff, "Sound Symbolism as Drama in the Poetry of Wallace Stevens", *ELH*, Vol. 48, No. 4, The John Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp. 914-934.
[155] Borroff noted that the use of the term 'guttural' has been superseded by 'velar', but recognises that "the most salient instance is of course the initial g of the word guttural itself" (p. 916). Partly for its self-reflexive sound symbolism, and partly because Stevens himself also uses the term a number of times in his poems, I am choosing to use the original term 'guttural'.
[156] P. 916.

> referent ... words like *blob*, *sludge*, *glitter*, and *zigzag*, in ways easy to feel though hard to analyse, have phonetic structures suggestive not of sounds but of shapes, qualities, and actions or processes.[157]

She includes onomatopoeia in this category, although the resemblance there is auditory in a mimetic sense, rather than cross-sensory. Articulatory sound symbolism, on the other hand, occurs where "there is felt to be a connection between meaning (of a word) and the sequence of physical actions involved in pronouncing it. *Yawn*, *gag*, *stutter* and *pooh-pooh* have articulatory significance in this sense".[158] These distinctions have implicitly synaesthetic origins, relating cross-sensory and semantic properties in the same way that synaesthetes relate words to colours, or numbers to shapes. Writing in 1981, it is unlikely that Borroff was aware of the synaesthetic implications of sound-symbolism, and her discussion doesn't deal with the concept. She posits that Stevens uses different forms of sound symbolism and different phonemes consistently, and that they are linked to certain characters and themes in his poetry.[159] While I do believe he did do this to a certain extent, I think he also used sound-symbolism to emphasise the synaesthetic qualities of certain objects or images, and to draw to attention the power of poetic metaphor in creating links between seemingly un-linked sensory experiences. In this way, he was (at times consciously and at times unconsciously) drawing on his latent synaesthetic capacity and his dexterity with metaphor in order to express poetically the nature of certain inexpressible things.

One of Stevens' uses of sound-symbolism relates to the synaesthetic properties of whiteness/ light (especially starlight), which I have previously discussed as being linked to ideas of sharpness, burning and physical pain, as well as the quality of coldness. If Borroff's and my own intimations are correct, then Stevens' poetic use of the white/light would show evidence of sound symbolic qualities emphasising its synaesthetic significance. This is, I believe, the case. I mentioned Stevens' famous poem "The Snow Man" earlier for its pervasive images of white, which are aligned with both coldness and sharpness. The poem also shows evidence of sound symbolism which enhances these aspects. It begins with the line "One must have a mind of winter / To

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[157] Pp. 916-. 917.
[158] P. 917.
[159] She writes of the use of labial and guttural words as aligned with characters/ideas in poems such as "The Plot Against the Giant", "The Apostrophe to Vincentine" and "Somnambulisma".

regard the frost and the boughs / Of the pine-trees crusted with snow".[160] This image suggests the icy, crunchy qualities of frost and snow, which are echoed in the sounds of the words themselves. The sharp, pointy but delicate */t/* sound of 'winter' and 'trees' has the aural essence of an icicle descending from a branch or a pine-needle, which is then followed by the repetition of the */st/* in 'frost' and 'crusted'; a crunchy, friction-y sound reminiscent of ice cracking and dripping, or indeed, in an acoustically significant example of sound-symbolism, of frost slowly forming a crust around the trees. This acoustic sound symbolism is continued in the next lines, "And have been cold a long time / To behold the junipers shagged with ice, / The spruces rough with distant glitter",[161] where the spiky, dazzling qualities of the */s/* and */t/* sounds in 'ice' and "distant glitter" echo the previous */st/* sounds. Again, the short, sharp pronunciation of these sounds offers a kind of clarity suggestive of ice or icicles. In contrast, we also see here the guttural */g/* of "shagged" and the fricative */f/* of "rough" which have a more opaque and heavier quality than the */s/* and */t/* and seem to suggest clumps of snow falling, or a shuffling movement through packed snowdrifts.

Interestingly, the next stanza of the poem introduces the wind, and from here a lot of the phonemes become more rounded and open, with long vowels ("sound", "land", "same", "blowing", "bare"), suggestive of gusts of wind. The */s/* sounds still continue, but now they are mostly devoid of the */t/* stop and they take on a whistling, breezy quality ("sun", "misery", "sound", "place"). It is only at the very end that the */st/* sound returns: the words "listener" and "listens" redirect the reader back to the icy aurality of the poem, to hear once again the distant splintering of ice or the crust of frost forming. The reader, who also "listens in the snow", realises that there is nothing in this "same bare place"; there is nothing of these sounds and sights but the inner mechanics of his ears and eyes and the cells of his brain. However, at the same time as he is beholding nothing he is also beholding *everything* ("nothing that is not there, and the nothing that is"); the 'nothing' that is a reality we can never truly know, and the 'everything' that is what the senses make of reality, which is all we can really ever know. The poem itself is also nothing and everything. The sounds and images we see and hear are both real in our minds, and non-existent, simply black marks on a page.

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[160] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "The Snow Man", p. 9.
[161] P. 10.

The poet's job is to bring the reader to this point of realisation, through the supreme fiction of his art. The complex sound-symbolism of the poem suggests that the poet must have a "mind of winter" indeed, to bring winter to the reader so immediately and yet so distantly.

Acoustic sound-symbolism is employed in many of Stevens' other poems. "The Dwarf" displays a similar sound-symbolic progression. The poem starts out with an image of winter joined with the action of weaving and the vision of webs, all of which are realised in the compulsive repetitiveness of the */w/* sounds:

> Now it is September and the web is woven.
> The web is woven and you have to wear it.
>
> The winter is made and you have to bear it,
> The winter web, the winter woven, wind and wind".[162]

The gliding */w/* sound seems to weave in and out of the words, creating a web of sounds which traps the fricative */v/*'s and guttural */t/*'s. The long, smooth nature of the */w/* sound (which, elongated, sounds and feels almost like a whistle) also suggests the whistling breezes of the winter wind. Stevens' use of the heteronyms wind (air movement) and wind (to tighten a spring) further enhances these similarities, as the two words can be read as both one, both the other, or one of each. The interchangeability of the words suggests in itself a weaving or winding motion, a sort of gestalt 'rabbit-duck' effect[163] where one thing can fluidly morph into the other, depending on our perception of it. In fact, in this way the poem itself becomes a gestalt 'whole', more than the sum of its parts, as the wind (air) and the winter, along with the */w/* sound, are wound and woven in amongst the webs of imagery and sounds. Stevens continues to weave the */w/* sound throughout the whole poem, just as a spider weaves an increasingly complex web. Occasionally, he deviates with the introduction of other sounds, as in the lines "jerked / and tufted in straggling thunder and shattered sun", which seem to indicate a temporary rift in the web. The images these words create suggest a destruction or breach and subsequent damaging (the web is jerked and shattered, leaving tufts and straggling threads) and the sudden introduction of the jerking sounds of */k/*, */t/* and */g/* create a similar breach in the smooth repetition of */w/* sounds.

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[162] "The Dwarf", p. 208.
[163] As in the famous rabbit-duck optical illusion used by Gestalt psychologists. See Brugger, P. and Brugger, S. "The Easter Bunny in October: Is It Disguised as a Duck?" *Perceptual Motor Skills* ,Vol. 76, 1993, pp. 577-578, p. 147.

At the very end of the poem a similar breach occurs, but this time the introduced sounds are the */b/* and */l/* of "nibble', "dribble" and "stubble". Nuckolls writes in her sound-symbolism study about the phenomenon of magnitude sound symbolism, which suggests that certain sounds and phonemes are intrinsically related to concepts of size and magnitude.[164] She refers to experiments which suggest that "as the tongue recedes in articulating vowels from the front to the back of the mouth, and as acoustic frequency becomes lower, the vowels are judged to be larger and darker"[165] which posit that there can be some correlation across languages between "words denoting 'little' and associated semantic concepts ... (and) the high front vowel /i/".[166] She discusses the studies of Bolinger (1950) and others who found that there were "vast numbers of sound-meaning correspondences interrelated through rhyme and assonance"[167], known as phonesthemes. In explaining this, Nuckolls refers to examples such as:

> word initial gl-, in roughly half of all commonly used English words, implies something visual as in glance, glare, gleam, glimmer (Bolinger, 1950) ... words with the letters –ash, implies fragmentation, collision or impact, as in ash, bash, dash, gash ... An initial 'tw', such as in twist, twirl, tweak, tweeze, is an assonant form which suggests a twisting or pinching motion ... By contrast, the 'irl' in twirl also occurs in curl, furl, whirl and swirl, all of which suggest a circular or round movement or shape.[168]

Nuckolls mentions synaesthesia here, recognising the significant overlap in the fields of study and recounting the findings of early synaesthesia researchers who looked into the prevalence of nasal phonesthemes in words for 'mother' and aural phonesthemes in words for 'father' across unrelated languages (a phenomenon which is suggested to be the result of the nasal sounds made by a child sucking which then become sound-symbolic of the mother herself).[169] Taking these ideas into account, it seems reasonable to suggest that '–bble' as a phonestheme could perhaps suggest small particles, or a larger group/whole comprised of many smaller parts; think not only of Stevens' nibble, dribble and stubble, but also of bubble, rubble, babble, cobble and pebble. As well as the sound, the actions involved in the pronunciation of the phonestheme also seem to suggest smallness or particularisation, as they involve small, articulated lip movements (*/b/* and */l/* as well as shortened vowels). Thus, words such as nibble or bubble are also

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[164] Nuckolls, pp. 229-233.
[165] P. 231.
[166] P. 231.
[167] P. 237.
[168] P. 237.
[169] Roman Jakobson (1962) and George P. Murdock (1959), as referred to in Nuckolls, pp. 236-237.

sound-symbolic in an articulatory manner, suggesting in their pronunciation a nibbling or bubbling motion. Stevens' choice of these three words was not merely a form of shallow alliteration or half-rhyme then. I believe he also wanted to induce the idea of smallness and division, in direct contrast to the images of large and whole parts (the web and the weaving together). Once again, gestalt themes are being explored; the opposition of parts and wholes as they relate to our perception. The life web that has been constructed throughout the poem has disintegrated and nothing is left but constituent parts; the dribble of coffee and nibbles of fruit, and the stubble of wheat which perhaps mirrors the stubble of the reader (or the poet himself) who, similarly touched by frost, becomes "the final dwarf",[170] a small and insignificant part of a whole that has been rendered meaningless. The whole poem moves from a vastness of woven, interrelated threads of words and images, to the lone human, sitting beside their lamp, dwarfed by the web of 'reality'. This transition from vast outside to interior reality echoes that of "Domination of Black", whose narrator is also left sitting alone by a light-source, lost within their own mind and dwarfed by the massive limitlessness of existence.

The prevalence of such sound-symbolic ideas suggests that Stevens was interested in the acoustic properties of sound, believing (as he suggests in "The Pure Good of Theory") there can be "weather in words and words in sounds of sound".[171] His synaesthetic sound symbolism was often weather-based, particularly relating to snow/winter and wind, thunder and light. Winter is once again connected with sound in the poem "No Possum, No Sop, No Taters", which is similar in tone to "The Snow Man":

> Snow sparkles like eyesight falling to earth,
>
> Like seeing fallen brightly away
> The leaves hop, scraping on the ground.
>
> It is deep January. The sky is hard.
> The stalks are rooted firmly in ice.
>
> It is in this solitude, a syllable,
> Out of these gawky flitterings,
>
> Intones its single emptiness,

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[170] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "The Dwarf", p. 208.
[171] P. 332.

The savagest hollow of winter-sound.[172]

As in the earlier poem, the poet has used an abundance of */s/* and */t/* sounds (as well as the above, the last few stanzas of the poem contain the words "purity", "rusty", "rises", "bright", "malice", "distance" and "tree"). Considering Williams' choice of words in this poem, it is not unlikely that he was attempting to express "the savagest hollow of winter sound" through "a syllable", or many. Like winter, wind and storms are also full of words and sounds in Stevens' poems: for example, "There are words of this / words, in a storm"[173] in "Sketch of the Ultimate Politician", "How the wind spells out / Sep – tem – ber ... Make o, make o, make o, / Otu – otu - bre"[174] in "Metamorphosis", and the tiny poem "To the Roaring Wind", which reads "What syllable are you seeking / Vocalissimus / In the distance of sleep? / Speak it".[175] Thunder is also given a similar treatment. The poem "Thunder by the Musician" reads,

The thunder became men,

Ten thousand, men hewn and tumbling,
Mobs of ten thousand, clashing together,
This way and that.
[...]
The sky would be full of bodies like wood,
There would have been the cries of the dead".[176]

These lines suggest combat as a metaphor for thunder and the sounds of the words seem to suggest both. The opening lines pair the sharper sounds of "thousand" and "clashing" with the duller sound of "tumbling" and "mobs"; the */mb/* sounds are indicative of a slow rumble interrupted by the startling crashes (the */sh/* and */s/*) of thunder, or battle. As I quoted earlier, in sound-symbolic phonestheme theory the */-ash/* sound implies collision and impact, and the use of "clash" here also suggests smash, crash and bash, which enhance the battle metaphor. Whereas "tumble", conversely, suggests the low constant rolling sound of rumble, grumble and mumble, all of which are acoustically and articulatorily sound-symbolic (i.e. to pronounce these words, you are doing something very similar to the thing that they are describing). The choice of the stark */d/* sounds, reminiscent of a dull thud or a bang, at the ending of lines adds to the combat metaphor in a sound symbolic as well as a semantic sense. Interestingly, these are reminiscent of the use of */d/* sounds in war literature ("lead" and "dead", as discussed in

[172] P. 294.
[173] P. 335.
[174] P. 265.
[175] P. 113.
[176] P. 220.

Chapter Four), which enhances Stevens' choice of this particular sound-symbolic phoneme for use in a metaphor of war and combat.

As I have already discussed, Stevens' images of light often take on synaesthetic associations, so it is natural to assume that he includes light references in his examination and exploration of synaesthetic sounds and sound-symbolism. He speaks of "the beast of light, / Groaning in half-exploited gutturals" and then "the universal flare ... the eloquence of light's faculties" in "The Pure Good of Theory",[177] a poem which employs a number of examples of sound symbolism. It is interesting that light is associated here first with the gutturals (which Stevens consolidates with his self-reflexive use of the guttural stops */g/* and */t/*) when light is a groaning beast, and then the labial */f/* and the liquid */l/* when the light is associated with eloquence. This suggests the line from "The Plot Against the Giant" about "Heavenly labials in a world of gutturals", which as Marie Borroff proposes, aligns the sounds of the words with characters or themes in a sound symbolic way.[178] In his poem "Montrachet-le-Jardin",[179] Stevens uses particular sounds in the expression of different sensory qualities. The poem starts with "O bright, O bright, / The chick, the chidder-barn and grassy chives, / And great moon, cricket-impresario". Here, the image of the bright moon is joined with the sounds of crickets, which are expressed in the repeated */ch/* sound. Like the moon, the sound in itself is bright. Stevens' follows this with images of blue and purple enhanced by */p/* and */b/* sounds, a deeper and breathier labial contrast to the bright fricative */ch/*. Then he brings back the */c/* sound, but this time it resembles not crickets, but a clock ticking: "Chrome! Clicks the clock". The similarity of the two sounds is exemplified in the spelling of 'chrome', which is spelt with */ch/* but sounded as */c/*; thus, the chirping of the crickets resembles the ticking clock, and both are metaphors for the passing of time. From here, Stevens moves on to a profusion of fricative */f/* and */s/* sounds:

> But if, but if there be something more to love
> Something in now a senseless syllable,
>
> A shadow in the mind, a flourisher
> Of sounds resembling sounds, efflorisant,
> Approaching the feelings or come down from them,
>
> These other shadows, not in the mind, players

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[177] P. 333.
[178] Borroff, p. 916.
[179] *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "Montrachet-le-Jardin", pp. 260-264.

> Of aphonies, tuned in from zero and
> Beyond, futura's fuddle-fiddling lumps.

These shuffling, muted sounds seem to be representative of "night's undeciphered murmuring" as well as the undeciphered murmuring of the mind and the thoughts. Edward Ragg addresses this idea in his book *Wallace Stevens and the Aesthetics of Abstraction*, suggesting

> Stevens' anaphora ('But if, but if') - contrasting with 'O bright, O bright' – accentuates a significant synaesthesia. The poem favours something in a 'senseless syllable', an abstract 'shadow in the mind', recalling Stevens' extensive play on the centrality of mind in 'Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas'. But that shadow, a 'flourisher', has a sonorous base ('of sounds resembling sounds').[180]

They are self-reflexive but senseless syllables that, flourishing and flowering, approach the expression of feelings, but still remain as shadows in the mind; merely sounds resembling sounds, rather than sounds resembling meaning. The poem as a whole is clearly very much concerned with words and sounds, as well as synaesthetic correspondences. The "aroma of summer nights" is expressed in the soft fricatives of "Licentious violet and lascive rose, / Midsummer love and softest silences", and in the lines

> Item: the cocks crow and the birds cry and
> the sun expands, like a repetition on
> One string, an absolute, not varying
> Toward an inaccessible, pure sound,

light becomes sound, sun becomes music and the repetitions of the poem (such as 'O bright', 'but if', 'Item') become the same as the aural repetition "on one string". In this poem, Stevens also uses letters as metaphors for both their visual and aural qualities. When he writes "feel the x malisons of other men", the letter x, visually suggestive of a cross or a mark and aurally suggestive of both non-being (ex) and a hissing sound (echoed in the word "malison"), represents a curse. Similarly, in "the wind is never rounding O", the wind becomes circular and aurally open, suggestive of a globe (the winds of the earth), a mouth (breath) and the never rounding and never-ending circles of infinity ∞, (particularly as it is also an echo of the "O bright" which opened the poem). Again, Stevens is using the sound properties of words in a symbolic, and synaesthetic, manner.

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[180] Edward Ragg, *Wallace Stevens and the Aesthetics of Abstraction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) p. 153.

iii. The Poet as the Letter P: Synaesthetic Personification

These examples of Stevens' use of metaphoric letters and sounds bring me to the final part of my discussion of Stevens' poetry, and the part which is perhaps most suggestive in terms of his use of synaesthesia: his peculiar personification of letters. As I mentioned earlier, I have not suggested that Stevens' use of synaesthetic metaphor and synaesthetic concepts necessarily arose from true synaesthesia. Rather, I believe it was most likely a natural mode of expression which arose out of his interest in perception, modern art and music and the function of poetic metaphor. There is one aspect however, which suggests more strongly than any other that perhaps Stevens may have had some form of true synaesthetic perception. While much has been made of Stevens' use of sound, nonsense words and aural poetic techniques, it was a 1978 paper written by Philip Furia and Martin Roth entitled "Stevens' Fusky Alphabet" which suggested to me that an unusually idiosyncratic aspect of Stevens' work could potentially be linked to actual synaesthetic capability, rather than merely the use and exploration of synaesthetic concepts. Furia and Roth write,

> The poet who loves the sounds of words must love the letters of the alphabet that produces those sounds and their words. These belle lettres have, for him, their own shapes, sounds and meanings ... Stevens can confidently assert that A is "an infant ... standing on infant legs" and that Z is a "twisted, stooping" old man "that kneels always on the edge of space".[181]

Their study then goes on to outline Stevens' uses of particular letters, namely A, B, G, O, U and Z, suggesting that he

> refers to specific letters as, to use his own pun, 'characters' (CP, 469). These characters represent certain relations between the imagination and reality, relations that, in turn, emanate from and reflect the tensions between the 'murderous' and 'fusky' alphabets. The values provided by some of these alphabetical characters provide the literal content and are involved in the literal inquiry of some of Stevens' poetry.[182]

Their article is interesting in that this tendency is not recognised as being connected to synaesthesia at all, but is seen as a poetic impulse which emanates from a "deep, purely childish, sensitivity to sound".[183] As an alternative, I would suggest that this tendency may have arisen from a synaesthetic capacity which perhaps emanates from the synaesthetic tendencies of early childhood perception. Whether this is an example of true synaesthetic grapheme personification or simply an extended poetic device arising

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[181] Philip Furia and Martin Roth, "Stevens' Fusky Alphabet", *PMLA*, Vol. 93, No. 1, Modern Language Association, 1978, pp. 66-77.
[182] P. 68.
[183] P. 66.

out of a latent synaesthetic capacity is probably extraneous. I do believe the mention of it is relevant to my discussion however, and although I won't expand on Furia and Roth's study I will briefly point out the similarities between their ideas of Stevens' "alphabetical characters" and the synaesthetic trait of grapheme personification.

Grapheme personification, or ordinal-linguistic personification, is a form of synaesthesia in which

> A grapheme may be described as having gender (e.g., seven is a male, eight is a female) or in some cases – a rather elaborate biography including personality traits such as 'old-fashioned'; 'generous loyal friend'; 'unimaginative, interested in technical subjects, reliable'; and 'physically active, inclined to rush about' ... Early reports of the phenomenon were provided by Flournoy (1893) and Calkins (1893, 1895), but it virtually disappeared from the literature for over a century ... Calkins referred to the tendency to personify ordinal sequences as 'dramatisation'– the endowment of physical and psychological characteristics to letters, numerals, and musical notes, 'so that they often become actors in entire little dramas among themselves'.[184]

This description, from the 2011 article by synaesthesia researchers Amin et al, sounds surprisingly similar to Furia and Roth's description of Stevens' alphabetical 'characters'. In 1978, when Furia and Roth's article was written, the study of synaesthesia had long lain dormant, so it is not really surprising that the authors did not connect this topic to synaesthetic tendencies. As I have noted previously, synaesthesia involving graphemes is sometimes referred to as ideasthesia, for its semantic rather than sensory connotations, and grapheme personification is an especially semantic form. Because of these close links with semantic concepts it is more difficult to draw a distinction between true synaesthetic perception and a semantic association of concepts, so it is impossible to say retrospectively whether Stevens was an actual synaesthete or not. Also, while Furia and Roth's study outlines the philosophical implications of each of Stevens' alphabetical characters and provides examples which show their consistency across his poetry, the relative divergence between types could be suggestive of a more conceptual approach (as I believe most of his use of synaesthetic metaphor was) rather than one arising out of true synaesthetic perception. It is true that Stevens uses specific letters more frequently in his work than most poets, endowing them with certain characteristics and traits. It is also clear that, as I have demonstrated with my discussion of his sound symbolism, he was very much aware of the sounds of letters and phonemes, and often seemed to make word choices based on these qualities as much as

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[184] Maina Amin et al. "Understanding Grapheme Personification: A Social Synesthesia?" *Journal of Neuropsychology*, Vol. 5, No. 2, Blackwell Publishing, 2011, pp. 255-282.

semantic qualities. It is unclear whether this indicates a true synaesthetic capacity in his understanding of letters, but it could be suggested as a practical explanation of the abundance of sound-based and letter-based elements within his work. The synaesthetic associations of sounds and syllables which I have already demonstrated suggest the possibility, as do certain lines such as,

> The ruddy temper, the hammer
> Of red and blue, the hard sound-
> Steel against intimation- the sharp flash,
> The vital, arrogant, fatal, dominant X.[185]

This characterisation of X is repeated in other poems: "That X is an obstruction, a man / Too exactly himself",[186] "X, the mighty thought, the mighty man ... X promenades the dewy stones",[187] "designed by X, the per-noble master"[188]and "the big X of the returning primitive",[189] which suggests a constancy in personification which is conducive to a synaesthetic explanation. Other mentions of letters involving characterisation occur, for example, "Now A / and B are not like statuary, posed / For a vista in the Louvre",[190] "When B. sat down at the piano and made music"[191] and "Naked Alpha, not the hierophant Omega".[192] Even some of the titles of his poems suggest an element of personification: "The Comedian as Letter C", "The Creations of Sound" and "Men Made out of Words", for example. Furia and Roth elaborate on these instances more extensively, suggesting that the prevalence of such characterisations and associations is enough to be more than coincidence.[193] Whether Stevens did in fact have this synaesthetic capacity is almost impossible to determine retrospectively, and his interest in metaphor and language could go against the synaesthete explanation. It could reasonably be said to be just as likely that he constructed these characters and ideas in an examination of the imaginative faculties of poetic metaphor, and that their synaesthetic significance arose out of the unconscious synaesthetic capacity being stimulated, rather than any true synaesthesia. Regardless, this tendency is important to note as an adjunct to my discussion of Stevens' use of synaesthetic metaphor and

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[185]*The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens*, "The Motive for Metaphor", p. 288.
[186] "The Creations of Sound", p. 310.
[187] "Anecdote of Canna", p. 55.
[188] "Extracts from Addresses to the Academy of Fine Ideas", p. 254.
[189] "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven", p. 474.
[190] "Connoisseur of Chaos", p. 216.
[191] "Esthetique Du Mal", p. 316.
[192] "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven", p. 469.
[193] Furia and Roth, p. 66.

synaesthetic association, particularly as it underlies his use of synaesthetic sound symbolism,[194] colour symbolism[195] and the philosophical implications of sensory perception, and represents one of the more unusual trends in the use of synaesthetic metaphor in the early twentieth century.

In the poetry of both William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens, whose mutual engagement with modernist theories of art and colour is well-established, it is not surprising to see such an abundance of synaesthetic concepts. Both poets used synaesthetic metaphor in order to enhance their poetry in emotive and imaginative ways, and I believe that recognition of this is important in examining their work against the contextual background of the early twentieth century period. Their work seems to engage with synaesthetic ideas in an increasingly aesthetic manner, with a particular emphasis on visual and artistic themes. However, they also show strong evidence of the tactile and gustatory metaphors used by the earlier poets, which suggests that there was some process of progression in the use of poetic synaesthesia. By looking at these synaesthetic concepts and their different use by poets of the period, I suggest we can gain a new perspective on modernist poetry and see even more clearly the tightly interwoven threads binding early twentieth century poetics to the art, music, science and cultural environment of the period.

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[194] As seen in Borroff's discovery that certain phonemes seem to represent certain characters, p. 915.
[195] McFadden talks about the symbolic 'characters' of the colours in Stevens' work, and how certain colours in Stevens' work are associated with philosophical ideas in the same way that Furia and Roth suggest his letters are.

CHAPTER EIGHT: THE DIVERGING PATHS OF POETIC SYNAESTHESIA

This chapter will look at the diverging paths that poetic synaesthesia took from the 1930s onwards, when the first flush of modernism was being dampened by economic depression, a second horrific world war, and the splintering and various rejections of modernist theories of art and aesthetics. While it is logistically impossible to consider these in great detail, it is important to recognise the progression that poetic synaesthesia took at this point in the twentieth century. In order to do so I have chosen to look briefly at the work of three major poets writing around the 1930 period: W.H Auden, Theodore Roethke and Dylan Thomas. These were by no means the only poets writing during this period, nor where they necessarily the most important (although each of them has a strong reputation and their own particular importance to modern poetry). Each of these poets used synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphor in unique ways representative of the divergent paths that this usage took after the 1930s.

W.H Auden, often recognised as the most important poet of the 1930s, moved poetry away from the focus on the image and sensory language that had characterised previous modern poetry. His works tackled political, moral and religious themes, preferring abstract conceptual ideas over the concrete images of the early modernists, and as a result his poetry shows a marked decrease in synaesthetic metaphor. The impersonal voice and social and political conscience which characterise his poetry were echoed in the works of later poets, indicating a path down which poetry moved where synaesthetic metaphor had less sensory immediacy than it did earlier in the twentieth century. In a world of new warfare, financial uncertainty and increasing moral and spiritual disintegration, poets like Auden began to abandon the sensory approach and turn to more critical and theoretical modes of expression. His use of synaesthetic metaphor, as a result, was considerably decreased, although it did not disappear altogether. Rather, when it appeared, it took on a theoretical nature involving the transfer of sensory and conceptual constructs rather than the inter-sensory ones which characterised much of the earlier use of synaesthetic metaphor. In this characteristic, I suggest, it is more akin to ideasthesia than to synaesthesia.

Auden's rejection of sensory themes does not entail that synaesthetic metaphor was relegated to obscurity in poetry (as the scientific study of synaesthesia was by this

point). Theodore Roethke, writing in the same period as Auden, took synaesthetic metaphor down a somewhat different route. Much of Roethke's poetry has a solipsistic quality, turning inward to the personal and intimate details of the mind and heart. Unlike Auden, who depicted man and nature as separate and autonomous entities, Roethke regarded them as interchangeable, and his use of synaesthetic metaphor reflects this. Roethke could conceivably be called a 'nature poet', and his synaesthetic metaphors are very much tied up with natural elements and forms. The constant spectre of childhood memory also underlies his poetry, a theme which lends itself quite naturally to synaesthetic expression. The path which Roethke took in some ways represents a continuation of the natural and bodily synaesthesia of the early Imagists and the WWI poets, and suggests that synaesthesia usage, particularly as it related to elemental forces or childhood experience, continued to have a presence in modern poetry.

Finally, synaesthetic metaphor occurs noticeably in the work of Dylan Thomas, a poet notoriously difficult to categorise. Like Roethke, Thomas also wrote extensively about nature, but his poems often have an outwardly expressive, almost violent emotional quality quite different to Roethke's much more internal angst. It is this aspect which indicates another path, running parallel to that of Roethke's and Auden's in many ways, in which synaesthetic metaphor was used as a means of conveying, through emotion, the energy and flow of endless cycles of life and death. For Thomas, who refused to be associated with any of the poetic movements of the time (although such groups as the Apocalyptic poets took after Thomas in style), synaesthetic metaphor functioned with the aural qualities of a poem as a means of expressing the emotion inherent in making sense of life and mortality. Thomas in some ways combines Auden's ideasthetic focus and Roethke's personal and natural metaphors, creating a poetry which was both unique and difficult to classify among the various poetic styles and movements of the 1930s. From this path came the emotional rawness of later poets who confronted death by using synaesthetic metaphor, in their search for something to shore up the ruins of the psychological damage such confrontation incurs.

From each of the different paths that these three poets took in regards to synaesthesia, came numerous further offshoots which are mostly outside the scope of my study. I believe, however, that the methods each of these poets used in regards to synaesthetic metaphor can be seen imprinted on the works of later poets, and in my final

section I will note the use of synaesthesia in the work of four poets writing from around the mid-century onwards (Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney) and suggest how this imprint may have arisen out of any or all of the paths that poetic synaesthesia took in the first half of the century.

8.1 W.H Auden and Synaesthetic Conceptualisation

Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973) is often recognised as one of the great poets of the twentieth century, and his poetry has sometimes been described as 'intellectual' for its focus on moral and social issues as well as for its incisive wit and allusion. Auden was interested in the latest developments in science and psychology, and his poetry was often concerned with sophisticated scientific ideas arising out of his vast knowledge of these areas. I don't believe that the reduction of synaesthesia in his poetry necessarily arose from a lack of engagement with the sensory or aesthetic theories of art and music which influenced much of its previous use. Auden does engage with these areas, but his poetic style moves the focus to a level where synaesthetic metaphor becomes more conceptualised. Most of Auden's work relies on abstract concepts rather than sensory or imagistic ones, and a large number of conceptual metaphors is perhaps more difficult poetically than a large volume of sensory metaphors, as they would tend to jostle for dominance within the poem.

Auden still uses the traditional 'perceptual' synaesthetic metaphor occasionally, suggesting how deeply such synaesthetic metaphors, whatever their role in poetry may be, are ingrained in language. Very often these involve music, such as the "flute that throbs"[1] in "Anthem for St. Cecilia's Day" (an echo of "the brass bands throbbing in the parks"[2] from Part VI of "The Voyage"), or the joining of song with "sharp notes of air ... warmth"[3] in "Orpheus", and voice with temperature: "an older colder voice, the oceanic whisper"[4] ("In Praise of Limestone"). They also involve the synaesthetic transfer of light and sound ("The opening light draws out of hiding / with all its gradual

[1] W.H Auden, *Collected Poems* Ed. Edward Mendelson (New York: Vintage International, 1991) p. 282.
[2] P. 177.
[3] P. 158.
[4] P. 541.

dove-like pleading"[5]), sound and texture ("Out of the air a voice without a face ... In tones as dry and level as the place"[6]), and sound and movement ("through the channels of the ear / May wander like a river / The swaying sound of the sea"[7]). A curious proportion of them involve an image of stars which is connected to some form of sound or music, as for example, in "Seven stars go squawking / Like geese about the sky",[8] "music poured out of each wonderful star"[9] and "Overhead / The uncomplaining stars composed their lucid song".[10] Whether or not this specific metaphor suggests a form of 'astral music' (possibly arising out of the ancient philosophical idea of *musica universalis*), which was perhaps intended as a conceptual symbol, the simple sense-to-sense synaesthetic transference from which the metaphor is derived is not overly common in his work.

i. Ideasthesia: Conceptual Metaphors

Although he sometimes employs sense-to-sense metaphors, the majority of Auden's synaesthetic metaphors involve more complex conceptual elements. Music occurs frequently in Auden's poetry, so it is not surprising that many of his synaesthetic metaphors involve a musical component. His famous poem "Anthem for St Cecilia's Day" has a special connection to music[11] and synaesthetic metaphors occur multiple times within this poem. The poem begins with an image of "this holy lady ... like a black swan as death came on" who "poured forth her song in perfect calm".[12] The synaesthetic suggestion of the song having physical form is continued with the image of "an organ to enlarge her prayer" from which "notes tremendous ... thundered out". Music is constructed as something that has physical weight, size and presence, a synaesthetic idea which becomes a conceptual one in which music attains symbolic weight and presence. The extension of the synaesthetic to the conceptual is continued in

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[5] "A Summer Night", p. 117.
[6] "The Shield of Achilles", p. 597.
[7] "On this Island", p. 130.
[8] "As I Walked Out One Evening", p. 134.
[9] Part X of "Twelve Songs", p. 142.
[10] "Voltaire at Ferney", p. 251.
[11] St. Cecilia being the patron saint of music, the song was set as a choral piece by British composer Benjamin Britten, with whom Auden collaborated many times. Interestingly, this was to be the last work they collaborated on, after difficulties between the two.
[12] Pp. 280-282.

the lines "Dear white children casual as birds / Playing among the ruined languages, / So small beside the their large confusing words". Again, the root of the idea is physical (the words attain physical, synaesthetic characteristics) but the giant, ruined words take on a conceptual significance; their physical size against the children is suggestive of the state of modern culture, dwarfed by classical cannons and faced with a slow disintegration of language and meaning. The poem was written in 1942 which also gives the image a certain prescience; the 'ruined languages' elicit echoes of the war-related destruction on all things physical and figurative, children, language (literally, in cases such as the Nazi book-burning) and society included. The transfer of synaesthetic sound to such concepts continues throughout this poem. The "cry created as the bow of sin / Is drawn across our trembling violin"; humanity can't escape "the greater silences / of dreadful things [they] did". The sounds of musical instruments are given conceptual significance by their synaesthetic transference; the sound of the violin is the cry of sin, law is "drummed out of our hearts" and even the simple touch/sound correspondence of the throbbing flute, which I mentioned earlier, eventually gains further conceptual significance by its association with the "thanksgiving breath / Of convalescents on the shores of death", whereby the throbbing comes not only from the music, but from the slowing throb of ailing hearts.

"Kairos and Logos"[13] reiterates some of the St Cecilia metaphors in the lines "the shadow cast by language" and "cold and absence echo on our lives". Conceptual representations of language or absence are again connected with synaesthetic metaphors: visual, aural and somatosensory qualities are transferred to concepts in order to enhance their poetic intensity. "At the Grave of Henry James" constructs synaesthetic metaphors with a conceptual component, such as "lest Proportion shed / The alpine chill of her shrugging editorial shoulder / On my loose impromptu song" and "all the pools at my feet / Accommodate blue now, echo such clouds as occur / To the sky, and whatever mourner the passing / Moments remark they repeat".[14] In some poems these conceptual synaesthetic metaphors involve an allusion of smell, for example the line in Part III of "Sonnets from China" ("only a smell had feelings to make known"[15]) or from "Advent"

[13] Pp. 305-310.
[14] Pp. 310-312.
[15] P. 185.

Part I ("The weather smells of their hate / And the houses smell of fear"[16]). Other examples of sensory-conceptual metaphors from some of his best-known poems include "Time and fevers burn away / individual beauty",[17] "the squares of his mind were empty, / Silence invaded the suburbs"[18] and "a crater whose blazing fury could not be fixed"[19]; metaphors which all involve a conceptual (time/beauty, mind, fury) and a perceptual (burning, square, blazing) element. Even his most famous (arguably, although he rejected it himself[20]) poem "September 1, 1939" incorporates this perceptual/conceptual transference:

> Waves of anger and fear
> Circulate over the bright
> And darkened lands of the earth
> [...]
> The unmentionable odour of death
> Offends the September night.
> [...]
> Each language pours its vain
> Competitive excuse
> [...]
> All I have is a voice
> To undo the folded lie.[21]

Again, sensory ideas are intertwined with conceptual ones here; anger and fear come in waves, smell can offend night, language can be poured and lies can be folded. These metaphors are significant in that they are reminiscent of the branch of synaesthesia research concerned with ideasthesia. Auden's synaesthetic metaphors, while modest in comparison to many other poets, still occur often enough be labelled as overwhelmingly 'ideasthetic' in that they involve the exchange of sensory and conceptual components, such as colour and emotion, and in this respect they often reflect nineteenth century uses of poetic synaesthesia. Auden began to take the use of poetic synaesthesia away from its sensory, imagistic roots toward a more conceptual, abstract style. He was certainly an influential poetry and critic, so his use of conceptual synaesthesia undoubtedly had ramifications for the progression of synaesthesia usage in the twentieth century.

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[16] P. 350.
[17] "Lullaby", p. 157.
[18] "In Memory of W.B Yeats", p. 247.
[19] "In Praise of Limestone", p. 541.
[20] Auden: "Between you and me, I loathe that poem", as quoted in Edward Mendelson, *Later Auden*, (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1999) p. 478.
[21] Peter Forbes (ed.) *Scanning the Century: The Penguin Book of the Twentieth Century in Poetry*, (London: Penguin, 1999) pp. 74-76.

8.2 "Spirit and Nature Beat in One": Theodore Roethke, Nature and the Synaesthetic Self

Theodore Roethke's (1908-1963) poetry, written in approximately the same period as Auden's, shows evidence of extensive synaesthetic references. I will divide my discussion of Roethke's synaesthetic metaphor into the two parts; synaesthetic metaphors of light, which represent a natural element, and synaesthetic metaphors of song, which represent a human element. These elements share a quality of fluidity which I suggest characterises the poet's internal existence; through the interchangeability and flux of these elements the poet becomes a part of nature, and nature becomes part of the poet. As Dennis E. Brown suggests,

> The aim of Roethke's poetry was to explore outwards from the preliminary position of the bounded self in order to examine the real frontiers between self and not-self--both inanimate and human. To an age characterised by ontological insecurity-- that angst which arose from the breakdown of old categories of self-definition-- Roethke's poetry offers a way back to a sane relationship between self and world. It demonstrates that there is no permanent division between self and reality.[22]

The poet's expression of the 'self' is inherently synaesthetic, and his senses are often integrated not only with each other but with other natural entities including birds, animals, plants, earth and the elements of light and wind, which in turn acquire reciprocal senses of their own. "The Lost Son"[23] exemplifies this interchange. Self-awareness is transferred to the "leaves [which] stuck out their tongues" or the "voice ... appear[ing] in the form of a spider / Or a moth beating the curtain", but at the same time the 'self' of the poet/narrator becomes part of the natural world, "the softening chalk of my bones", being "fished in an old wound / the soft pond of my repose". The same sense of integration is repeated in many of his poems, and is very often connected with the image of bones or flesh: for example, "Believe me, knot of gristle, I bleed like a tree ... A bird sings in the bush of your bones" ("Give Way, Ye Gates"[24]), "the long flesh. / I know the way out of a laugh; / I'm a twig to touch" ("Sensibility! Oh La!"[25]), "a dry cry comes from my own desert; / the bones are lonely" ("I Cry, Love! Love!"[26]), "I touched

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[22] Dennis E Brown, "Theodore Roethke's "Self-World" and the Modernist Position", *Journal of Modern Literature*, Vol. 3, No. 5, Indiana University Press, 1974, pp. 1239-1254 (p. 1243).
[23] Theodore Roethke, *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke* (New York: Doubleday & Co, 1966) pp. 53-58.
[24] P. 79.
[25] P. 81.
[26] P. 93.

the stones, and they had my own skin" ("The Pure Fury"[27]) and "The dust rose and spoke; / A shape cried from a cloud, / Cried to my flesh out loud" ("The Exorcism"[28]). The trees, birds and desert are felt deep within the bones and the flesh, right down to the knot of gristle; flesh becomes nature and nature becomes flesh, and "spirit and nature beat in one breast-bone".[29] Both touch and sound are implicit in these metaphors.

The beating of the heart and the pulsing of blood are also transferred synaesthetically from self to nature: the "rose, sweet one ... drowsing in soft light, petals pulsing" in "The Long Alley",[30] "all the waters, of all the streams / sang in my veins" in The Waking,[31] "the ground's beating like a flame" in "O Thou Opening, O"[32] and "the pulse of a stone" in "The Visitant"[33] all become part of the "bonny beating gristle"[34] of the poet/narrator. This echoes the 'beat' of nature apparent in the poems of T.S Eliot, and is particularly relevant as a metaphor because of its simultaneous aural and somatic qualities. Sound and touch are linked inextricably in much of Roethke's poetry, and the synaesthetic tactility of many of these quotes is furthered by their mutual synaesthetic sounds; nature and self often seem to be joined together by a synaesthetic singing, laughing, crying or speaking. Thus, Roethke's poetic self becomes a synaesthetic self, joined by the senses to nature and the natural elements from which it came and to which it will ultimately return. As Stephen Spender noted in *The Objective Ego,*

> Entering into his world—indeed becoming it—his world "la-bas"—where words become loam, and roots and snails and slugs lying among bright chips of jangles from nursery rhymes and gashed childhood memories—Roethke is forever on the edge of Rimbaud's goal of the systematic *dérèglement de tous les sens*.[35]

The Symbolist 'disordering of the senses' was an inherently synaesthetic idea, and one that Roethke does seem to subscribe to in some ways (note the Baudelairean feel of the lines "A steady storm of correspondences / ... A man goes far to find out what he is" from "In a Dark Time"[36]). Drawing from Symbolist ideas of correspondences, Roethke

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[27] P. 133.
[28] P. 147.
[29] "The Sententious Man", p. 131.
[30] P. 59.
[31] P. 51
[32] P. 97.
[33] P. 100.
[34] "Praise to The End", p. 85.
[35] Stephen Spender, "The Objective Ego" in Arnold Stein (ed.) *Theodore Roethke: Essays on the Poetry* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1965) pp. 3-13.
[36] *The Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke,* p. 239.

employs a particularly synaesthetic mode of description in many of his 'nature' poems. Roethke's expression of the fluidity of exchange between nature and man is most fully realised in the phenomena of synaesthetic sound and synaesthetic tactility, and can be seen in his representation of the natural element of light in auditory and tactile terms, and the echo of this through the metaphor of song.

i. "Hearing Light on a Dry Day": Light, Touch and Sound

Roethke's poetic depiction of light is endowed with both synaesthetic sound and synaesthetic touch. In some poems, it echoes the light/pain metaphor that the WWI poets brought so devastatingly to the fore. His poem "The Light Comes Brighter"[37] associates light with pain, describing how "the sun cuts deep into the heavy drift" and interestingly, extends this implication to the aural sense: "The light comes brighter from the east; the caw / Of restive crows is sharper on the ear". Light is described in similar nociceptive terms in "Four for Sir John Davies"[38] ("a shape alone / impaled on light") where the metaphor is again enhanced by its transference to other perceptions; "Things have their thought: they are shards of me". It occurs in "The Coming of the Cold", where the "dense trees no longer hold the light ... the rocks gleam sharply on the narrow sight", and this tactility is once again transferred to other senses:

> The wind shakes out the scent of pear
> Upon the field the scent is dry:
> The dill bears up its acrid crown;
> The dock, so garish to the eye,
> Distils a pungence of its own;
> And pumpkins sweat a bitter oil.
> But soon cold rain and frost come in
> To press pure fragrance to the soil.[39]

In a similar synaesthetic transfer, light is given form and hardness in "I Cry, Love! Love!"[40] ("shaking out the flakes of moonlight"), "The Dream"[41] ("Light hardened on

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[37] P. 11.
[38] Pp. 105-107.
[39] "The Coming of the Cold", pp. 14-15.
[40] P. 92.
[41] P. 119.

the water where we were; /A bird sang low; the moonlight sifted in") and "The Long Waters"[42] ("where light is stone").

Other tactile associations occur in relation to light too. In some poems it loses the nociceptive properties associated with the war poets and becomes gentler and softer, taking on a liquid quality rather than a hardened form, becoming more reminiscent of the synaesthetic use of light in the poems of Stevens or Williams. This liquidity of light is evident in such examples as "gullies washed with light",[43] "these sweeps of light",[44] "light falls and fills, often without our knowing / As an opaque vase fills to the brim from a quick pouring"[45] and "I hear the flowers drinking in their light".[46] In "I'm Here", the "flat branch of that hemlock holds the last of the sun / Rocking it, like a sun-struck pond",[47] suggesting both liquidity and tactility, and the metaphor is perhaps most intense in "Supper with Lindsay", where "The sudden light spilled on the floor like cream / From a knocked-over churn, and foamed around / Us, under the chair-rungs, toward the cellar-door".[48] Roethke's synaesthetic light metaphors (light as solid, and light as fluid), have a certain fluidity themselves; light changes from something painful, to something tactile, to something soothing. While this echoes the World War I and Imagist poets, for whom tactile associations were paramount, it also suggests a progression in the use of synaesthetic metaphor. Like the war poets, Roethke transferred the sensory aspects of his own experience onto natural objects in order to give them poetic gravity, but his use of these sensory aspects also suggests a poignant poetic self-reflexivity; the qualities of light change from solid to liquid and back again in a sort of chemical flux, but so too do the qualities of his metaphors. The 'flow' of the natural world is expressed synaesthetically within the 'flow' of his poetry.

Roethke's use of light as a synaesthetic metaphor also frequently involves aural associations and these occur nearly as often as tactile ones; for example, he writes in "The Changeling"[49], "I can hear light on a dry day". As I have shown, his tactile

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[42] P. 196.
[43] "Night Journey", p. 34
[44] "The Lost Son", p. 56.
[45] "The Shape of the Fire", p. 67.
[46] "The Abyss", p. 222.
[47] P. 162.
[48] P. 273.
[49] P. 266.

associations of light were often transferred to other senses, which could go some way to explaining the profusion of aural metaphors as well. The synaesthetic aurality of light is as fluid as the tactile metaphors were, occasionally associated with haphazard sounds but mostly being aligned with speech and the human voice. The synaesthetic coupling of light with haphazard sounds can be seen in poems such as "The Unextinguished" ("morning light comes tapping at the lid") which interestingly enough, again also involves tactile and nociceptive transferences ("a flare / Of western light leaps with intenser blaze / To conflagration in the upper air"). It is also evident in the aptly titled "Light Listened"[50], where "The close air faintly stirred / Light deepened to a bell, / The love beat of a bird" and is applied to silence in "The Rose"[51] ("the rock singing, and light making its own silence ... the whole of light / Gathering to itself sound and silence"). More frequent, however, is the association of light with human voice, which continues the synaesthetic self/nature integration that Roethke so overwhelmingly employed in his work. "O, Thou Opening, O"[52] depicts "light's broken speech revived", an idea which is repeated in "She"[53] ("she knows the speech of light"), "What Can I Tell My Bones"[54] ("the barest speech of light") and "The Longing"[55] ("The light cries out, and I am there to hear") among others. The prolificacy of the metaphor of light as speech/sound is related, I suggest, not to a specific property of light itself, but rather to Roethke's overall conception of the synaesthetic amalgamation of nature and the self. It is not only light that takes on the properties of speech, but other natural objects: the "dark hollows said ... the moon said ... the salt said ... the weeds whined / the snakes cried / the cows and briars said to me: Die".[56] The capacity of the natural world for human speech is as integral to the poet's work as it is to poetry itself, where all things, even the inexpressible, are converted into the medium of language.

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[50] P. 212.
[51] P. 205.
[52] P. 97.
[53] P. 129.
[54] P. 171.
[55] P. 187.
[56] "The Lost Son", p. 53-57.

ii. "The Waters of All the Streams Sang in my Veins": Natural Song

Like much of Eliot's work, Roethke's poetry was interspersed with snippets of synaesthetic music connected to natural entities. Roethke's fixation on the reciprocal exchange between self and nature was also extended to song which shares similar qualities to light, such as fluidity and lack of form. Many of his music metaphors involve some sort of sensory transfer with natural or organic attributes. When he writes in "The Waking"[57] that "Heat was happy ... the wren's throat shimmered / Either to other / The blossoms sang / The stones sang ... all the waters / of all the streams / sang in my veins", the sensory implications of the image (heat/light/water/blood-flow) are combined into one 'song' which metaphorically represents the natural 'flowing' of both sensory impressions and natural elements. The metaphor is continued in other poems, including "Praise to the End"[58] ("another singing / Lighter than bells / Softer than water"), "Unfold! Unfold!"[59] ("Sing, sing, you symbols! All simple creatures, / All small shapes, willow-shy, / In the obscure haze, sing! / A light song comes from the leaves ... the minnows sang") and "The Becoming"[60] ("From the folds of my skin, I sing, / The air still, the ground alive, / The earth itself a tune"). The singing of nature is once again connected implicitly to the human body and the selfhood of the poet; his song becomes nature's song. The idea is (as I have noted in relation to poets such as Eliot and Auden, who tended to conceptualise it more than Roethke did) reminiscent of the ancient philosophical idea of the music of the spheres (*musica universalis*), a concept which implicitly underpins much of the use of synaesthetic musical concepts in poetry concerned with nature. Roethke's interpretation of this philosophical idea is much more personal however; his music arises from the self, rather than the movements of the universe, and represents a much more solipsistic view of perception. In Roethke's poetry, very often the self *is* the universe.

This natural music also occurs quite frequently in Roethke's love poems, for example "Elegy for Jane (My Student Thrown by a Horse)"[61]: "Her song trembling the twigs and small branches. / The shade sang with her; / The leaves, their whispers turned

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[57] P. 51.
[58] P. 88.
[59] P. 90.
[60] P. 165.
[61] P. 102.

to kissing; / And the mold sang in the bleached valleys under the rose". This poem, one of Roethke's most famous, depicts the echoing song of the shade and mold[62] as a sort of organic or earthly 'love-song', an idea which he repeats fairly often. Many of his love poems (and I would classify "Elegy..." as a love poem, considering its striking intimacy and delicacy of subject) use natural entities in the expression of their subject. Jane is described with "neckcurls, limp and damp as tendrils ... A wren, happy, tail into the wind ... My sparrow ... waiting like a fern ... my skittery pigeon". In the same way, the love-object is linked with music/song, which often arises out of the metaphorical interaction between natural entity and human subject. Jane's 'singing' is complemented by nature's 'singing'; in their song they become one. Perhaps the elegiac nature of this poem provides some insight here. Jane, perceived as *part* of nature, continues to exist (just as "Jane as a poem" does); perhaps the poet, in this metaphor, is not attempting to "nudge [her] from [the] sleep" of death, but instead to nudge her from the sleep of memory, to ensure she remains an alive and active force within his words and images. Again, a tendency towards philosophical solipsism is evident; the self/the mind *is* the universe, and if Jane can exist there, then she is not lost. A similar idea occurs in "The Voice":

> In her low voice I heard
> More than a mortal should
> [...]
> And yet I roamed out where
> Those notes went, like the bird,
> Whose thin song hung in the air,
> [...]
> The shy cerulean bird;
> It sang with her true voice,
> [...]
> Desire exults the ear:
> Bird, girl, and ghostly tree,
> The earth, the solid air—
> Their slow song sang in me.[63]

In this poem, the bird, the trees, the earth and the air are all made part of the girl (the subject of the love poem) through their mutual song; it is this, acting as a form of *musica universalis*, which unites these separate entities. I suggest that Roethke used this particular synaesthetic metaphor as a symbol of 'joining'; the synaesthetic song joins everything in the natural world together, thus it joins the poet/narrator and the subject of

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[62] Roethke's spelling.
[63] P. 128.

his love poem together in an unbreakable bond. Considering his other uses of synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphor, the fact that this metaphor occurs so frequently in his love poems (it occurs in 9 out of 16 of the poems included in the section "Love Poems" of the *Collected Poems*[64]) indicates that it took on some sort of symbolic significance for him. Roethke's use of synaesthetic metaphor was specifically related to nature and natural entities, and the relationship between these and the 'self'. This represents, I would venture, a thread in which synaesthetic metaphor in poetry continued to be used following the early years of the twentieth century. Although around the 1930s/1940s poets such as Auden were beginning to retreat from the previously perceptual focus of poetry in order to pursue a more conceptual or intellectual approach, there were many other poets who continued to use synaesthetic metaphor, both consciously and unconsciously, as a primary mode of expression.

8.3 The Five and Country Senses of Dylan Thomas

> "When all my five and country senses see [...] The heart is sensual"
> –"When All My Five and Country Senses". [65]

A study of synaesthesia in early twentieth century poetry would not be complete without mention of Dylan Thomas (1914-1953), if not for his original, idiosyncratic style and its influence on later poets, then certainly for the unrelentingly sensory nature of his work. Thomas' poetry abounds in perceptual metaphors, and a large number of these involve cross-sensory interactions, as is suggested by the above quote from the poem, which posits a mode of perception whereby all the five senses "see". In this poem Thomas suggests synaesthetic perception as a mode for perceiving the non-sensory (or wholly-sensory, depending on how you look at it) concept of love. This approach suggests that it is only through the synaesthetic interaction of all the senses, rather than the separate perceptions of each, that love can truly be experienced ("the heart is sensual, though five eyes break"[66]), and represents what I believe is a core element of Thomas' poetry: the synaesthetic expression of emotional concepts. Thomas elaborates on the synaesthetic implications of this idea for each sense in the poem, suggesting that,

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[64] Pp. 119-141.
[65] Dylan Thomas, *Dylan Thomas Omnibus: Under Milkwood, Poems, Stories and Broadcasts* (London: Phoenix, 1995) p. 60.
[66] P. 60.

The fingers will forget green thumbs and mark
How, through the halfmoon's vegetable eye,
[...]
Love in the frost is pared and wintered by,
The whispering ears will watch love drummed away
[...] the lynx tongue cry
That her fond wounds are mended bitterly.
My nostrils see her breath burn like a bush.

This poem is characteristic of the way Thomas uses synaesthesia: it is the emotion inherent in these synaesthetic metaphors which intensifies them. Although his poems contain elements of Auden-esque ideasthesia ("the lips of time leech to the fountainhead ... time has ticked a heaven round the stars"[67]) as well as the bodily/natural connection that Roethke was so enamoured with, the element which sets Thomas apart from these two poets is his emotional intensity. Auden's and Roethke's poems, despite their intimate subject matter, have a sense of being in some way removed; Auden's intellectualism can become impersonal, and Roethke's solipsism, while highly intimate, does in some ways exclude the reader. Thomas' poetry however, feels almost bodily in its sounds and images. The intensity of his poems reaches fever-pitch at some points, and they seem a prime example of the Wordsworthian idea of a spontaneous overflow of powerful emotion. His words, rhythms and images, while occasionally running the risk of obscurity or nonsense, certainly manage to affect the reader in an intense manner, as seen by the diverse range of critical responses they have inspired since their publishing. As J. M Kertzer notes in "'Argument of the Hewn Voice': The Early Poetry of Dylan Thomas", Thomas "defended his poems by telling Vernon Watkins that their 'form was consistently emotional' ... Both thought and feeling must be engaged in 'the antagonistic interplay of emotions and ideas ... brain chords and nerve chords'".[68]

i. "Man is My Metaphor": The Synaesthetic Body

The human body holds a central position in Thomas' poetry, as he affirmed in "If I were tickled by the rub of love" ("I would be tickled by the rub that is: / Man be my metaphor"[69]). In this respect he is similar to Roethke, using the body as a poetic

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[67] "The Force that Through the Green Fuse Drives the Flower", p. 12.
[68] J.M Kertzer, "Argument of the Hewn Voice": The Early Poetry of Dylan Thomas", *Contemporary Literature*, Vol. 20, No. 3, University of Wisconsin Press, 1979, pp. 293-315, p. 294-295.
[69] *Dylan Thomas Omnibus*, pp. 14-15.

vehicle for the exploration of birth, death, sex and love and the endless cycles they engender, but he diverges from Roethke's technique too. Where the solipsism of Roethke's body metaphor is often personal and philosophic, Thomas' seems universal and emotional, and in this he resembles the nineteenth century use of synaesthesia. However, Thomas' poetry also shows evidence of the tactility which characterised the twentieth century. His work was deeply fixated on sensory themes as well as on cycles of birth and death, which makes his choice of the body as a central metaphor understandable. Marshall W. Stearns suggests that Thomas "select[ed] man as the theme of his poetry, 'man living, loving, using his five senses and functioning fully' ... Man for Thomas is man from seed to grave, with the emphasis on the grave, and the poet constantly attempts to view the entire progression simultaneously".[70] This 'simultaneism' is conducive to synaesthetic expression, and Thomas expresses the body in synaesthetic terms just as Roethke did. Thomas' tendency toward the synaesthetic expression of the body as a metaphor can, like Roethke's, be traced back to the bodily/tactile preoccupation of Imagist and WWI poets. "If I were tickled by the rub of love" uses the metaphor of man as a sensory being in order to explore abstract ideas of love and death. The synaesthetic tactility of the poem is obvious from the title/first line, which suggests love in its traditional romantic sense, but also gives it an erotic component through its tactile associations (tickled, rub). Various aspects of love are then expressed in tactile synaesthetic terms throughout the poem. Lines such as "the rub of love ... the red tickle ... still set to scratch a laughter from my lung", "tickled by urchin hungers / Rehearsing heat upon a raw-edged nerve" and "from damp love-darkness" are all intrinsically tactile but also include elements of the visual and aural (red, laughter, darkness). The same occurs for ideas of birth ("the itch of man upon the baby's thigh") and death ("I sit and watch the worm beneath my nail / Wearing the quick away" and "Death's feather on the nerve ... the words of death are drier"). Thomas uses man as a metaphor in a literal sense; the flesh, blood and bones of man become the site for poetic and philosophic questions of life, death and love. The same technique occurs in "I see the boys of summer", a poem incorporating extensive tactility and taste:

> Sour the boiling honey;
> The jacks of frost they finger in the hives;

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[70] Marshall W. Stearns, "Unsex the Skeleton: Notes on the Poetry of Dylan Thomas", *The Sewanee Review*, Vol. 52, No. 3, The John Hopkins University Press, 1944, pp. 424-440, p. 427.

> There in the sun the frigid threads
> Of doubt and dark they feed their nerves
> [...]
> I see the summer children in their mothers
> Split up the brawned womb's weathers,
> Divide the night and day with fairy thumbs
> [...]
> There from their hearts the dogdayed pulse
> Of love and light bursts in their throats
> O see the pulse of summer in the ice.[71]

Here, in a way now similar to Roethke's poetry, the cyclic connection of nature and the body are expressed in synaesthetic tactile terms; the seasons' endless succession echoes the endless cycle of birth and death. The pulse of summer is visible in the ice, just as the visible pulse in the throats of children is a reminder of their inevitable mortality. The metaphor here is an emotional one (enhanced by abstract emotional concepts such as doubt and love), while Roethke's, I would argue, is more pragmatic. The bodily pulse as a synaesthetic entity reoccurs often in Thomas' poetry, as in the poem "In the beginning" where the pulsing of blood through the veins becomes a metaphor for natural creation:

> Life rose and spouted from the rolling seas
> Burst in the roots, pumped from earth to rock
> [...]
> Before the veins were shaking in their sieve
> Blood shot and scattered to the winds of light.[72]

Again, this bodily metaphor is enhanced by its emotional associations with the "smile of light across the empty face" and the "the ribbed original of love". The synaesthetic treatment of blood occurs in a number of other poems, and very often contains an emotional element: "furious [...] Roaring, crawling, quarrel / with the outside weathers [...] the windy blood / slides like a sea",[73] "claw of the crabbed veins / squeeze from every red particle / the parched and raging voice",[74] "we trembled listening / To the sea sound flowing like blood from the loud wound"[75] and "The leaping saga of prayer [...] Pastoral beat of blood through the laced leaves".[76] It echoes very strongly Roethke's and Eliot's use of the 'beating' metaphor and once again suggests the pervasiveness of the synaesthetic representation of nature and the body in the period, although it is

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[71] *Dylan Thomas Omnibus*, p. 6.
[72] P. 21.
[73] "Light breaks where no sun shines", p. 22.
[74] "How shall my animal", p. 66.
[75] "Lie still, sleep becalmed", p. 97.
[76] "In Country Sleep", p.122.

palpably more grounded in emotional experience than either of theirs, and in its conceptualisation it also echoes the ideasthesia of Auden's poetry.

Thomas utilises synaesthetic taste metaphors in a similar way to Roethke, and also to Williams who used them in relation to gender, nature and ideas of birth. Just as the pulse of blood was transferred to nature, so the sensory implications of birth, weaning and mothering become representative of time and mortality in Thomas' poems, such as "My world is pyramid":

> Half of the fellow father as he doubles
> His sea-sucked adam in the hollow hulk,
> Half of the fellow mother as she dabbles
> Tomorrow's diver in her horny milk,
> [...]
> The fellow seed and shadow as it babbled
> The swing of milk was tufted in the pap.[77]

This also occurs in other poems: "the mouth of time sucked, like a sponge, / the milky acid [...] / And swallowed dry the waters of the breast"[78], "All all and all the dry worlds couple [...] Contagious man / With the womb of his shapeless people / All that shapes from the caul and suckle"[79] and "milk in your mouth, at the sour floods / That bury the sweet street slowly",[80] the latter a particularly poignant echo of Williams. This metaphor is notable in that, like Williams, Thomas used synaesthetic taste and tactility to emphasise birth, time and mortality, but by extension also the primitive and religious aspects (primitive man, Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, the religious re-birthing of the world) inherent in these concepts. Once again, these poems have an emotional resonance in their images and sounds which synaesthetic metaphors help to enhance. Even "From love's first fever", one of Thomas' most enduring and emotional poems, shows a similar intention; the "soft second / And to the hollow minute of the womb / From the unfolding to the scissored caul / The time for breast"[81] represents the joining of poetic ideas of time and mortality with tactile and gustatory synaesthetic metaphors of birth, in an inherently emotional manner. Thomas uses the metaphor of the body in a

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[77] "My world is pyramid", p. 25.
[78] "When once the twilight locks", p. 8.
[79] "All all and all", p. 28.
[80] "A saint about to fall", p. 69.
[81] P. 20

synaesthetic way, as Roethke, Eliot or Williams did, but the emotional resonance which characterises his poems gives it a slightly different implication.

ii. The Poet's Sawn, Splay Sounds

Reading Thomas' poetry, it is impossible not to recognise that sound plays an incredibly important role. Much has been made of this; in fact, it is unusual to find a critical response to Thomas' poetry which doesn't mention sound in some form or other, positive or otherwise.[82] Thomas uses sound in a variety of ways within his poetry to create rhythmic patterns, to enhance emotional intensity and to represent images and concepts in sound-symbolic form.[83] It stands to reason then that Thomas' synaesthetic metaphors also incorporate sound quite extensively. An examination of his work reveals that he consistently establishes various inter-sense correspondences for sound, the most frequent of which are sound and tactility, and sound and vision. The innate embedding of this synaesthetic experience of sound is suggested by the lines in his Author's Prologue (which he "intended as an address to my readers, the strangers"[84]):

> At poor peace I sing
> To you, strangers (though song
> Is a burning and crested act,
> The fire of birds in the turning wood,
> For my sawn, splay sounds).[85]

These synaesthetic "sawn, splay sounds", a curiously appropriate description for much of Thomas' poetry, have both visual and tactile significance, and Thomas continued these dual associations throughout his work. As in these lines, the synaesthetic qualities of sound are expressed through the idea of shape in "Hold Hard, these ancient minutes": "and now the horns of England, in the sound of shape".[86] This idea is repeated in "A Grief Ago" ("The dens of shape / Shape all her whelps with the long voice of water"[87]), "Altarwise by Owl-light" ("Shade without shape? The shape of Pharaoh's echo? / (My

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[82] Louise Baughan Murdy notes that Robert Graves wrote about Thomas' poetry "Dylan Thomas was drunk with melody, and what the words were he cared not. He was eloquent, and what cause he was pleading, he cared not...He kept musical control of the reader without troubling about the sense" Louise Baughan Murdy, *Sound and Sense in Dylan Thomas' Poetry* (Paris: Mouton & Co, 1966) p. 11.
[83] Baughan Murdy's study discusses this in detail, suggesting that sound and sense in Thomas' poetry increasingly correlate over time, p. 85.
[84] Dylan Thomas, *Collected Poems 1934-1952* (London: J.M Dent, Everyman's Library, 1966) p. vii.
[85] *Dylan Thomas Omnibus*, p. 3-5.
[86] P. 39.
[87] P. 43.

shape of age nagging the wounded whisper)" and "time tracks the sound of shape on man and cloud"[88]) and "A Winter's Tale" ("the harp shaped voice of the water's dust pricks in a fold / of fields"[89]).

The idea of sound having shape or physical form is both a tactile and a visual one, as form can be both seen and felt. Thomas uses this metaphor in both senses. He aligns sound with touch and tactility in lines such as "Then all the matter of the living air / Raised up a voice, and, climbing on the words, / I spelt my vision with a hand and hair",[90] "Ears in this island hear / The wind pass like a fire"[91] and "Time's tune my ladies with the teats of music ... fix in a naked sponge / Who sucks the bell-voiced Adam out of magic".[92] The same correspondence can be seen in "the sinners' dust-tongued bell claps me to the churches ... strike the sea hour through bellmetal"[93] and "both note and plume plunge from the spire's hook ... songs that jump back / To the built voice".[94] Even phrases such as "sigh long, clay cold, lie shorn ... leaped up the whinnying light"[95] and "the foxes on the hill barked clear and cold"[96] have synaesthetic sound-touch associations. Again, note the bodily implications of many of these lines, which reflect Thomas' synaesthetic treatment of 'man as metaphor'. Clearly the synaesthetic potentialities of sound were not lost on Thomas, and he continues his inter-sensory associations by aligning sound with colour and shade in similar abundance, as can be seen most explicitly in "From love's first fever": "shone in my ears the light of sound / Called in my ears the sound of light".[97] Again, this metaphor is repeatedly used in other poems. The poet speaks of sound (and silence) as coloured: "black-tongued bells",[98] "a white answer echo[ing]",[99] "a calling for colour [...] a one-coloured calm / The heavenly music over the sands / Sounds with the grains",[100] "the colour of saying /

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[88] Pp. 53-57.
[89] P. 87.
[90] "I fellowed sleep", p. 24.
[91] "Ears in the turrets hear", p. 45.
[92] "Altar-wise by Owl Light", p. 56.
[93] "It is the sinners' dust-tongued bell", p. 63.
[94] "The spire cranes", p. 63.
[95] "How shall my animal", p. 67.
[96] "Fern Hill", p. 118.
[97] P. 20.
[98] "I see the boys of summer", p. 7.
[99] "Why east wind chills", p. 42..
[100] "We lying by seasand", p. 61.

soaked my table",[101] "the golden note",[102] "Illumination of music [...] singing into the white act"[103] and "back to the black silence".[104] He also speaks of sound in conjunction with light and dark: "loud and dark directly under the dumb flame",[105] "the shadow of a sound",[106] "singing light",[107] "sing / Darkness kindled back into being [...] the last light spoken".[108] The prevalence of these metaphors suggests that synaesthetic connections between the senses were deeply embedded in Thomas' work. As I have already suggested, these synaesthetic metaphors work to enhance the emotional intensity of his poems by engaging both thought and feeling in "the antagonistic interplay of emotions and ideas", as Thomas intended.

iii. Dark-Vowelled Birds and Hollow Words

The final aspect of Thomas' poetry to have synaesthetic significance is his endowment of words with sensory characteristics. Thomas as a poet was clearly enamoured with words, and their appearance among his synaesthetic metaphors is not unexpected; his use of word and language references is reminiscent of grapheme-based synaesthesia, one of the most common forms of synaesthetic perception. Numerous suggestions have been made that Dylan Thomas was a true synaesthete, and if this was indeed the case it is likely that he would have had a grapheme-related form of synaesthesia. Natalie Wourm considers this in her essay, "Dylan Thomas and the French Symbolists", which mentions his significant use of synaesthesia:

> Recalling his own experience of words in early childhood, Thomas likewise concludes that words have life, selfhood and autonomy [...] Thomas also refers to "the colours the words cast on my eyes" in these early days and to the primary importance of the "sound" of words as opposed to what they "stood for, symbolized or meant".[109]

Judging by the sheer abundance of synaesthesia in his work it is possible, if not probable, that he was actually synaesthetic himself, and these lines certainly suggest

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[101] "Once it was the colour of saying", p. 65.
[102] "There was a saviour", p. 90.
[103] "In my Country Sleep", p. 122.
[104] "Vision and Prayer" II, p. 107.
[105] "It is the sinners' dust-tongued bell", p. 62.
[106] "A Refusal to Mourn the Death, by Fire, of a Child in London", p. 73.
[107] "In my Craft or Sullen Art", p. 91
[108] "Ceremony After a Fire Raid", pp. 92-93.
[109] Natalie Wourm, "Dylan Thomas and the French Symbolists", Birkbeck College London, n.d. *The Dylan Thomas Boathouse at Laugharne*, Accessed on 6/09/12 at <http://www.dylanthomasboathouse.com/english/education/papers.html >.

that; but as explained before, definitive confirmation of this is not the aim of my study. Thomas certainly uses words synaesthetically to integrate the sensory and emotional aspects of poetry, as he did with the tactile and aural metaphors I have already discussed, and these synaesthetic word metaphors appear as often as the others. Like Roethke, he also used this technique as a means of self-reflexivity and a way of incorporating into his poetry some sense of the double level on which it operates; a reminder, in some sense, that in poetry it is words which create perceptions, and perceptions which create words.

Thomas' poem "Especially when the October wind" [110] is intertwined with both words and perceptions, and each become a part of the other. The poet, like the poem itself, is "shut in a tower of words" and his "busy heart ... Sheds the syllabic blood and drains her words". As the poem continues, it becomes clear that the words are encroaching on everything, and that the inhabited poem-world is one which is made out of words, both literally and figuratively:

> The wordy shapes of women, and the rows
> Of the star-gestured children in the park.
> Some let me make you of the vowelled beeches,
> Some of the oaken voices, from the roots
> Of many a thorny shire tell you the notes,
> Some let me make you of the water's speeches
> [...]
> Some let me make you of the heartless words.
> The heart is drained that, spelling in the scurry
> Of chemic blood, warned of the coming fury.
> By the sea's side hear the dark-vowelled birds.

Baughan Murdy says of this poem that "a metaphoric structure is utilized to communicate poetically the narrator's experiences, for Thomas describes the poet's visual and auditory perceptions on a particular October day in the terminology of poetic language ... the imagery of the poem is both visual and auditory ... the sound effects help blend harmoniously together the various experiences".[111] What this blending suggests is a synaesthetic form of perception, and I believe that the terminology the poet used in describing these perceptions was a reflection of the visual/auditory nature of the poem. Language, particularly poetic language, is both a visual and an auditory medium in itself and Thomas gave equal importance to both qualities. So when he wished to

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[110] *Dylan Thomas Omnibus*, p. 17-18.
[111] Baughan Murdy, p. 29-31.

express the visual and auditory perceptions of an October day, what better metaphor to turn to than the metaphor of language itself? The self-reflexivity here is obvious; the poet must turn to language in order to create metaphor and he must use metaphor in order to create poetry; so to use language as a metaphor within this poetry is to come in a full, paradoxical circle (something which would no doubt have appealed to Thomas, whose interest in cycles is evident).

Thomas' use of this metaphor was not a one-off anomaly or mere poetic experimentation. He used it considerably throughout his poems, and I believe he most likely recognised the possibilities it offered for poetic self-reflexivity. "In the beginning" speaks of "the pale signature / Three-syllabled and starry as the smile" and the "word / That from the solid bases of the light / Abstracted all the letters of the void / And from the cloudy bases of the breath / The word flowed up translating to the heart / First characters of birth and death".[112] The religious implications of these images are obvious ("in the beginning was the word"), but I believe they also refer to the poetic process, or poetic 'creation'. The description of the word which "flowed up translating to the heart / First characters of birth and death" is too self-referential and reminiscent of the themes in Thomas' own poetry to ignore. Thus, once again his use of synaesthetic metaphor here carries multiple significances, appealing to both the *thoughts* and *feelings* of the poet and the reader. Other instances of this synaesthetic metaphor occur where words are given tactile, visual and aural qualities: "the words of death are dryer than his stiff / My wordy words are printed with your hair",[113] "the hollow words could bear all suffering / And cure me of ills",[114] "lava's light split through the oyster vowels / And burned sea silence on a wick of words",[115] "hollow / Alcove of words out of cicada shade",[116] "her threadbare whisper in a damp word ... this monumental / Argument of the hewn voice"[117] and "the shade of their trees was a word of many shades".[118] The idiosyncratic nature of such synaesthetic metaphors is perhaps part of the reason why Dylan Thomas' name often comes up in discussions of possible synaesthetes, and it is easy to imagine that he had a grapheme, visual or auditory form of synaesthesia. Natalie

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[112] *Dylan Thomas Omnibus,* p. 21-22.
[113] "If I were tickled by the rub of love", p. 15.
[114] "Out of the sighs", p. 38.
[115] "Altarwise by owl-light", pp. 55-56.
[116] "We lying by seasand", p. 61.
[117] "After the funeral", pp. 64-65.
[118] "Once it was the colour of saying", p. 65.

Wourm makes an interesting observation, suggesting that Thomas “seems to develop further the Baudelairean concept of a unity of sensations in the unified world of perfection which, Thomas believes, one knew before birth when "All world was one, one windy nothing" ... synaesthesia is used to suggest the gradual awakening of sensation in the unborn child in the womb”.[119] This is a fascinating suggestion when viewed in relation to the recent research on infantile synaesthetic perception, and it suggests that perhaps Thomas had an uncanny prescience for sensory and neurological ideas. In any case, the unrelentingly sensory and emotional nature of his poems has certainly carved him out a place as one of the most original and unusual poets of his generation, and his use of synaesthesia only enhances this.

8.4 Inheritances: Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney

To conclude my study I would like to look briefly at a few prominent poets whose work in some ways continued the trends in poetic synaesthesia which can be seen in the work of Auden, Roethke and Thomas. While there are numerous directions that could be taken here, the length restriction of this study demands that the focus is narrowed down to four selected poets: Philip Larkin (1922-1985), Sylvia Plath (1932-1963), Ted Hughes (1930-1998) and Seamus Heaney (1939-2013). I have chosen these poets for their original contributions to twentieth century British and American literature, but also for their distinct continuation of the use of synaesthesia which I suggest formed part of the inheritance they took from the earlier poets. As these poets were writing their main works in the 1950s and beyond (although Larkin began writing earlier, he was not well known for his poetry until the mid-1950s), they belong just outside the focus of my study. As such, I will only discuss their use of synaesthesia in brief; however I do feel it is important to note the directions that synaesthesia use moved in as the century progressed, and to show how it formed part of the significant legacy left by the poets I have already discussed. Instead of focusing on each poet individually, I will look instead at some of the predominant metaphors which arose out of early twentieth

[119] Wourm, p. 4.

century poetic synaesthesia and establish how the inheritance of these can be seen in the works of these mid-century poets.

i. Touch, Pain and the Bodily Senses

One of the most prominent synaesthetic tropes to occur in early twentieth century poetry was the use of touch and the somatosensory system as a form of synaesthetic correspondence. As established earlier, touch as a primal, bodily synaesthetic metaphor was used extensively by the Imagist and World War I poets, and the impact of this was long-lasting: it can be seen in the works of poets whose concerns were becoming more aesthetic, such as Eliot, Cummings, Williams and Stevens, and it still occurs extensively in the later works of poets such as Roethke and Thomas. This metaphor of synaesthetic tactility continues to appear in the poetry of all four of the mid-century poets I am discussing, which goes some way to demonstrating its pervasiveness and persistence as a poetic trope in the early twentieth century period. The touch/pain metaphors of light and sky that the war poets used so extensively can still be seen, even in the poems of someone like Larkin who explicitly rejected the 'modernist' poetic approach.[120] Larkin's cobblestones which "sent no light back to the loaded sky, / Sunk as it was with mist down to the roofs"[121] or the lights which "burnt on, / Pin-points" carry unmistakeable echoes of Sassoon, Owen or Rosenberg, as do the "white rooms / Whose lights in clusters beam / Like suddenly caused pain".[122] In fact, Larkin uses touch metaphors quite frequently, and often these are associated with natural entities such as light and the sky: for example "On longer evenings, / Light, chill and yellow, / Bathes the serene foreheads of houses"[123] or "a cavernous wind-picked sky ... (Stone-coloured light sharpening the roofs below) ... The hardness and the brightness and the plain / Far-reaching singleness".[124] Such sensory associations can be seen particularly in his early poems, such as "Winter Nocturne" ("the dusk steals slowly in, / Crossing the dead, dull fields with footsteps cold ... night's fingers spin / A web of drifting mist ... The sky is

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[120] Simon Petch, *The Art of Philip Larkin* (Sydney University Press, 1981) p. 5.
[121] Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems* Ed. Anthony Thwaite (London: Marvell Press, 1988) p. 20.
[122] "Ape Experiment Rooms", p. 160.
[123] "Coming", p. 33.
[124] "Sad Steps", p. 169.

silent too, / Hard as granite"[125]) and "Summer Nocturne" ("a ghostly light spills ... filters through their lace to touch the flowers ... cooled by the pale moonlight"[126]). Both of these poems were written in 1939, around the time when Thomas and Roethke were also exploring ideas of tactility, which could perhaps suggest that the reoccurrence of war brought the tactile and nociceptive senses to the fore once again. Moreover, Larkin also uses synaesthetic touch in more ideasthetic ways, which is unsurprising considering Auden's influence on his work: he writes of how "dew clarifies air / To sharpen evenings, / As if time put an edge / Round the last shape of things",[127] of the "hollows of afternoons"[128] and that "my sleep is made cold / By a recurrent dream".[129] Lines such as these incorporate both the intrinsic bodily associations of the war poets and the conceptual, ideasthetic sensory associations explored by Eliot, Stevens and later by Auden. Clearly Larkin was an inheritor of both traditions.

Sylvia Plath's poetry, like that of her immediate predecessors Dylan Thomas and Theodore Roethke, was centred on the body. Plath's synaesthetic metaphors also contain echoes of the touch/pain metaphors of the World War One and Imagist poets, as seen in such lines as "the red / Eye, the cauldron of the morning",[130] "the sky leans on me" and

> The horizons ring me [...]
> Touched by a match, they might warm me,
> And their fine lines singe
> The air to orange
> Before the distances they pin evaporate,
> Weighting the pale sky with a solider colour.[131]

The somatic associations of these lines, where the image of the sky is expressed in tactile terms such as leaned, touched, warmed, singed, pinned and weighted, are once again reminiscent of the early sensory use of such metaphors by the war poets. In fact, much of Plath's poetry uses nociceptive associations, which is perhaps not surprising considering her long battle with depression, her multiple suicide attempts and

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[125] P. 225.
[126] P. 227.
[127] "Long Sight in Age", p. 105.
[128] "Afternoons", p. 121.
[129] "Songs, 65° N", p. 303.
[130] Sylvia Plath, *Selected Poems* Ed. Ted Hughes (London: Faber, 1985) "Ariel", p. 70.
[131] P. 37.

hospitalisations, and her final surrender to the spectre of death which haunts most of her poems. A poem such as "Tulips" shows this most poignantly:

> The tulips are too red in the first place. They hurt me.
> Even through the gift paper I hear them breathe
> Lightly, through their white swaddlings, like an awful
> baby.
> Their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds.
> They are subtle: they seem to float, though they weigh me
> down,
> Upsetting me with their sudden tongues and their colour,
> A dozen red lead sinkers round my neck.
> [...]
> Where once a day the light slowly widens and slowly thins,
> And I see myself, flat, ridiculous, a cut-paper shadow
> [...]
> The vivid tulips eat my oxygen
> [...]
> Before they came the air was calm enough [...]
> The tulips filled it up like a loud noise
> [...]
> And I am aware of my heart: it opens and closes
> Its bowl of red blooms out of sheer love of me.
> The water I taste is warm and salt.[132]

This poem is extraordinarily synaesthetic in its associations, depicting the effects of the tulips through sound, taste and touch, with a specific emphasis on pain. Again, echoes arise here of Gurney's visceral "red wet", or Owen's jagged gash of red dawn, stimulated unconsciously by the chaotic sensory onslaught of their horrific experiences. Plath's use of colour as an expression of multi-sensory associations also has echoes of poets such as Cummings, Williams and Stevens, who were using it for expressive and emotive purposes. The poem itself and Plath's poetry in general both inherit elements of each of these synaesthetic modes.

Plath's poems seem to switch fluently between an adult intelligence and a childlike perception, and I believe that her synaesthetic metaphors do the same, flickering constantly between primal bodily experience and conceptual ideas. Touch/pain is linked to colour in a primal, visceral way as in "Tulips, Nick and the Candlestick" ("the light burns blue"[133]), or "Poppies in July" ("Little poppies, little hell flames...you flicker. I cannot touch you. / I put my hands among the flames. Nothing burns"[134]), and these colour-centred ideas are inherently related to those of Stevens or Williams. So too, coloured touch occurs in "Letter in November" ("There is a green in

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[132] P. 33.
[133] P. 73.
[134] P. 53.

the air / Soft, delectable / It cushions me lovingly"[135]), "Winter Trees" ("The wet dawn inks are doing their blue dissolve. / On their blotter of fog the trees / Seem a botanical drawing"[136]) and "Edge" ("her blacks crackle and drag"[137]). However, Plath also explored the conceptual and emotive aspects of these metaphors in multi-sensory ways somewhat reminiscent of Thomas. For example, "Poppies in July" is very similar to "Tulips" in that it extends the dominant metaphor of red as painful/somatic into a multi-sensory experience: "A mouth just bloodied. / Little bloody skirts! / These are fumes that I cannot touch ... If my mouth could marry a hurt like that! / Or your liquors seep into me, in this glass capsule, / Dulling and stilling", thus taking it from a primal experience to a more conceptual one, with ideas of femininity and sex, sleep, drugs/anaesthetic, war and injury (many of which are frequent themes in Plath's poetry) resonating around the central image of red poppies.

Ted Hughes' poetry shows a similar tendency, echoing the war poets' use of touch/pain metaphors for light and sky in "the sun, / Orange, red, red erupted. / Silently, and splitting to its core tore and flung cloud, / Shook the gulf open",[138] "the dusty stabs of the late sun"[139] or "the sun melts the hill's spine and the spilled light / Flows".[140] Like Plath, Hughes incorporated synaesthetic touch as a central metaphor which moves between sensory and conceptual significance, but where Plath tended to follow Williams and Stevens, using colour as the reciprocal metaphor for touch, Hughes' work contains echoes of Roethke and Thomas by making the natural and the earthly a central trope. Thus, in Hughes' poetry, touch is again used as an intermediary between nature and the self; the poet seems to focus on the moment when "Into the mesh of sense, out of the dark / Blundered the world-shouldering monstrous 'I'"[141] (a moment which suggests both infantile, synaesthetic perception and primal, animalistic instinct). This can be seen in poems such as "Meeting" ("an eye / That was like a living hanging hemisphere / And watched his blood's gleam with a ray / Slow and cold and ferocious as a star"[142]), "Wind" ("the wind wielded / Blade-light, luminous black and emerald, /

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[135] P. 75.
[136] P. 80.
[137] P. 85.
[138] Ted Hughes, *New Selected Poems 1957-1994*, (London: Faber, 1995), "The Horses", pp. 7-8.
[139] "Gnat-Psalm", p. 85.
[140] "Recklings: Stealing Trout on a May Morning", p. 46.
[141] "The Man Seeking Experience Enquires his Way of a Drop of Water", pp. 12-13.
[142] P. 13.

Flexing like the lens of a mad eye ... the brunt wind that dented the balls of my eyes"[143]) and "Recklings: Memory" ("Hands of light / Wash the writhing darkness"[144]). It is also clear that Hughes uses colour as a synaesthetic reciprocate of touch, but where Plath's colour-touch metaphors represent the emotive expression of an abstract experience, Hughes' are grounded in the natural, animalistic world: as in the "widening deepening greenness" of "The Thought-Fox" (which also represents the world of the mind), the "Blaze of darkness ... Blackness is depth" of "The Bull Moses" which echoes "the blaze / singing"[145] in "Gnats Psalm", or the otter "Crying to the old shape of the / starlit land ... Till light and birdsong come / walloping up roads".[146] All of these poems, like so many of Hughes', have bestial, inhuman connotations. His use of synaesthetic touch echoes the synaesthetic natural 'self' of Roethke, where human perceptive capacity is transferred to non-human entities, but it also echoes Thomas' sense of the 'force' of life which runs through human bodies, animal bodies, and the earth equally.

Like Hughes, Seamus Heaney uses the metaphor in a similar way to Roethke and Thomas. He talks in "Bone Dreams" of the "rough porous language of touch"[147] as an inherently earthly, natural mode of experience, where the bodies of man, woman and animal are transferred into the earthly elements of chalk, dirt, grass, dew and grain (ideas he explores even more literally in the bog-poems). Heaney also uses synaesthetic touch to poetically emphasise the sensuous and emotive elements of visual imagery in a similar way to Plath; to enhance, for example, the "cool hardness in our hands ... the cold smell of potato mould"[148] in "Digging" or the "thick warm slobber / of frogspawn that grew like clotted water" and the "big dark blobs [that] burned like a plate of eyes"[149] from "Death of a Naturalist", poems which are characterised by their multi-sensory associations (touch, smell, taste, sight) as well as their childhood themes. As for Plath and Roethke, the sensory experience of childhood is intrinsic to Heaney's work and he seems to use more bodily synaesthetic metaphors in his earlier childhood-centred

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[143] P. 14.
[144] P. 48.
[145] "Gnats-Psalm", p. 85.
[146] "An Otter", pp. 37-38.
[147] Seamus Heaney, *New Selected Poems 1966-1987* (London: Faber, 1990) pp.62-65.
[148] Pp. 1-2.
[149] Pp. 3-4.

poems. His later poems become more cerebral and less sensory in some respects[150] and he sometimes aligns synaesthetic touch metaphors with more conceptual ideas in lines such as "We have no prairies / to slice a big sun at evening",[151] or the "day of cold, raw silence",[152] which perhaps echo Larkin and Auden more than anyone. Heaney too was a poetic inheritor of metaphors of synaesthetic touch, even though he was writing deep into the second half of the century. It is clear even from this short discussion that synaesthetic touch remained a pervasive poetic metaphor, and forms a substantial part of the poetic inheritance acquired by poets such as Larkin, Plath, Hughes and Heaney, among others.

ii. Taste and Smell

Taste, as I have mentioned before, was generally regarded as a 'lower-order' sense, presumably less worthy of examination both philosophically and poetically than the higher-order senses of sight and hearing. Yet it occurs frequently in the poetry of the early twentieth century, and very often in a synaesthetic capacity. Synaesthetic smell metaphors were used quite frequently in nineteenth century poetry, particularly in French Symbolist poetry, but taste metaphors did not generally appear. For the inheritors of the early twentieth century synaesthetic/poetic tradition, both taste and smell appear in sensorial and conceptual manifestations, suggesting once again the joint influence of nineteenth and twentieth century synaesthetic traditions.

Synaesthetic smell appears in Larkin's poetry in a highly conceptualised manner, often being used in a multi-sensory capacity to depict ideas such as time ("the chestnut trees are caked with silence. I'm / Aware the days pass quicker than, before, / Smell staler too. And once they fall behind / They look like ruin"[153]), emotion ("each deep drawn breath is redolent / Of all the folded flowers' mingled scent / That rises in

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[150] Heaney once said in an interview with Dennis O'Driscoll: "My first impulse when writing had been to make the language as rich as possible and to have a stained glass effect. But in my forties I wanted plain clear glass, and soon realised that if the first appeal of a poem isn't going to be in the texture of its language, then it must have some other means of taking hold". Seamus Heaney and Dennis O'Driscoll, "An Ear to the Line: An Interview", *Poetry*, Vol. 193, No. 3, 2008, pp. 254-268, p. 258.

[151] Heaney, *New Selected Poems,* "Bogland", p. 17.

[152] "Casualty", p. 101.

[153] Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, "To Failure", p. 28.

confused rapture now"[154]) or a multi-sensory mixture of the two ("the evening ambles near, / Softly, through the scented air, / Laying by the tautened fear: / Peace sliding from above"[155]). Plath uses smell as a synaesthetic entity less frequently, and mostly in a more sensory, less emotive way; as in "vapours / ravel to clearness on the dawn sea" and "smell sweet as rubber"[156] or "odours bleed / From the sweet deep throats of the night flowers".[157] This is interesting in that it diverges from the emotive manner which Plath usually employs for her synaesthetic metaphors, reflecting instead the inheritance of Imagist ideas of sensory immediacy. Hughes' synaesthetic use of smell is very similar to Plath's when he writes of "the sudden sharp hot stink of fox"[158] or "their perfume gargled in his throat'[159], although he also uses a conceptual focus which echoes Larkin's: "Error on error / Perfumed / With a ribbon of fury".[160] Heaney uses synaesthetic smell even less, occasionally writing of "the cold smell of potato mould"[161] or "dry smells",[162] sensory associations which echo the earlier Imagist uses of synaesthesia.

Synaesthetic taste on the other hand, seems to be used more conceptually among these poets than smell, which is interesting considering it is probably the least 'conceptual' of the senses. Larkin's use of taste follows on explicitly from his use of smell, often used as the expression of an image or a concept rather than as a simple sensory correspondence: "Even so distant, I can taste the grief, / Bitter and sharp with stalks",[163] "Too much confectionary, too rich: / I choke on such nutritious images",[164] "the old cold sour grey bed",[165] "the sunlight has turned milky"[166] and "the day was plucked and tasted bitter / as if still cold among the leaves. Instead / it was your severed image that grew sweeter".[167] Plath also shows a primarily conceptual association when

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[154] "Summer Nocturne", p. 227.
[155] "After-Dinner Remarks, p. 238.
[156] Plath, *Selected Poems*, "Full Fathom Five", p. 17.
[157] "Edge", p. 85.
[158] Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, "The Thought-Fox", p. 3.
[159] "Mascot", p. 169.
[160] From *Gaudete*, p.149
[161] Heaney, *New Selected Poems*, "Digging", p. 2.
[162] "Bye-Child", p. 38.
[163]Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, "Deceptions", p. 32.
[164] "Lines on a Young Lady's Photograph Album", p. 71.
[165] "A slight relax of air where cold was", p. 142.
[166] "To the Sea", p. 173.
[167] "So through that unripe day you bore your head", p. 283.

she writes of "sugary planets ... sweet, drugged wakening", "peacefulness ... It is what the dead close on, finally; I imagine them / Shutting their mouths on it, like a Communion tablet"[168] or "This is rain now, this big hush. / And this is the fruit of it: tin-white, like arsenic".[169] Interestingly, she also explicitly connects the synaesthetic taste metaphor to her tactile synaesthetic metaphors when she writes "Berries cast dark / Hooks- / Black sweet blood mouthfuls, / Shadows",[170] its tactility directly echoing lines such as "their smiles catch on to my skin, little smiling hooks"[171] and "I am inhabited by a cry / Nightly it flaps out / Looking with its hooks".[172] Plath also speaks of "tasting the words",[173] another combination of dominant synaesthetic metaphors which again suggests that Plath's inheritance of the synaesthetic poetic tradition was significant and wide-ranging.

While taste occurs periodically in Larkin's and Plath's poetry, Hughes mostly seems to overlook the metaphor, but it appears again in Heaney's work where it retains some conceptual associations but also becomes very much connected with natural entities and multisensory experiences. Heaney describes berries in a similarly tactile, bodily manner to Plath ("You ate that first one and its flesh was sweet / Like thickened wine: summer's blood was in it"[174]) and he repeats these associations in "Glanmore Sonnets" (V):

> And elderberry I have learned to call it.
> I love its blooms like saucers brimmed with meal,
> Its berries a swart caviar of shot,
> A buoyant spawn, a light bruised out of purple.
> Elderberry? It is shires dreaming wine.[175]

Taste for these two poets becomes inherently tactile, taking on attributes of blood and flesh, which emphasises the dominance of both metaphors. Heaney also uses synaesthetic taste to describe natural entities in other poems: "rain and soured light and wind-dried stones",[176] the "tart green shade of summer" and "the slow tight burn of its stinking juice".[177] Yet, like Plath, there is also evidence of a more conceptual use of the

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[168] Plath, *Selected Poems* "Tulips", p. 33.
[169] "Elm", p. 51.
[170] "Ariel", p. 70.
[171] "Tulips", p. 32.
[172] "Elm", p. 51.
[173] "Winter Trees", p. 80.
[174] Heaney, *New Selected Poems*, "Blackberry Picking", p. 5.
[175] P. 113.
[176] "Triptych", p. 93.
[177] "Field Work", p.

taste metaphor, and interestingly this is again centred on words and language: "Sucking the fake taste, the stony flavours / of those sanctioned, old, elaborate retorts",[178] "words / Imposing on my tongue like obols"[179] and "I ate the day / Deliberately, that its tang / Might quicken me all into verb, pure verb".[180] Again, we can see that the use of synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphor, far from losing poetic influence after the first flush of modernism, was still a significant and dominant form of expression even well into the second half of the twentieth century.

iii. Words and Language

Another aspect of this synaesthetic inheritance is the use of synaesthetic associations for language and words. As I have previously discussed, this idiosyncratic concept can be seen in the work of poets such as Stevens and Thomas and it represents another unusual synaesthetic metaphor which featured in the period. Synaesthetic words occur in Larkin, Plath and Hughes' poetry, but in comparison to Heaney who adopted them as a central metaphor, they only appear occasionally. Larkin writes in "Nothing significant was really said" of the "memory of his words, as sharp as grit"[181] and in "The Importance of Elsewhere" of "the salt rebuff of speech".[182] Plath hints at it in "Tulips" when she writes "their redness talks to my wound, it corresponds"[183] or in "Little Fugue" with "I like black statements".[184] Even her image of "The stars ... flashing like terrible numerals / ABC her eyelids say"[185] in "An Appearance" has definite synaesthetic associations. Hughes also writes about words in a particularly synaesthetic way, using them to extend images as in the "thistles ... like pale hair and the gutturals of dialects", or describing them in bodily terms; "rifled by dry cold / His words / twitch and rustle, twitch / and rustle",[186] "every remotest curse, weighted with a bloodclot, /

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[178] "From Whatever you Say Nothing", p. 78.
[179] "Fosterage", p. 89.
[180] "Oysters", p. 92.
[181] Philip Larkin, *Collected Poems*, p. 235.
[182] P. 104.
[183] Plath, *Selected Poems*, p. 33.
[184] P. 46.
[185] P. 48.
[186] Hughes, *New Selected Poems*, p. 67.

Enters that ear like a blowfly" and "his lips oozed soft words and blood bubbles".[187] These particular descriptions, with their graphic, visceral qualities, are once again very reminiscent of the writing of the war poets and their use of synaesthetic tactile and nociceptive metaphors.

Heaney, however, uses synaesthetic words incessantly, to the point that they form a central metaphor in his work. Words, and especially names, have a multi-sensory significance for Heaney which he obviously finds poetically stimulating as they seem to be the basis for many of his poems. Words are frequently expressed as intrinsically synaesthetic; "names portable as alter stones, unleavened elements"[188] or "the iron clash of consonants / Cleaving the line",[189] "vowels and ideas bandied free / as the seed pods blowing"[190] or "vowels ploughed into each other: opened ground"[191] and "words entering almost the sense of touch".[192] Specific words also hold specific sensory associations for Heaney, which he uses to explore them poetically. For example, "Anahorish" is "soft-gradient / of consonant, vowel-meadow, / after-image of lamps"[193] and "the tawny guttural water / spells itself" for "Moyola", which "is its own score and consort, / bedding the locale / in the utterance, / reed music, an old chanter / breathing its mists / through vowels and history".[194] In "Broagh",

> the shower
> gathering in your heelmark
> was the black O
>
> in Broagh
> its low tattoo
> among the windy boortrees
> and rhubarb blades
>
> ended almost
> suddenly, like that last
> gh.[195]

The synaesthetic associations of these lines are undeniable, and could possibly be used to suggest that Heaney experienced some form of grapheme synaesthesia. Their frequency in his poems is certainly quite astounding. Synaesthetic associations are

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[187] P. 69.
[188] Heaney, *New Selected Poems*, "The Stations", p. 47.
[189] "Bone Dreams", p. 63.
[190] "The Ministry of Fear", p. 82.
[191] "The Glanmore Sonnets" I, p. 109.
[192] "The Glanmore Sonnets" II, p. 110.
[193] P. 21.
[194] "Gifts of Rain", p. 24.
[195] P. 25.

applied to the place name Derrygarve in the poem "A New Song" in an almost wanton abundance:

> Derrygarve ... the name, a lost potent musk,
> Recalled the river's long swerve,
> A kingfisher's blue bolt at dusk
> [...]
> Vanished music, twilit water-
> A smooth libation of the past
> Poured by this chance vestal daughter
>
> But now our river tongues must rise
> From licking deep in native haunts
> To flood, with vowelling embraces
> Demesnes staked out in consonants.[196]

The associations here involve all five of the senses, and show just how ingrained this particular synaesthetic metaphor was in Heaney's poetry.

Other words also hold sensory significance. Heaney writes that in "rehears[ing] / each patriarchal dictum: / Lazarus, the Pharaoh, Solomon / and David and Goliath rolled / magnificently, like loads of hay"[197] and of how "The word enemy had the toothed efficiency of a mowing machine. It was a mechanical and distant noise beyond that opaque security, that autonomous ignorance"[198] in the prose-poem "England's Difficulty". In another prose poem, the word "Incertus" is described in similar terms: "I went disguised in it, pronouncing it with a soft church-Latin c, tagging it under my efforts like a damp fuse ... The old pseudonym lies there like a mouldering tegument".[199] Heaney continues the synaesthetic expression of words in "The Singers House", writing that "When they said *Carrickfergus* I could hear / the frosty echo of saltminers' picks. / I imagined it, chambered and glinting, / a township, built of light" and "I say to myself *Gweebarra* / and its music hits off the place / like water hitting of granite. / I see the glittering sound".[200] Even simple words are given this treatment: in "The Glanmore Sonnets" is the line, "I said out loud 'A haven' / The word deepening, clearing, like the sky"[201] and in "The Skunk":

> the word 'wife'
> like a stored cask, as if its slender vowel
> Had mutated into the night earth and air

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[196] "A New Song", p. 27.
[197] "The Other Side", p. 29.
[198] P. 43.
[199] P. 48.
[200] P. 106.
[201] "The Glanmore Sonnets", VII, p. 115.

> Of California. The beautiful, useless
> Tang of eucalyptus spelt your absence.
> The aftermath of a mouthful of wine
> Was like inhaling you off a cold pillow.[202]

It is undeniable that these synaesthetic words played a huge part in Heaney's poetry, perhaps even more than for Stevens and Thomas. They were particularly significant in light of Heaney's contextual background, as many of them are Gaelic words or place names which were increasingly being changed to English. Other Irish writers at this time, particularly Brian Friels in his play *Translations*, were using language to highlight the linguistic implications arising out of Irish history and politics. The fact that Heaney turned to synaesthetic metaphor to express ideas which had a huge personal resonance for him shows just how widespread and long-lasting the effects of poetic synaesthesia in the early twentieth century were. As such, their significance to the development and progression of modern poetry and poetics, and their poetic inheritance, should not be underestimated.

[202] P. 122.

CHAPTER NINE: CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I will briefly reiterate the main inferences that can be taken from this study, and establish how the use of synaesthesia and synaesthetic metaphor in British and American poetry of approximately 1900-1950 is significant to the fields of synaesthesia, poetry and poetics, modernist studies, and sensory history and culture. The use of synaesthesia in the poetry of the early twentieth century was widespread and appeared in many forms, but there was a progression in this use which emerged around 1900 and can be traced through the works of some of the prominent poets of the early twentieth century period. Initially, this progression was characterised by a more traditional use of synaesthetic metaphor reminiscent of the technical and conceptual synaesthesia of the Romantic and Symbolist poets, as seen in the work of W.B Yeats. It then moved to an increasingly bodily focus in the works of Pound and the Imagist poets, who often paired imagery with synaesthetic tactile impressions. The trend toward tactility was strengthened further during World War I, when war poets such as Wilfred Owen, Siegfried Sassoon and Isaac Rosenberg used synaesthetic metaphors which reflected the sensory transferences of the war experience. After World War I, the use of synaesthesia in poetry increasingly began to reflect the interdisciplinarity of the period, incorporating synaesthetic ideas from music and visual art movements. Poets such as T.S Eliot and E.E Cummings engaged with modern and avant garde trends in music and painting, and the influence of the synaesthetic theories of Marinetti and Kandinsky can also be seen in the poetry of this period. William Carlos Williams and Wallace Stevens in particular combined the sensory, tactile approach of the earlier Imagists with these visual/aural aesthetics. From the 1930s, the use of synaesthetic metaphor diverged into two paths: a conceptual focus which can be seen most clearly in a poet such as Auden, and a sensory focus suggestive of Imagist and World War I poetry which tended to be centred on natural entities, as seen in the works of Theodore Roethke and Dylan Thomas. Towards the mid-century, synaesthetic metaphor once again had similarities to nineteenth century poetic synaesthesia, particularly in the use of conceptual and emotive metaphors, and its focus on the relationship between man and the natural world. At this point the poetic use of synaesthetic metaphor came in somewhat of a full circle, informed by the nineteenth century but reflective of the early twentieth century use. From the mid-century, this divergent use of synaesthesia continued to be evident in the works of poets such as Philip Larkin, Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and Seamus Heaney.

The significant inheritances of the progression of this poetic synaesthesia can be seen through the use of dominant synaesthetic metaphors and tropes which appear in poetry throughout the early twentieth century and beyond. The implications of these synaesthetic metaphors can be extended beyond the realm of poetics; they suggest changing modes of perception and a shift in the sensoriality of the twentieth century period.

i. Twentieth Century Visuality and Intersensoriality

One of the prevailing trends in current sensory research is the increasing focus on visuality in Western culture, which arose around the time of the Renaissance and has continued to dominate thought about the senses ever since. Both Classen and Smith note this tendency in their studies of sensory culture and history, suggesting that the idea of visual predominance has caused other aspects of the sensory experience effectively to be ignored.[1] However, as Smith notes, the direction taken in recent studies of the senses has countered this by emphasising the importance of intersensoriality:

> Even though McLuhan especially overstated the extent to which sight triumphed over the other senses by identifying a shift in the ratio of the senses, he nevertheless opened up analytic room for taking seriously the relationship among the senses. ... [R]ecognizing the function and importance of multiple senses, and how they might have operated in concert (or even in tension), illustrates how supposedly premodern senses ... were imported into modernity ... The other senses not only remained important, they became critical to modernity, a point made especially clear when we consider the ways in which the senses functioned together.[2]

Smith suggests that this focus on intersensoriality will be beneficial for future study of the senses and sensory history and culture, not only in the areas of anthropology and history but in other fields as well. Interdisciplinary studies of the senses have been gaining popularity in recent years, and the possibilities offered by the extension of these are exciting. Researchers such as Francesca Bacci and David Melcher (*Art and the Senses*, 2011[3]) and Patrizia Di Bello and Gabriel Koureas (*Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*, 2010[4]) have contributed to the recent growth of a sensory focus in studies of art history, and others have looked at architecture, music, theatre and film

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[1] Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, p. 6. Smith, *Sensory History*, p. 19.
[2] Smith, *Sensory History*, pp. 125-128.
[3] Francesca Bacci and David Melcher, *Art and the Senses* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).
[4] Di Bello & Koureas, *Art, History and the Senses: 1830 to the Present*.

from a similar perspective.[5] However there have not been many studies in the field of poetics. This is interesting considering the importance of the senses to poetry in which images, sounds and, especially, sensory metaphors interact on a fundamental level. Smith suggests that recognition of the role of sensory metaphors will be important to future sensory research:

> Taking seriously historically situated sensory metaphors is important because understanding how contemporaries used and invented sensory metaphors thoroughly complicates the notion of "proximate" senses. Through metaphor, smells, tastes, touches, and sounds broke free of their physical space, slipping into wide social and cultural circulation ... Printed words did not always stabilise vision and it is important to recognize how print itself served to empower, through metaphor and description, the non-visual senses granting them the ability to reach audiences far removed in space and time.[6]

Poetry represents, I believe, one of the largest resources for the study of sensory metaphors. Smith's suggestion that recognition of the importance of intersensoriality (the interaction of the non-visual senses in particular) and sensory metaphor will be an important factor in future sensory research is highly pertinent to my current study. Synaesthetic metaphors, whether they arose from true synaesthetic perception, applied synaesthetic theories, or simply as a natural mode of poetic expression in a period characterised by flux, fragmentation and sensory overload as I have suggested, are the crux of this combined focus. Poetry represents the interaction of language, experience and context. Thus, an examination of poetry and synaesthetic metaphor in tandem can reveal new and exciting perspectives not only for their respective fields, but also for the study of the senses in general. Some of the dominant synaesthetic tropes that have appeared in my study, such as the trend toward tactile and gustatory metaphors, have particular significance to the period because they represent the emergence of an increased focus on the non-visual or 'lower' senses. If, as Smith suggested, the visual focus of the modern Western World, reaching its peak in the twentieth century, has been increasingly countered by a focus on intersensoriality, then the dominance of such synaesthetic tropes in the early twentieth century is particularly important to an examination of this trend. I would also suggest that these tropes most likely arose because of their emphasis on intersensoriality, and in this they represent the emergence of a new way of experiencing and representing the world that has profound relevance to our own time.

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[5] The website *Sensory Studies* has a comprehensive collection of current researchers in the area of sensory studies, as well as source materials and events: *Sensory Studies*, n.d. Accessed 24/09/12 at <http://www.sensorystudies.org/>

[6] Smith, *Sensory History*, p. 131.

ii. Some Dominant Synaesthetic Metaphors

Synaesthetic tactility in poetry, which arose out of the Imagist visual-tactile focus and was bolstered by the war poets' use of sensory transferences, resulted in the use of synaesthetic metaphors such as light (often dawn) as pain/wound, and sky/darkness as heavy or smothering. These can be traced from occasional earlier uses, such as Yeats' moon metaphors, but they appear frequently in poetry from approximately 1912 onwards, and can still be seen consistently in poetry even towards the latter half of the twentieth century. The significance of these metaphors arose partly as a result of the tactility enhanced by the sensory experience of World War I, both through the synaesthetic effects elicited by sensory deprivation and degradation, and the conduciveness of synaesthetic metaphor to the expression of unprecedented experiences, as scholars such as Santanu Das have noted. There were other influences on this increased tactility too, which may help to explain their dominance in the period. McLuhan wrote in his 1961 essay "Inside the Five Sense Sensorium" about the phenomenon of tactility around the turn of the twentieth century:

> Just at the end of the nineteenth century Bernard Berenson had begun a crusade 'to endow the retinal impression with tactile values.' There was a wide awareness that photography and other technical change had abstracted the retinal impression, as it were, from the rest of the sensorium. Thus, in 1893 Adolf Hildebrand the sculptor published a small book called *The Problem of Form*. He insisted that true vision must be much imbued with tangibility, and that creative, aesthetic awareness was touching and making. Such was the timeliness of his insistence that the theme of artistic vision as tangible, tactile, and based on the interplay of the senses began to enjoy acceptance in poetry and painting alike.[7]

This recognition of tactility as an integral element of artistic and aesthetic awareness was evident in many of the art movements of the early twentieth century, such as Cubism and Futurism, which increasingly used collage and fragmentation to emphasise tactile characteristics of perception. McLuhan even suggested that the "Romantic rebellion against abstract and fragmented man reached great intensity with the attacks on industrialisation and robotism in the nineteenth century. Everywhere among these enemies of abstract, visual and mechanical order is stress on synaesthesia and wholeness and tactility. For, in practice, tactility is less of a separate sense than it is an interplay among the senses".[8] In the same way, the emphasis on synaesthetic tactility

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[7] Marshall McLuhan, "Inside the Five Sense Sensorium", from David Howes (ed.) *Empire of the Senses: The Sensual Culture Reader*, p. 43.
[8] P. 46.

arose in the early twentieth century as a response to the fragmentation of modernity and as a natural form of expression in a period characterised by interplay among the senses, counter to the increasing visuality of the time.

Constance Classen notes in *Worlds of Sense* that the etymology of the senses was particularly multi-sensory, and this sensoriality was extended to other forms of thinking about the human mind. She notes that many of our English terms for thought or intelligence originally had a tactile or kinaesthetic basis, suggesting as examples "apprehend", "brood", "cogitate", "comprehend", "conceive", "mull", "perceive", "ponder", "ruminate" and "understand" as terms for thought, and "acumen", "keen", "sharp", "smart", "clever" and "penetrating" as terms for intelligence (although this inherent tactility is not immediately obvious in our current understanding of most of these words, it can be quite clearly seen in their original meanings).[9] Classen notes:

> The predominance of tactile imagery in words dealing with intellectual functions indicates that thought is, or was, experienced primarily in terms of touch. Thinking was therefore less like looking than like weighing or grinding, knowing was less like seeing than holding. The use of tactile and kinaesthetic terms for thought expresses a more active involvement with the subject matter.[10]

These etymological roots are interesting to consider in light of the common hierarchical ranking of the senses which commonly places touch as the lowest, or basest, sense. The increased use of metaphors of tactility in the early twentieth century suggests a reapprehension of the tactile senses which counteracted the increasing visuality of the twentieth century. It is important to note here that in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries when digital technologies have again been emphasising the dominance of sight, tactile and kinaesthetic metaphors have once again been brought to the fore. In looking for a mode of expression to overcome the mathematically abstract nature of digital communication, we have turned to tactile and kinaesthetic metaphors: we 'surf' the web, 'cut' and 'paste' text, we 'connect to' the internet, 'write' emails and 'poke' people on social media sites, despite the fact that all these actions are really only the result of shifting binary code. Moreover, digital technologies are increasingly incorporating tactile components such as touch screens and tactile user interaction (particularly in computers). McLuhan went as far as to propose that the invention of the television in the early twentieth century represented the fulfilment of the aesthetic

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[9] Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, p. 58.
[10] P. 58.

program of this enhanced synaesthetic tactility.[11] Once, again, tactile/kinaesthetic metaphors seem to be integral to the expression of new, abstract experiences, despite the dominance of visual and aural modes in these experiences. The synaesthetic intersensoriality of the early twentieth century in many ways represents the beginning of the changing sensorial modes of the post-industrial, electronic/digital period.

The unusually frequent use of synaesthetic taste metaphors in early twentieth century poetry was also significant to this trend toward inter-sensoriality. Prior to this, the use of synaesthetic taste metaphors was not as common, and most often involved descriptions such as "sweet music" or "bitter cold". Due to the synaesthetic conduciveness of the early twentieth century period, synaesthetic taste metaphors began to be used which extended these commonly accepted transferences. Like touch, taste has traditionally been considered as a hierarchically inferior sense, so the profusion of synaesthetic taste metaphors is another interesting example of the way synaesthetic modes of expression were perhaps inverting the trend towards visuality. The frequent use of these synaesthetic taste metaphors was an unexpected outcome of my study; it was not something that I expected to see on commencing my research, possibly because of the relative rarity of synaesthetic taste perceptions (compared to those from other modalities) among genuine synaesthetes.[12] Once again, the explanation for this prevalence could be related to Ward's observation in *The Frog that Croaked Blue*, that "our perception of food is an example of multisensory processing par excellence. Food has taste, smell, tactile texture, temperature, colour, and even sound (think of the crunch of a carrot). Moreover, our experience of food tells us that these sensory attributes tend to reliably co-occur".[13] Taking this inter-sensoriality into account, it makes sense that in a period when synaesthetic modes of perceiving were more prominent, taste would be one of the senses to be brought to the fore. Thus, the unexpected profusion of synaesthetic taste metaphors in the work of poets as diverse as W.B Yeats, Wilfred Owen, William Carlos Williams and E.E Cummings, and their continuation in the poetry of mid-century poets, was perhaps related to the conduciveness of taste to multi-modal forms of expression. The synaesthetic elements of taste are also being

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[11] McLuhan in Howes, p. 44.
[12] For a discussion of lexical-gustatory synaesthesia, one of the more common of the relatively rare taste-synaesthesias, see Jamie Ward and Julia Simner. "Lexical-gustatory synaesthesia: linguistic and conceptual factors." *Cognition*, Vol. 89, 2003, pp. 237-261.
[13] Ward, *The Frog Who Croaked Blue*, pp. 40-41.

highlighted again in the twenty-first century, particularly in the gourmet food and wine industries: Ward notes the rise of restaurants such as Dans le Noir and The Fat Duck in London, where the synaesthetic elements of taste are being explored in a very public (and popular) manner.[14] Similarly, genetic engineering and food technology are highlighting how the multi-sensory elements of a food can affect its perceived taste. Like touch, the sense of taste is increasingly being explored in relation to synaesthetic modes of perception, and this trend may well have arisen out of the synaesthetic modes which were explored in the early years of the twentieth century.

The synaesthetic personification of sensory or semantic elements and the sensory depiction of words and language can also be seen quite widely in the poetry of this period. That these metaphors occurred in poetry is particularly enlightening; for poets, words are the primary materials for creative or sensory expression, and their synaesthetic expression is perhaps the natural outcome of a period in which synaesthetic modes of thinking and perceiving were increasingly pertinent. They represent, I suggest, the intrinsic internalisation of synaesthetic modes of perception being reflected onto abstract, semantic concepts. The transference of sensory qualities to words is also implicit in the formation of language, as Classen has noted:

> We are accustomed to thinking of language, in its spoken and written forms, as an auditory and visual phenomenon. However, language, in fact, can be said to involve all the senses. Writing is tactile as well as visual, requiring the touch of one's hand. Speech is not only auditory, but also kinaesthetic, olfactory (speech is carried on the breath), and even gustatory, as we shall see in theories of Jacob Boehme. At the same time, language expresses sensory phenomena.[15]

Once again, it seems that the dominant synaesthetic metaphors being used in this period arose from the senses and concepts which were most intrinsically related to inter-sensoriality. This trend underpins my entire theory; if this period was especially conducive to synaesthetic ways of thinking and perceiving, then it makes sense that the metaphors commonly used by poets were ones which most reflected this synaesthetic potentiality.

Other synaesthetic metaphors that appear in the period, such as synaesthetic smell, visual music and the synaesthetic relationship between nature and the self, can be traced back to the nineteenth century use of synaesthesia. Around the 1930s onward,

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[14] Pp. 52-57.
[15] Classen, *Worlds of Sense*, p. 50.

when poetic synaesthesia appeared to diverge into a variety of forms, the links to synaesthesia in the nineteenth century became more pronounced. Auden and Thomas were using ideasthetic metaphors related to conceptual ideas and emotions, which echoed the Romantic use of synaesthesia as an emotive or conceptual trope. Similarly, Thomas and Roethke were using synaesthesia specifically in relation to nature and natural cycles or forces, which also echoed the Romantic ideal of synaesthetic sublimity and the Symbolist doctrine of universal correspondences. These metaphors continue to be seen in the works of later poets, suggesting that perhaps poetic synaesthesia came in a full circle, ending up in some respects back where it started in the nineteenth century when it was adopted for technical and conceptual means. Still, the effects of the unique use of poetic synaesthesia in the early twentieth century can also be seen in the works of the later poets; contrary to what has been surmised in the past, synaesthetic metaphor and synaesthetic modes of expression were equally significant to the twentieth century as they were to the nineteenth century.

iii. Future Directions for Research

Due to the wide-ranging and interdisciplinary nature of this study there were inevitably areas which I was unable to cover, and these represent possible directions for future research. Primarily, a discussion of modern poetry and poetics outside the United Kingdom and the United States of America and an examination of the use of synaesthesia within this poetry would be valuable as an extension of my current research. For example, the concept of synaesthesia in Australian literature is almost wholly unexplored. Research in this area would need to look at the use of synaesthetic metaphors by some of the prominent Australian poets of the early twentieth century. It would involve an investigation of the reception of modernism in Australia, including the impact of such literary groups as the Jindyworobaks and the Angry Penguins, as well as an examination of the concurrent influence of Australian art and music and a discussion of the impact of World War I. Furthermore, a discussion of the unique issues involved in Australian poetry and poetics would be enlightening, particularly if it looked at the environment and the role of Indigenous Australians and the relation between these aspects and the use of sensory and synaesthetic metaphor. Diana Green wrote an interesting paper in 2005 called *The Smell of Greenness: Cultural Synaesthesia in the*

Western Desert [16] which looked at the correspondence between colour and odour in the Pitjantjatjara people from the Western Desert of Australia, and showing the importance of sound and odour to this indigenous group. As the Western Desert is also an important area in regards to indigenous art, it would be interesting to examine the connection between the two, and extend this to an examination of synaesthetic concepts in indigenous literature.

Similarly, an examination of whether this phenomenon occurred in non-Western countries or in non-English languages would be useful as additional research in the area of synaesthesia and poetics. In terms of twentieth century poetry in languages other than English, very few studies have been undertaken in relation to synaesthesia (aside from studies of French Symbolist poetry and Italian Futurist poetry); two rare examples include Arthur H. Whitney's 1952 article "Synaesthesia in Twentieth-Century Hungarian Poetry"[17] and more recently, Esther Levinger's 1999 article "Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses".[18] Van Campen also looks briefly at the use of synaesthesia in Dutch poetry, specifically the 'Group of Fifty' poets of the 1950s who used synaesthetic metaphor extensively.[19] Looking at synaesthesia in the poetry of non-English speaking poets would be interesting considering the current branch of scientific research examining synaesthetic graphemes in languages other than English.[20] Moreover, as Green found in her examination of the significance of synaesthesia to the indigenous Pitjantjatjara people of the Australian Western Dessert, Classen and others have noted that implicitly synaesthetic modes of perception can be found in some non-Western cultures,[21] so it would be interesting to examine the presence of these modes in relation to art and language, specifically metaphor as used in literature and poetry, or

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[16] Diana Green. "The Smell of Greenness: Cultural Synaesthesia in the Western Desert", *SENSES,* Vol. 18, No. 1, Etnofoor, 2005, pp. 61-77.
[17] Arthur H. Whitney. "Synaesthesia in Twentieth-Century Hungarian Poetry", *The Slavonic and East European Review,* Vol. 30, No. 75, 1952, pp. 444-464.
[18] Esther Levinger. "Czech Avant-Garde Art: Poetry for the Five Senses", *The Art Bulletin,* Vol. 81, No. 3, 1999, pp. 513-532.
[19] Van Campen, pp. 96-98.
[20] For example: J Simner, W.Y Hung & R. Shillcock. "Synaesthesia in a logographic language: the colouring of Chinese characters and Pinyin/Bopomo spellings." *Consciousness and Cognition,* Vol. 20, No. 4, 2011, pp. 1376-92,
and Michiko Asano & Kazuhiko Yokosawa,. "Synesthetic colors for Japanese late acquired graphemes", *Consciousness and Cognition,* Vol. 21, No. 2, 2012, pp.983-993.
[21] For example, the Desana of the Colombian Amazon use synaesthetic colours extensively in their cosmology. Classen, *Worlds of Sense,* pp.131-137.

oral forms (such as rhymes and songs) which resemble poetry in the case of less literate societies.

Another aspect which represents a possible future direction for this research is the role of gender in the use of poetic synaesthesia. While my study included both female and male poets, length restrictions precluded any in-depth analysis of whether gender differences occur in their synaesthesia-use. Synaesthesia as a condition was originally thought to be more prevalent in females,[22] although this claim has now been questioned, and it would be interesting to examine whether the poetic application of synaesthetic concepts by female poets differs from that of male modernist poets. This research would need to incorporate feminist and gender-based theories of modernism and poetics, and it would be useful to look in detail at the differences between women and men in regards to the cultural context and background of the time, considering that some of the technologies and experiences would have differed for men and women (for example, the World War I experience as noted in Chapter Four).

iv. Implications of this Research

The implications of my study are directly relevant to the field of synaesthesia research, the field of poetry and poetics and the field of modernist studies. In terms of synaesthesia research, in the past thirty years this has been primarily scientific, and mostly concerned with finding answers to the *why?* and *how?* of synaesthetic perception. Numerous scientific studies have been conducted based on specific types of synaesthesia, which has revealed links between the semantic and sensory components involved and suggested that synaesthetic perception most likely involves some form of conceptualisation. More recent research has looked at the possibilities of infantile synaesthesia and the underlying inter-sensory connections of normal perception, including the implications that these have on creativity, language and sensory processing. While the interdisciplinary potential of synaesthesia has been addressed at sporadic points in the past, it has only been in the last ten years or so that this potential

[22] Ramachandran and Hubbard refer to the findings of a 1996 Baron-Cohen et el. Study which estimates the female to male ratio as 6:1, Ramachandran and Hubbard, p. 6.

has started to be more readily and comprehensively addressed. Synaesthesia as a neurological condition, once thought to be extremely rare, has now been shown to be more common than previously thought. New forms of synaesthetic perception have been uncovered, and many of these have wider-ranging implications, such as the significance of mirror-touch synaesthesia to psychological and anthropological studies of empathy. Synaesthesia has also been shown to be more prevalent among people in creative careers, so it makes sense that the scientific and creative aspects of synaesthesia could be discussed in tandem and new revelations for both be taken from this discussion. I believe that future research in the area of synaesthesia, while still focusing very closely on the neurological mechanisms and the evolutionary potential of the condition itself, will also branch out even more extensively into interdisciplinary areas such as art, music and literature. The relation between synaesthesia as *condition* and synaesthesia as *concept* will become more intertwined, particularly as more is discovered about the potential of an underlying synaesthetic capacity of perception and the synaesthetic origins of perceptive experience.

In light of this, bringing the scientific study of synaesthesia together with the literary study of poetry and poetics represents a future direction for both fields. The trend towards the increasing interdisciplinary application of literary studies is particularly important to the field of poetry and poetics and twentieth century modernism. These areas have been exhaustively written about, so new standpoints for discussion will be particularly important for refreshing and opening up alternative possibilities for research. Synaesthesia, with its sensory and semantic basis, has close links to language, particularly metaphor which attempts to express one thing in terms of another and very often turns to multiple senses in doing so. Metaphor is one of the primary materials of poetic language, which also attempts to express subjective, personal experience and abstract, universal concepts in unique ways. The link between synaesthesia, particularly in terms of synaesthetic metaphor, synaesthetic imagery and synaesthetic concepts, and poetry is therefore intrinsic and significant. This is especially true in terms of early twentieth century poetry, which was written in a period characterised by overwhelming and all-encompassing change. This poetry was influenced by the synaesthetic theories of the nineteenth century and was similarly affected by the synaesthetic ideas being explored in visual arts and music, and shows an incredible abundance of synaesthetic metaphor as a result of these influences. The

widespread and pervasive nature of these synaesthetic metaphors begs comprehensive examination, and it is surprising that this has not been undertaken before now. My study has provided perhaps the first possible explanation for this abundance.

In terms of the study of poetry and poetics, there is no shortage of critical research relating to the early twentieth century. Poets such as Eliot, Yeats and Auden have been studied and written about extensively, and specific poetic movements such as Imagism have also received attention. While past studies have emphasised the differences among modernist "poetries", as Jon Cook has suggested,[23] my theory highlights the existence of a common thread by which these fragmented "poetries" can be united. What my research brings to this area is a new perspective which enables the works of all the poets writing in this period to be viewed in relation to one common factor: the presence of poetic synaesthesia. This is significant in that it emphasises the inherent interdisciplinarity of the period and highlights a distinct commonality between the works of poets writing from vastly different standpoints. This approach represents a possible new direction for the study of poetry and poetics, and could potentially be applied to studies of poetry in other periods, including an examination of the current state of poetry and poetics in the digital age.

The wider implications of my research also extend to studies of sensory history and culture in the latter half of the twentieth and the early twenty-first centuries. As I have shown, the field of sensory studies is experiencing growth in its interdisciplinary potential. Recent research has extended anthropological and historical studies of the senses into the areas of art history, music, theology and literature; it is likely that these areas will continue to grow in the near future and will eventually be applied not only to the past, but to the present. Thinking about the early twentieth century in terms of the synaesthetic paradigm opens up new avenues of thought for our own sensorially complex time. The impact of digitalisation and rapid advances in communication technology such as the internet has caused another major shift in our sensory environment, once again necessitating the use of inter-sensory metaphors in the expression of new experiences. The adoption of tactile metaphors for virtual experiences, as mentioned earlier, is one such example. There is also an increasing

[23] Cook, p. 2.

focus on intersensoriality, and closer attention is being paid to the so-called 'lower' senses despite the fact that vision is becoming increasingly dominant as a result of digital and virtual culture. The implications of my study therefore naturally extend to an examination of sensory culture in our own time, and the presence of literature and poetics within this.

In conclusion, this thesis has established that synaesthetic ideas were integral to the poetry and poetics of the early twentieth century, and that the use of these ideas arose partly out of the stimulation of the universal synaesthetic capacity as a response to the cultural, social and technological changes occurring at the time. It has shown that synaesthetic concepts occurred widely within the works of major and minor poets, regardless of genre, style and intention, and that they were inextricably related to the interdisciplinarity encouraged by the joint sensory focus of the creative arts. It has also demonstrated that these synaesthetic concepts precipitated the use of certain synaesthetic metaphors which emphasised the inter-sensoriality of the period and in some ways countered the increasing predominance of sight and the visual, and has shown how these metaphors were dominant enough to form part of the inheritance evident in the work of later poets. Finally, it has indicated the relevance of this approach to the continuation of research in the fields of synaesthesia, poetics, and sensory history and culture. Contrary to Constance Classen's assertion that "The multisensory aesthetics of the late nineteenth century ... [provide] us with a last glimpse at a shared vision of a world in which "sounds, fragrances and colours correspond",[24] it should be clear that this fleeting glimpse belies a vast and interconnected world of synaesthetic correspondences which existed well into the twentieth century and continues today.

[24] Classen, *The Colour of Angels: Cosmology, Gender and the Aesthetic Imagination,* p. 113.

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