«Footfalls echo in the memory»: Literal Travelling and Metaphorical Journeying in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*

by Stefano Maria Casella

1. Invitation to the journey

«Let us go then, you and I…» resonates Prufrock's invitation to his silent interlocutor in Eliot's debut poem. Since that first exhortation to make a move and venture into desolate townscapes and labyrinthine mindscapes through «indecisions…decisions and revisions» (*CPP* 14[1]) to the laborious and painful crossing of the visionary, kaleidoscopic and semantically multifaceted *The Waste Land*, a journey through time (mythical and historical ages, seasons of the year, parts of the day), places (real, imaginary, symbolic, mythic), and literary, artistic, musical, and religious masterpieces, the poet's «footfalls» echo throughout his whole œuvre.

Four Quartets summarize and bring to completion the 'ambulatory' tendency of Eliot's poetry. From a literal and biographical perspective to a symbolic, metaphoric, and allegoric interpretation, the theme of walking (as well as journeying, voyaging, and exploring) both on foot and by various means of transportation[2] but, above all, in the mind and spirit, recurs constantly. This poem, like the two ones previously mentioned and together with *Ash-Wednesday*[3], is the compendium of a 'journey' through historical time, geographical space as well as far beyond these two typical dimensions of reality and of human experience.

This poetic «Quadrologue»[4] includes and fulfils several topics connected to the various literal meaning and symbolical or metaphorical interpretation of «step» (and «foot», also in its metric and rhythmic aspects), of walking, of physically and psychologically experiencing the dimensions of space and of passage, of the relationship and interaction between man (in this case the poet Eliot) and the environment, which reveals the poet's deep interest, regard, close connection, historical knowledge, and personal and private recollections. From a spiritual and religious perspective, the metaphor of the journey – a kind of 'pilgrim's progress' shaped mainly, even though not exclusively, on the paradigm of Dante's otherworldly journey – is characterized by a progressive manifestation close to the phenomenology of mystical experience, fully realized in the final vision of *Little Gidding* V, so that the spiritual categories represent the very 'ontological' substance of the poem.

The topography itself of the four places which give the poems their titles: Burnt Norton manor in Gloucestershire; East Coker village in Somerset; the rocks of the Dry Salvages off Cape Ann in Massachusetts; and the Huntingdonshire handful of buildings (farm, stables, chapel) of Little Gidding, implies the idea of movement, of physical relocation from one place to another – and of inner transformation undergone in the process – from the autobiographical, historical, cultural, literary, artistic, creative, symbolic, spiritual and religious point of view. In a metaphorical sense, these four places represent the four cardinal points of Eliot's 'new' spiritual compass, leading him to the conclusion and fulfillment of his 'journey'.

Notwithstanding these multiple characteristics, the very topic of odeporic poetry does not seem to have drawn the attention of Eliot's critics, whereas his biographers have dealt with the poet's pleasure in walking *en passant*, merely as occasional episodes of his life[5]. On the contrary, an analysis of this theme is highly relevant and revealing, offering new original insights in the intelligence of his poetry.

2. Oximoric convergences of ways

«ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὠυτή»: «the way up and the way down are one and the same»[6]. Thus reads the second epigraph of the poem[7], a fragment from Heraclitus 'The Obscure'. Through these apparently antithetic words centered on the substantive «ὁδὸς», the theme of the 'way' is introduced; not so much in a literal interpretation, rather as a metaphor, in a psychological, initiatory, and spiritual, religious, and mystic perspective. Such levels of intelligence of the text might be fruitfully enriched and integrated by Dante's polysemy: literal, allegoric, moral, anagogic – a suitable even though not always easy hermeneutical approach to Eliot's final masterpiece.

The concept of «ὁδὸς» in the epigraph is immediately followed by another closely connected word: «foot» which, in its earliest occurrence in the poem, has to do with Eliot's biography and its 'reverberations' on the emotional, sentimental, psychological, and spiritual sphere:

> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden. My words echo
> Thus, in your mind.
> (*CPP* 171).

On the one hand there is the poet with his personal history: the 'impossible romance' with Emily Hale and their 1934 visit to Burnt Norton ruined manor and rose-garden[8]; on the other hand there are the poet and his readers: Eliot's «Footfalls» and «words» «echo» not only in his own (and in Emily's) «memory» and «mind»[9], but also, in a less private sphere, in the «mind» of his readers – past, present, and to come.

From the metric point of view, «footfalls» bears also a close relationship to the poetic unit of measure «foot», the basic element of poetry since its very origins. «Foot» then eventuates in, and implicates the phonic, rhythmic, and musical levels[10]. Thus, through an uninterrupted and articulated sequence of feet, accents, rhythms («the complete consort dancing together» *Little Gidding* V, *CPP* 197), the 'poietés' leads us from the beginning to the end of his poetic 'way'. As a literary critic, Eliot significantly discusses about «feet», «metre», and «scansion» in one of his earliest critical essays, *Reflections on Vers Libre* (1917), and returns on the same theme in *The Music of Poetry* (1942)[11].

There is also another fundamental element, «time», which pertains to music but is not unrelated to poetry (inasmuch poetry, in its musical qualities: rhythm, pitch, cadence, movements, is undeniably close to music, and *Four Quartets* in particular, in their title, five-parts structure, varied movements, and rhythmic effects). «Time» is one of the *Leitmotive* of the poem; it is, in fact, the very first word of *Burnt Norton*, repeated seven times in the first five lines and, being strongly accented, it literally 'beats [the] time' of the *incipit*:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.
> (*CPP* 171).

This is evidence (among the other things) of Eliot's mastery in the use of different and varying metres to evoke emotions, feelings, and thoughts: in this sense his musical virtuosity (also, sometimes, intentionally cacophonic as in *The Waste Land*) represents a different and not less important 'declension' of his theory of the «objective correlative» applied to phonic and musical effects. To slightly modify the wording of the famous 1919 formulation, one might say that:

> The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of *musical effects* which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the *auditory and musical effects* which … terminate in sensory [i.e. *auditive/-ory*] experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked[12]. (changed words in Italics)

The poet himself expresses a similar concept in *The Music of Poetry*: «…in a poem of any length, there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole…»[13].

3. From the early steps to the «sequela» of Dante (with mystical and alchemical echoes)

Therefore, let us «follow» not so much «the deception of the thrush» (*Burnt Norton* I, *CPP* 171), rather the poet's call and invitation – like at the beginning of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* – to another, different, and conclusive journey through *Four Quartets*.

Where do Eliot's physical 'steps' and poetic 'feet' lead the «hypocrite lecteur»?

After the recognition of «what might have been and what has been» (*CPP* 171) with Emily Hale, and the re-visitation (through «memory and desire») of the «rose-garden» of Burnt Norton, the path seems to head towards two different and antithetical directions, upwards and downwards (the «ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω» of the epigraph), both implying a spiritual and initiatory process and progress. To begin with: «We move above the moving tree / In light upon the figured leaf» (*CPP* 172). This is an allusion to one of the stages of the spiritual initiation, the «Ritual Tree Climbing» in Mircea Eliade's words, which represents one of the various steps in the initiation of the shaman[14].

In parallel (but contrariwise) here is the opposite movement:

> Descend lower, descend only
> Into the world of perpetual solitude
> […]
> to purify the soul
> Emptying the sensual with deprivation
> Cleansing affection from the temporal…
> (*CPP* 173, 174).

«Above» vs. «descend [lower]», 'katabasis' and/vs. 'anabasis', way up and/vs. way down: both «point to one end» (*CPP* 171) that is the same process of initiation achieved through these different modalities, both precisely analyzed by Mircea Eiade in the «Descent to the Underworld»[15]. These earliest examples prove that in *Four Quartets* the meaning of 'step', 'foot', 'journey' is only partially literal: its real and deepest significance is metaphorical, allegorical, spiritual and initiatory.

In the second *Quartet*, *East Coker*, the focus shifts on past history in connection to the poet's family genealogy, namely his ancestors Sir Thomas Elyot and Andrew Eliot (XVI-XVII c.) and the homonymous Somerset village[16]. The 'persona' of the poet silently draws near to a real place: «…In that open field / If you do not come too close, if you do not come too close» (*CPP* 177) to contemplate a visionary scene: the ancient peasants dancing and celebrating a rural festival. In their simple dance, translated into poetic images and rhythms, physical 'feet' and metric 'feet' move, 'beat', and 'keep time' in unison:

> Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,
> Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth
> […]
> … Keeping time,
> Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
> As in their living in the living seasons
> The time of the seasons and the constellations
> The time of milking and the time of harvest
> The time of the coupling of man and woman
> And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
> Eating and drinking. Dung and death.
> (*CPP* 178).

Apart from the precise, rhythmic cadence of the accents falling on «feet», «time» (as with «time» in the *incipit* of *Burnt Norton* quoted above), «rising and falling. / Eating and drinking», worth considering is also the final gloomy 'diminuendo' «Dung and death», with the repetition of the dental «d» onomatopoeically echoing the very beats of a drum.

A similar cadenced beating of 'feet' echoes in the third section of the same poem, where the poet's steps head to a funeral march, a 'Totentanz' (forewarned by the drum beats of «dung and death»): «O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark, / […] all go into the dark, / [...] And we all go with them, into the silent funeral» (*CPP* 180). «Dark» is then repeated in «And dark the Sun and Moon» and in «darkness on darkness» (Ibid.), suggesting again the initiatory theme and *topos* of the 'katabasis', the ritual and spiritual descent into the Underworld[17].

To make a point of this concept and of its ritual significance, here is the first allusion to the Dantean theme of «the middle of the way» which, not by chance, rep-

semicerchio rivista di poesia comparata
LXIII 02/2020 *Hodoeporica*. Gli ospiti del caso / The guests of chance / Les hôtes du hasard

resents the starting point of Dante's own 'katabasis'[18].

> In the middle, not only in the middle of the way
> But all the way, in a dark wood, in a bramble,
> On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure foothold,
> And menaced by monsters, fancy lights,
> Risking enchantment.
> (*CPP* 179).

The poet's feet and steps now follow those of his greatest undisputed master, Dante Alighieri, through the 'trans-position' into English of the memorable *incipit* of the *Comedia* (*Inf*. I: 1-2). For the modern epigone the «dark wood» is no less obscure, dangerous, and threatening but, unlike Dante's journey, there is no guide for him: Eliot has neither Virgil to help, comfort, guide, and instruct him (in *Inferno* and *Purgatorio*), nor Beatrice to lead him throughout *Paradiso*, nor St. Bernard to guide him to the ultimate Empyrean vision. He must undergo his spiritual journey in the name of the 'via negationis' of the mystics (San Juan de la Cruz):

> … In order to arrive there,
> To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
> You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy.
> In order to arrive at what you do not know
> You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
> […]
> In order to arrive at what you are not
> You must go through the way in which you are not.
> (*CPP* 181).

However, this is nothing but another 'version' of the 'katabasis', now projected and conveyed in the language, imagery, and phenomenology of Christian mysticism in its apophatic version, requiring the spiritual condition of 'askesis' and inner emptying (see *Burnt Norton*'s anticipatory 'negative' sequence: «destitution… internal darkness… deprivation… Desiccation… Evacuation… Inoperancy…», *CPP* 174[19]) leading to the Christian teaching of humility: «humility is endless» (*CPP* 179).

The same Dantean theme (il «mezzo del cammin») returns also in the final section of *East Coker*: «So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years – / Twenty years largely wasted… – Trying to learn the use of words» (*CPP* 182); now the way is the way of words, the hard task and mission of the poet[20], as emblematized by the Latin motto «Ars longa, vita brevis». Nonetheless, and for this very reason, («brevitas vitae») a new teaching is revealed to, and made his own by, the poet:

> Old men ought to be explorers
> Here or there does not matter
> We must be still and still moving
> […]
> Through the dark cold and the empty desolation,
> (*CPP* 182).

4. Sea voyages (and the shadow of Ulysses)

The metaphor and *topos* of the 'way' as course/journey of the human life is now declined as unending exploration, intertextually echoing both Dante's Ulisse (*Inf*. XXVI) and the third stanza of Tennyson's *Ulysses*[21].

Like the mythical hero, it is towards the sea and sea voyages, explorations, and not infrequently shipwrecks (metaphoric of the risks and failures of life) that the poet now heads for in the third *Quartet*, *The Dry Salvages*; from «explorers» (*East Coker* V) to «travellers» to «voyagers» it is a short step, the goal being always the same:

> And the way up is the way down, the way forward
> is the way back.
> […]
> Fare forward, travellers!
> […]
> You are not the same people who left that station
> Or who will arrive at any terminus,
> […]
> And on the deck of the drumming liner
> […]
> You shall not think 'the past is finished'
> Or 'the future is before us'.
> […]
> 'Fare forward, you who think that you are voyaging;
> […]
> Fare forward.
> O voyagers, O seamen,
> […]
> Not fare well,
> But fare forward, voyagers.
> (*CPP* 187, 188).

Once again the initial – and initiatory – theme of

«ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω» is here recalled and reaffirmed, together with the related motif of inner transformation undergone through and during the journey itself («You are not the same people who left that station / Or who will arrive at any terminus,»). All is 'sealed' by the unceasing exhortation «Fare forward» – once more echoing Ulysses' «orazion picciola» in Dante's *Inf*. XXVI, and in Tennyson's *Ulysses*: a spur to undergo new journeys and voyages of the mind.

5. Returning home and the 'end' of the journey

A 'return' to past history (not unlike that of *East Coker* I) occurs in the first movement of *Little Gidding*:

> If you came this way,
> Taking the route you would be likely to take
> From the place you would be likely to come from,
> If you came this way in may time,
> […]
> If you came at night like a broken king,
> If you came by day not knowing what you came for,
> […]
> If you came this way,
> Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
> At any time or at any season,
> It would always be the same:
> (*CPP* 191, 192).

The poet's steps now lead to the Huntingdonshire small village of Little Gidding, which saw the flourishing and decline of the religious community (1625-1646) of Nicholas Ferrar and the dramatic flight of a defeated King Charles I (May 2, 1646)[22]. Whereas at the beginning of the second *Quartet* the historical perspective was mainly focused on personal and familiar history (Eliot's ancestors), here the emphasis is on national history, both in the dramatic events of the past (Civil War) and in the tragedy of the present (the German «Blitz»): «History is now, and England» (*CPP* 197). But it is for a higher purpose, the religious one, that the poet has directed his steps to Little Gidding: «You are here to kneel / Where prayer has been valid.» (*CPP* 192). His journey is becoming more and more a spiritual one, both in the religious 'orthodox' perspective (i.e. Christian and Anglo-Catholic) and in the less 'orthodox' and more ancestral one (i.e. ritual initiation in the classic mythic way).

In fact, after the 'pilgrimage' to the place «[w]here prayer has been valid», the scene changes again; the modern 'wayfarer' now finds himself in [his] contemporary London (even though any precise topographical reference is omitted):

> In the uncertain hour before the morning
> Near the end of the interminable night
> […]
> After the dark dove had passed the horizon of his homing
> While the dead leaves still rattled on like tin
> Over the asphalt
> […]
> Between three districts whence the smoke arose
> I met one walking, loitering and hurried…
> (*CPP* 193)

It is the memorable scene of the «nekuia», the ritual meeting with the shadows of the dead, of classic myth and epics, *Odyssey* XI and *Aeneid* VI: Odysseus' and Aeneas' respective descent into the Underworld and the encounter with the 'umbrae'. The two protagonists of this episode, the poet's 'persona' and the «familiar compound ghost» meet, recognize (or half-recognize) one another, and walking together («We trod the pavement in a dead patrol.», *CPP* 194) talk about poetics. Then the ghost takes leave, after a final, bitter and disheartening revelation of «the gifts reserved for age» (*CPP* 194, 195)[23].

The long, complex, difficult journey (metaphorical, spiritual, initiatory) is approaching to its end. Its various, gradual, and preparatory stages throughout the four poems now lead to the acme of the finale, where one is reminded that:

> The end is where we start from.
> […]
> Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
> Every poem an epitaph. And any action
> Is a step to the block, to the fire, down the sea's throat
> Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start.
> […]
> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> […]
> At the source of the longest river
> (*CPP* 197).

rivista di poesia comparata semicerchio LXIII 02/2020 *Hodoeporica*. Gli ospiti del caso / The guests of chance / Les hôtes du hasard

The theme of «exploration/exploring» and of its 'end' (in its double significance of conclusion and goal/aim) are here resumed and recapitulated. The *explicit* is once more paradoxical and oximoric, echoing for the last time the message of the epigraph: the «ὁδὸς ἄνω…» is now conveyed through the metaphor of the climbing up «[a]t the source of the longest river» which also adumbrates the anagogical conclusion of the long spiritual journey[24].

Since this moment onwards, the poet must stop; he can only recollect a few 'flashes' of his whole journey, meditate on their spiritual significance and, Dante-like, contemplate the almost ineffable final hierophany: «When the tongues of flame are in-folded / Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one.» (*CPP* 198).

Notes

1 The acronym *CCP* followed by page number stands for T.S. Eliot, *Collected Poems and Plays*, London, Faber and Faber 1969, and will be used in the whole essay.

2 See for example the «underground train» and «tube» (*East Coker* III, *CPP* 180), the «train» and the «drumming liner» (*The Dry Salvages* III, *CPP* 187, 188).

3 Also the six 'tableaux' of *Ash-Wednesday* may be interpreted as stages of an allegorical (spiritual) journey. And one cannot omit the first *Ariel Poem*, *The Journey of the Magi* (1927) with its eloquent title.

4 This original definition is by John Hayward in a letter to Frank Morley (both friends of Eliot's) of July 1941. See Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, London, Faber and Faber 1978, p. 22, and shall be sometimes used in this essay.

5 The most famous episode (perfectly 'odeporic' and 'pedestrian', as well as typically ironical) is that which saw the American poet meeting his fellow countryman and friend Ezra Pound not far from Excideuil (Dordogne), as recollected by Pound himself in his obituary for T.S.E. (Westminster Abbey, February 4, 1965): «Recollections? Let some thesis-writer have the satisfaction of 'discovering' whether it was in 1920 or '21 that I went from Excideuil to meet a rucksacked Eliot. Days of walking – conversation? literary? Le papier Fayard was then the burning topic». Ezra Pound, *For T.S.E*. *The Sewanee Review. T.S. Eliot* (*1888-1965*), Vol. LXXIV (Winter 1966), Vol. I, p. 109. On this same episode see also Richard Sieburth, ed. *A Walking Tour in Southern France. Ezra Pound among the Troubadours*, New York, New Directions 1992, p. 24, and Robert Crawford, *Young Eliot. From St. Louis to The Waste Land*, New York, Farrar, Straus and Giroux 2015, p. 333. On the theme of landscape in Eliot's poetry see Nancy Duvall Hargrove, *Landscape as Symbol in the Poetry of T. S. Eliot*, Jackson, University Press of Mississippi 1978 and, *en passant*, Steve Ellis, *The English Eliot: Design, Language and Landscape in Four Quartets*, London, Routledge 1991.

6 See *Eraclito. Dell'Origine*, ed. by Angelo Tonelli, Milano, Feltrinelli 1993, p. 163 (Fr. 98, my translation).

7 On the different positioning of these two quotations (after the title *Burnt Norton*, or before the whole «quadrologue») see Helen Gardner*, The Composition of Four Quartets,* cit., p. 82 footnote.

8 See various biographers and critics of the poet: Peter Ackroyd, *T.S. Eliot*, London, Abacus 1985, p. 229; Lyndall Gordon, *T.S. Eliot. An Imperfect Life*, New York-London, W.W. Norton 2000, pp. 266-270; Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets*, cit., pp. 35-37; Ronald Bush, *T.S. Eliot. A Study in Character and Style*, New York-Oxford, Oxford University Press 1983, pp. 185-187; A. David Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot Poet*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1994, p. 162. Now these 'classic' studies are being enriched by a most recent enterprise: «Reports from the Emily Hale Archive», sponsored by the International T. S. Eliot Society and realized by professor Frances Dickey, a survey of T. S. Eliot's letters to Emily Hale collected at Princeton University Library and opened to the public at the beginning of 2020 (link: https://tseliotsociety.wildapricot.org/news).

9 One cannot forget that the word «memory» recalls, in a sense, the couple «Memory and desire» of the third line of *The Waste Land* (*CPP* 61) and, at the same time, «memory» is the very personal and genetic source of the first *Quartet* at least for its initial images; finally, in a wider sense, «memory» is linked to the mythical Mnemosyne, mother to the Muses and therefore origin of the various arts (poetry, music, dance, etc.)

10 «Foot», *The Oxford English Dictionary*, prepared by John S. Simpson and Edmund S.C. Weiner, Oxford, Clarendon Press 1989, Vol. VI, p. 13.

11 As regards the ancestral rhythmic and rhapsodic origins of poetry, see T.S. Eliot, «The Beating of a Drum» (A review of *Studies in the Development of the Fool in the Elizabethan Drama*, by Olive Mary Busby, Oxford, Oxford UP 1923, and of *The Sacred Dance: A Study in Comparative Folklore* by William Oscar Emil Oesterley, Cambridge, Cambridge UP 1923). *The Nation and the Athenaeum*, 34 (6 Oct. 1923), pp. 11-12, now in *The Complete Prose of T.S. Eliot: The Critical Edition. The Perfect Critic 1919-1926*, Eds. Tony Cuda and Ronald Schuchard, Baltimore, John Hopkins University Press 2014, vol. II, pp. 471-475 (abbreviated in the two following footnotes as *CPTSE*), and the poet's own words: «Poetry begins… with a savage beating a drum in a jungle», Idem, *The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism* (1933), London, Faber and Faber 1964, p. 155.

12 T.S. Eliot, *Hamlet and his Problem* (1919), *CPTSE*, p. 48.

13 T.S. Eliot, *The Music of Poetry*, *CPTSE*, p. 112.

14 See Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism. Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (1951), Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press 2020,

pp. 125-127, 137, 169. On an initiatory shamanistic interpretation of Eliot's poetry see Stefano Maria Casella, *Lo sciamano e lo ierofante: T.S. Eliot ed Ezra Pound alle radici rituali della poesia* in *L'immagine dell'artista nel mondo moderno*, a cura di Edoardo Zuccato, Milano, Marcos y Marcos 2017, pp. 115-134 and, Idem, *T.S. Eliot, the shaman who dressed like a banker* in «Libere Luci», n. 15 (2015), 1, pp. 4-5 (periodico dell'Associazione culturale Arthena, Lerici-SP).

[15] See Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism*…, cit., pp. 200, 308, and *passim*.

[16] On the poet's ancestors Sir Thomas Elyot and Andrew Eliot see Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets,* cit., pp. 42-43.

[17] See note n. 15 on Mircea Eliade's *Shamanism*, and Michael Thurston, *The Underworld in Twentieth-Century Poetry: From Pound and Eliot to Heaney and Walcott*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan 2009, Ch. 3, *In Nekuia Begins Responsibility:* «Little Gidding» *and the Postwar Necromantic Tradition*, pp. 87-104. Thurston limits his analysis to the second section of *Little Gidding*, the meeting with the «familiar compound ghost», whereas the whole of Eliot's «quadrologue» are full of episodes (and/or hints) referring to mythic rituals of initiation resembling and echoing shamanic phenomenology and its transformations in more 'refined' forms developed by the most known and widespread religions (Eastern and Western as well) and by Poetry and Art in general (often as a metaphor). For wider explorations of such themes see Stefano Maria Casella, *Lo sciamano e lo ierofante*, cit. and, by the same author, «*…Restoring / With a New Verse the Ancient Rhyme*»*: T.S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Poetic Homages to Dante*, in *T. S. Eliot, Dante, and the Idea of Europe*, ed. P. Douglass, Newcastle upon Tyne, Cambridge Scholars 2011, pp. 95-109, and *L'immaginario iniziatico e mistico nei Four Quartets di T. S. Eliot*, in *Mosaici di Orizzonti. Società, immaginari, comunicazione*, a c. di Giovanni Michele Pozzobon, Milano, Franco Angeli 2005, pp. 91-119.

[18] Dante's journey to the Underworld, though shaped after the classical, mythological and ritual 'katabasis', is however different, being followed not only by the equally classical, mythological and ritual 'anabasis' but also by a new anagogical perspective. See Vittorio Cozzoli, *La Guida delle Guide. Dante secondo Dante*, Trieste, Battello Stampatore 2007, p. 86: «…ormai non più…nei modi dell'antica 'catabasi', ma in quelli della 'nova': infatti ora 'lo scendere' è seguito dal 'risalire'. L'antica catabasi si muta in nuova anagogia».

[19] In these negative images and process, it may be recognized also an echo of the 'nigredo', the initial phase of the spiritual alchemy.

[20] See T.S. Eliot, *What Dante Means to me* (1950): «The whole study and practice of Dante seems to me to teach that the poet should be the servant of his language, rather than the master of it. This sense of responsibility is one of the marks of the classical poet […] To pass on to posterity one's own language, more highly developed, more refined, and more precise than it was before one wrote it, that is the highest possible achievement of the poet as poet […] the great master of a language should be the great servant of it». Idem, in *To Criticize the Critic and other writings*, London, Faber and Faber 1965, p. 133.

[21] Another echo is represented by the *incipits* of Wallace Stevens's *The World as Meditation* (1952) and *The Sail of Ulysses* (1954), even though there is no direct influence between the two American poets.

[22] See Helen Gardner, *The Composition of Four Quartets,* cit., pp. 58-62.

[23] On this theme see Stefano Maria Casella, *T.S. Eliot's and Ezra Pound's Poetic Homages*, cit. and, Idem, *L'immaginario iniziatico e mistico*, cit., and Michael Thurston, cit.

[24] See the Medieval motto: «Littera gesta docet, quid credes allegoria, / Moralia quid agas, quo tendas anagogia». *On Modern Poetry. Essays presented to Donald Davie*. Eds. Vereen Bell and Lawrence Lerner, Nashville, Vanderbilt University Press 1988, pp. 142-143. See also Dante Alighieri's definition and explanation in *Convivio*, II.i.6-8, and the entry «anagogico», *Enciclopedia Dantesca* (https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/anagogico_%28Enciclopedia-Dantesca%29/).