Introduction

Broadly, this book is about philosophical influence on theological articulations. Specifically, I claim that C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden's post-conversion works that have time as a theological theme cannot be completely understood apart from the philosophy of Henri Bergson. Until now there have only been four books devoted exclusively to the relationship between the philosophy of Henri Bergson and twentieth-century literature. Both Paul Douglass in *Bergson, Eliot, and American Literature* (1986) and Tom Quirk in *Bergson and American Culture* (1990) examine Bergson's influence on Anglo-American writers. While Shiv Kumar's *Bergson and the Stream-of-Consciousness Novel* (1963) looks at Bergson's impact on James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, its scope is narrowed to only include a few of Bergson's ideas and their influence on a select group of authors. The most exhaustive study of Bergson, twentieth-century authors, and literary modernism is Mary Ann Gillies's *Henri Bergson and British Modernism* (1996). In Gillies' treatment of Bergson's influence on twentieth-century literature, she focuses on authors such as Conrad, Joyce, Woolf, Richardson, and Eliot. Other works like Michael Levenson's *A Genealogy of Modernism* (1984) and Sanford Schwartz's *Matrix of Modernism: Pound, Eliot and Early Twentieth Century Thought* (1985) have devoted chapters and essays to Bergson's relationship to modernism, twentieth-century currents of thought, and twentieth-century literature. This present work makes only the fifth major attempt to investigate Bergson's influence on twentieth-century literature and the first attempt to examine Bergson's influence on the Christian theology of twentieth-century authors C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden.

Bergson was a major philosophical force in the first two decades of the twentieth century, and by the time Lewis, Eliot, and Auden wrote their

post-conversion works Bergson's ideas were widely known by twentieth-century philosophers, theologians, and writers.[1] Because of Bergson's influence it is surprising that there is such a scarcity of scholarship on Bergson and the theological literature of important twentieth-century authors. Thus, I seek to fill the holes, while creating some new craters, in scholarship on early- to mid-twentieth century theologized literature and Bergson's influence on important twentieth-century writers by demonstrating a strong dependence on Bergson's ideas by Lewis, Eliot, and Auden.

C. S. Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and W. H. Auden's "Kairos and Logos" are theological treatments of time that rely on Bergson's theory of time, and particularly on his concept of *duration*. Indeed, without Bergson, Lewis, Eliot, and Auden could not have composed their works, as we now know them and could not have articulated what I will refer to as their theologies of time. There are three reasons why I think the Bergson connection to these twentieth-century Christian writers is important and contributory to studies of Lewis, Eliot, and Auden, as well as to the field of theology and literature. First, one cannot understand the theological agendas in these authors' works without an understanding of Bergsonian duration. Second, not only was Christian theology of the utmost personal importance to each author, but also the promulgation of theology was the controlling idea behind their post-conversion works on time.

Yet another reason is that scholars have missed the theological connections between the three authors. While Lewis, Eliot, and Auden enjoyed successful contemporaneous careers and while they all converted to Christianity roughly within a decade of one another, scholars have failed to see any strong theological connections among them. The fact is that Lewis, Eliot, and Auden share a remarkable theological and thematic relationship that once revealed will situate each writer in a group of authors that shared the common goal of theologizing the theme of time for a twentieth-century audience. Scholarship has created a gulf between these authors, in that Eliot and Auden have been depicted as icons of literary modernism, while Lewis has traditionally been cast as an apologist and creator of the fantastic. This divergent reading of these three authors needs to be altered to accommodate their important theological commonalities.

1. For more on Bergson's influence on several twentieth-century thinkers, see Pilkington's *Bergson and His Influence: A Reassessment*.

In the area of theology, Eliot and Auden were every bit as interested in promulgating Christianity as Lewis. In fact, like Lewis, whose career is known for popularizing theology to his fellow twentieth-century readers, Eliot and Auden took on the roles of what I will here describe as literary theologians. And the theme of time reveals a theological interest deemed immensely important by each author. Establishing this theological and thematic connection among the authors is thus important for understanding their individual post-conversion careers. It is also a significant thread in their theological constructions that Lewis, Eliot, and Auden all composed Bergsonian works on time. Without a Bergsonian reading, which has yet to be applied to the works studied here, one misses a controlling idea behind their post-conversion works. Lewis, Eliot, and Auden did not choose to write biblically allegorical treatments of time, in the vein of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* (1678) or like Hannah Hurnard's *Hinds' Feet on High Places* (1955), nor did they mostly rely on a prominent theologian from centuries past or a distinctly religious thinker from their own. Instead, each author looked to and was influenced by the philosophy of twentieth-century philosopher Henri Bergson.

To most fully understand Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's theologies of time and the works that it produced, one must understand that Bergsonian duration is the foundation on which each author built. Some scholars have rightly connected Bergson's ideas with the works of Lewis, of Eliot, and of Auden. However, those scholars are few, and none treat Bergson's influence on all three authors. Furthermore, I have been unable to find another scholar who connects Bergsonian duration to any of these authors' works in which theologized time is a theme, a theme on which I will concentrate. A Bergsonian reading provides an explanation as to how Lewis, Eliot, and Auden constructed their theologies of time, it demonstrates that time is an important thematic and theological concern, and it reveals that an understanding of these authors' works is incomplete without the consideration of Bergson.

Although connections seem tenuous between the Christian faiths of C. S. Lewis, T. S. Eliot, and W. H. Auden and the Bergsonian philosophy that pervades their literary works, each author's theological articulations on time and Bergson's secular philosophy are inseparably woven. While I will exhaustively explain Bergson's theories in chapter 2, I will here simply gloss Bergsonian duration as the belief that time is a force that works on an individual's inner emotional and spiritual states. Also important to this concept of durative time is the role of intuitive knowing and experience

as a way to access duration. In Bergsonian duration, one's consciousness is connected to duration (i.e., time) through intuition, which allows the force of time to dynamically change the individual's inner states, or what Bergson calls *intensities*.

In the case of each author, Bergson's theory of duration served as a catalyst for his respective post-conversion treatment of time, and in the case of each author, ironically, his post-conversion theological writings also retained elements of Bergson's non-Christian theories. Indeed, the post-conversion works of all three writers exemplify Bergsonism and Christianity cooperating in ideological cross-fertilization. Though diverse in literary and personal expressions of their faith, Lewis, Eliot, and Auden are the twentieth-century's paramount examples of prominent English writers operating in and perpetuating a complicated Christian-Bergsonian binary.

Because Lewis, Eliot, and Auden retained Bergsonian ideas about time that might logically be abdicated following conversion to Christianity, each author can fruitfully be seen as a reactionary Christian figure whose post-conversion writings were direct commentaries on a prominent, non-Christian twentieth-century philosophy of time. Spanning slightly over a decade, the conversions of T. S. Eliot in 1927, C. S. Lewis in 1931, and W. H. Auden in 1940 inaugurated an unprecedented creative and critical body of work that joins theological with distinctly secular philosophical writing. For Eliot and Auden, their already prominent literary careers were reanimated by religious conversions, whereas Lewis's conversion fostered the ideas that defined his corpus. Each writer's conversion would create a new phase of heightened poetic intensity and leave indelible marks on his post-conversion body of work by providing him a belief system on which he could expound.

Eliot, the creator of the indelible poem *The Waste Land*, who cried in his pre-conversion state "these fragments I have shored against my ruins"[2] would become known for this prayer in "Ash Wednesday": "Suffer me not to be separated / And let my cry come unto Thee."[3] Auden would turn from his controversial political works like "Spain" to his highly theological Christian works like *The Double Man*—an entire collection devoted to his return to the Anglican Communion. For Lewis, already an aspiring poet and promising academician, conversion to Christianity would

2. Eliot, *The Waste Land*, V. line 431.
3. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday," VI. lines 35–36.

produce vastly popular fiction, a prolific body of literary criticism, and the twentieth-century's most significant works of Christian apologetics.

In their post-conversion careers, all three authors were often unable to see literature and literary criticism except through the eyes of faith, and some of the authors' most significant works were theological responses to what they saw as threatening secular philosophies, for example, Lewis's *Abolition of Man*, Eliot's *After Strange Gods*, and Auden's *On Secondary Worlds*. In fact, some of the theological beliefs most seminal to Eliot's verse and literary criticism are congruent to Lewis and Auden's beliefs, as when Eliot says, "Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint."[4] Eliot's definite theological standpoint of Christianity encompasses the Bergsonian philosophy, which he, Lewis, and Auden employed. It is an important goal of my work to suggest that post-conversion Lewis, Eliot, and Auden as literary figures are far better understood when placed at the crossroads of Christianity and Bergsonian philosophy.

My primary and much narrower goal here, however, is to explore one theme prevalent in the works of twentieth-century writers, Christian and non-Christian alike, as well as being prominent in theologians' writings in the early to mid twentieth century: the theme of time. The rapid acceleration of the first decades of the twentieth century fostered the feeling that time was out of human control. The concept of time and man's seemingly insignificant subjective place in it troubled twentieth-century writers. Novelists departed from strict chronology, made extensive use of flashbacks and foreshadowing, and explored the disjuncture between private and public time. For example, Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent* (1907) imagines an anarchist plot to blow up Greenwich Observatory, where standard time was measured, as a symbol of a more general attack on objective standards. In Conrad's novel time itself is out of joint; after recording the explosion, the narrative flashes back without warning to an earlier time frame, leaving the plot's projection of time uncertain.

Another vivid example of twentieth-century anxiety over time occurs in Walter Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History" (1940). In discussing Paul Klee's painting *Angelus Novus*, Benjamin interprets its central figure as the angel of history.

> Where we perceive a chain of events, the angel sees one single catastrophe that keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the

4. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," 343.

> dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing from Paradise; it has got caught in his wings with such violence that the angel can no longer close them. This storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.[5]

Here Benjamin depicts time as a violent, uncontrollable force. In time's wake nothing remains whole, and even notions of the supernatural have been swept by the thrust of rapidly passing time. A virtually inescapable critical conversation about time was created by the influential philosopher Henri Bergson's work on time, reality, and the subjective experience of the individual in time (*Time and Free Will*, 1913); the works by prominent literary figures like Wyndham Lewis that privileged the import of understanding time (*Time and Western Man*, 1927); and monumental literary works like Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) that completely reconfigured how time could operate in a narrative. In fact, one of the greatest links between Lewis, Eliot, and Auden is that they each entered the conversation about time and meaning with creative theological voices. Lewis, Eliot, and Auden saw time as a problematic divide between a non-Christian approach to literature and a distinctly Christian one.

In fact, each author held the idea of time to be not only a theological tenet but also a fundamental literary theme of a Christian construction of human experience with God. Before moving on to my argument for how time functions theologically in Lewis, Eliot, and Auden, I want to briefly anthologize the problem of time as raised by each author in his own words. In Lewis's apologetic work, *Miracles*, he says about time:

> It is probable that Nature is not really in Time and almost certain that God is not. Time is probably (like perspective) the mode of our perception. There is therefore in reality no question of God's at one point in time (the moment of creation) adapting the material history of this universe in advance to free acts which you or I are to perform at a later point in Time. To Him all the physical events and all the human acts are present in an eternal Now. The liberation of finite wills and the creation of the whole material history of the universe (related to the acts of those wills in all the necessary complexity) is to Him a single operation. In this sense God did not create the universe long ago but creates it at this minute—at every minute.[6]

5. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," 257–58.
6. Lewis, *Miracles*, 176–77.

Lewis equates temporal time with human perception, divine creation, and God's presence. According to Lewis, all moments are "eternally Now" to God, therefore any perception of time from a theological standpoint must take into consideration that though humans understand God to work in time, God by His own nature transcends time. Important to Lewis's idea of God occupying all moments as if they were present is the assumption that time *is* the medium through which God is known and made known. In Lewis's thinking, because time is God's medium, it is of the utmost theological importance.

In his fictional *Screwtape Letters*, Lewis says of time, "Humans live in time . . . therefore . . . [they] attend chiefly to two things, to eternity and to . . . the Present. For the Present is the point at which time touches eternity . . . in it alone freedom and actuality are offered."[7] It will be the leitmotif of *The Great Divorce* that the Present is the point at which time touches eternity. According to Lewis, living in time means to experience both eternity and the Present, which in Lewis's work is akin to Eliot's "always present" and Auden's "Kairos" in that the Present represents the moment in time in which God meets man. That moment is not found in the past or in the future, but in the direct experience of time in the Present. Apart from the Present, Lewis imagines no way for temporal man to know God. In *Till We Have Faces*, a retelling of the myth of Cupid and Psyche and arguably his most developed work of fiction, Lewis intimates of the apocalyptic implications of time:

> Lightly men talk of saying what they mean. Often when he was teaching me to write in Greek the Fox would say, "Child, to say the very thing you really mean, the whole of it, nothing more or less or other than what you really mean; that's the whole art and joy of words." A glib saying. When the *time* comes to you at which you will be forced at last to utter the speech which has lain at the centre of your soul for years, which you have, all that time, idiot-like, been saying over and over, you'll not talk about joy of words. I saw well why they gods do not speak to us openly, nor let us answer. Till that word can be dug out of us, why should they hear the babble that we think we mean? How can they meet us face to face till we have faces?[8]

The narrator and protagonist, Orual, recounts the instructions of her pedagogue, the Fox, about saying what one truly means. Here Orual

7. Lewis, *Screwtape Letters*, 67–68.
8. Lewis, *Till We Have Faces*, 294.

reflects on the Fox's teaching, wondering if saying what one really means will matter when the time for speaking finally ends. When the time comes and mankind is spiritually ready, when men "have faces," then glib sayings and Job-like audacity to treat with the gods will cease to be. Not only does Lewis see time as the medium through which God meets man, he also sees time as a revealer of divine judgment. *Till We Have Faces* associates time with the ultimate reckoning between the divine and human, as does *The Great Divorce*.

Eliot shares Lewis's concern for the theology and theme of time. In his post-conversion poem "Ash Wednesday," Eliot laments man's temporal condition:

> Because I do not hope to know again
> The infirm glory of the positive hour
> . . . . . .
> Because I know that time is always time
> And place is always and only place
> And what is actual is only for one time
> And only for one place.[9]

Here Eliot bemoans temporality without divinity. When unoccupied by the eternal, the temporal is vacant of spiritual meaning. To see time as "always and only" being only time is a concession to temporality's limitations and a theologically bereft position. "Ash Wednesday" presents the possibility of experiencing the temporal without the eternal. The possibility of abdicating the eternal and only experiencing the temporal is also a recurring theme in *Four Quartets*. In both "Ash Wednesday" and *Four Quartets* Eliot uses the theme of time in service to a theology of Incarnation, by depicting the temporal present as the means for the Incarnation. Like Lewis, Eliot invests time with a great deal of theological meaning. Indeed, Eliot opens his *Four Quartets* with:

> 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.[10]

I will treat this passage fully in the fourth chapter, but for now it is sufficient to say that time in the *Four Quartets* is concerned with the

9. Eliot, "Ash Wednesday," lines 1, 9–10, 16–19.

10. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, lines 1–5.

possibility of theological redemption. The speaker sees theological redemption as interconnected with time, so interweaving the two that the poem will imagine no form of redemption outside of time. The speculative possibility that all time is unredeemable if all time is eternally present will run throughout the entirety of the poem, which finally concludes that time is the agent of redemption.

Lewis and Eliot's interest in time is matched by Auden's. In his "Kairos and Logos," a poem partly written in response to *The Interpretation of History* (1936) by German theologian Paul Tillich, Auden also depicts time as the vessel for the Incarnation. In this poem, time is both a theological event and a type of literary trope, as indicated by the first line, "Around them boomed the rhetoric of time." And in "For the Time Being," Auden poetically theologizes the meaning of the birth of Christ in time: "Before the Infinite could manifest Itself in the finite . . . . But here and now the Word which is implicit in the Beginning and in the End is become immediately explicit."[11]

Lewis, Eliot, and Auden considered time to be the sphere in which their Christian faiths and their creative works intensely met, and it is their treatments of time that simultaneously reveal their identities as both Christian thinkers and philosophically Bergsonian writers. It is also in that treatment of time that one sees these authors' complex theological and creative attempts to engage the issue of man's temporal existence—an issue that thinkers like Bergson brought to the philosophical forefront in the first decades of the twentieth century. Furthermore, Lewis, Eliot, and Auden imagined their treatments of time to involve both the ideas posed by Bergson (e.g., man's ability to be transformed through the force of time) as well as their own particular theological articulations. It is somewhat ironic that to fully express what they thought to be the Christian theological answer to the problem of man's existence in time, each author created a theology that retained certain traits of Bergson's non-Christian theory of duration.

The reason for Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's implementation of a prominent secular philosophy is that writing theology in the twentieth century was marked in its demand for a new presentation. Ezra Pound's cry to "make it new" can be applied to the task of writing theology in the twentieth century, as theologians and Christian writers like Lewis, Eliot, and Auden all saw the need for theological writing suitable for the radically reimagined world in which they lived. The philosophy of Henri Bergson

11. Auden, *Collected Poems*, 387.

had already made a significant impact on philosophy by the time Lewis, Eliot, and Auden converted to the Christian faith. And it was Bergson's philosophy that gave each author a contemporary, innovative, and effective theory of time that both complemented their Christian beliefs about duration and enabled them to create entirely new depictions of time that conveyed theological belief to a twentieth-century audience.

Theologically poeticizing time was for Lewis, Eliot, and Auden a primary way to address a philosophical concern while espousing a Christian understanding of time that metonymically stood for the entire Christian mythos. By focusing on the theologies of time in the works of these three eminent Christian authors, this book voices a unique argument in the field of theological criticism of twentieth-century literature and can shed yet more light on literary Christianity in the twentieth century.[12] And while I attempt to formulate the theory that Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's Christian theological articulations are inseparably interconnected with and dependent on the secular philosophy of Henri Bergson, I more give equal attention to placing Lewis, Eliot, and Auden in unprecedented direct conversation with one another about theme and theology.

No scholar has linked Lewis, Eliot, and Auden in terms of how all three prominent writers shared aspects of Christian belief that were manifested in the same literary theme of time. And while there is no shortage of works on time in twentieth-century literature, not to mention works on time in Lewis, in Eliot, and in Auden's works, there is a dearth of scholarship on theological time in these authors' writings. For the sake of defining the terms that comprise this conversation, theological time is simply defined as the belief that temporal time operates in conjunction with God's eternality. God's eternal nature is not erased in the temporal; rather, the eternal infuses the temporal with divine will, revelation, and redemptive purpose. In other words, theological time insists that God reveals Himself through time and that man may know God through time.

Despite the importance of theological time in the post-conversion work of the Lewis, Eliot, and Auden, scholarship has been largely silent about how time theologically operates for these three Christian authors.

12. For other writers that similarly work at the intersection of theology and literature, see Jasper, *European Literature and Theology in the Twentieth Century*; Jeffrey, *Christianity and Literature*; Ward, *Planet Narnia: The Seven Heavens in the Imagination of C. S. Lewis*; Wood, "The Baptized Imagination: C. S. Lewis's Fictional Apologetics"; *Literature and Theology*; Spurr, *"Anglo-Catholic in Religion": T. S. Eliot and Christianity*; Kirsch, *Auden and Christianity*; and the more dated but insightful work by Edwards, *Toward a Christian Poetics*.

And I have been unable to locate any critical argument positing that time operates as a theological tenet simultaneously reacting against and adhering to modernist literary conventions. The several strong critical works that examine how time operates in the works of any of these authors do not really engage time's theological significance. Indeed, even while critical publications about Lewis, Eliot, and Auden are so extensive as to defeat any attempt at an exhaustive literature review, they either fail to place these writers in conversation with one another or they neglect the importance of time as a theological and literary topic. The following selected studies have been instrumental in my own thinking about these authors and the theme of time. This project will add to their findings.

On C. S. Lewis, the scholarship is overwhelmingly theological, and some of the most relevant and helpful works for my approach to Lewis privilege Lewis's role as theologian and twentieth-century author. But the majority of critics of Lewis's theology do not privilege the "doctrine" of time that appears so prominently in his fiction. In their collection of essays *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness and Beauty* (2008), David Baggett, Gary Habermas, and Jerry Walls attempt to situate Lewis in the classical philosophical tradition, claiming that "The great classic triumvirate of Truth, Beauty, and Goodness is a particularly apt framework for engaging C. S. Lewis and philosophy."[13] As helpful as the collection is at showing Lewis to be a deeply philosophical thinker, its focus on truth, beauty, and goodness rules out most philosophical considerations of time. The collection also often overlooks any ideological relationship between Lewis and Bergson. The usefulness of this work for my own is in various close readings that identify philosophical ideas deeply woven into Lewis's fiction.

A work on Lewis that swings far in the direction of understanding his relationship to his twentieth-century world is Louis Markos's *Lewis Agonistes: How C. S. Lewis Can Train Us to Wrestle with the Modern and Postmodern World* (2003). According to Markos, "Perhaps no age has so dulled the edge of the Christian *agon* as a time in which modern and postmodern ideologies have proven so monolithic . . . thankfully, though, our age also produced one of Christianity's greatest wrestlers, a man whose vision allowed him to pierce through the modern and postmodern tree to examine the roots that sustain it."[14] However, for all his attention to

13. Baggett, Habermas, and Walls, *C. S. Lewis as Philosopher: Truth, Goodness and Beauty*, 17.

14. Markos, *Lewis Agonistes*, x.

Lewis as a cultural critic, Markos does not engage Lewis's dependence on the philosophical climate under his critique. Far from being a theologian living in a cultureless vacuum, Lewis's career began in and flourished by his conversance with secular philosophy. Because approaches to Lewis have been one-sided, overwhelmingly theological in their approach, even heralding him as the greatest literary Christian of the twentieth century, Lewis's identities as a philosopher and writer have been obscured. While my project is theological, it is also thoroughly philosophical and literary. I will show Lewis to be a philosophical writer, whose theological agenda is inseparable from his conversance with and employment of secular philosophy.

An unpublished work that is proving most helpful to my own is the dissertation of Rebecca Radmacher, "'Nothing Said Clearly Can Be Said Truly': Modernism in C. S. Lewis's *Till We Have Faces*." Radmacher's is one of the only works that I have come across that reads Lewis's novel as a twentieth-century theological retelling of myth. The strength of Radmacher's reading of Lewis is her attempt to situate him in his twentieth-century milieu. Radmacher rightly argues for a Lewis in conversation with twentieth-century ideologies and literature. But Radmacher's work narrows Lewis's theological agenda in that she does not see time as a crucial trope in the novel, thereby losing the theological implications of the idea that man's relationship with the gods and knowledge of the divine are all temporal contingencies. *Till We Have Faces* depicts time as the darkened window through which man must look in order to see the hand of the divine on human affairs. Indeed, along with *The Great Divorce*, *Till We Have Faces* demonstrates Lewis to be a creative theologian whose literary work and Christian faith shape one another through the idea and theme of time.

In *The Company They Keep,* Diana Glyer looks at Lewis in the context of his friends in the writing circle—known as the *Inklings*—comprised primarily of C. S. Lewis, J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, and Owen Barfield. Glyer attempts to discover the implications of community in relation to creativity.[15] For example, in what ways and to what extent did Tolkien and Williams influence Lewis's fiction? Through extensive biographical and textual analysis, Glyer concludes that "Lewis, Tolkien, and the other Inklings all place significant value on continuity as an essential attribute to the creative process."[16] My interest in Glyer revolves around her work on Lewis as a part of a Christian literary community.

15. Glyer, *The Company They Keep*, xix.
16. Ibid., 222.

While Lewis, Eliot, and Auden never shared a communal relationship like the Inklings, Glyer's study has helped me formulate my own ideas about the theological and thematic relationship between these three writers. I intend to show a theological and thematic continuity between Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's post-conversion work on time. Donald Williams, in *Mere Humanity: G. K. Chesterton, C. S. Lewis, and J. R. R. Tolkien on the Human Condition* (2006), uses the same biographical approach and comes to some of the same conclusions as Glyer. His strongest move is expanding Lewis's literary community to include G. K. Chesterton, whom Lewis greatly admired. Williams's work is useful to my own in how he connects several prominent literary figures around one common theme, in this case a concern for the human condition shared by each author. I seek to do the same kind of situating as do Glyer and Williams, though in my case it is Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's shared theological treatments of time that join them together rather than personal relationships.

I also want to mention the works of Sanford Schwartz, *C. S. Lewis on the Final Frontier: Science and the Supernatural in the Space Trilogy* (2009), and the much earlier *The Literary Achievement of C. S. Lewis* (1987) by Colin Manlove; both critics build strong arguments about Lewis's agenda through almost line by line close readings, and both have been greatly influential to my work in their diligent readings of Lewis's fiction. My greatest interest in their work lies not in what they discovered about Lewis but the process by which they discovered it: through thematically-focused close readings. These two authors provide a concentrated close reading of Lewis's work, which is their criticism's greatest strength and an area I hope to continue in my work by moving from the texts to a fully formed theology of time. Like Schwartz and Manlove, what most of the critics I mention here produce are careful and scholarly sound treatments of Lewis, Eliot, and Auden. I should note that their arguments do not produce an explanation for how and why Lewis, Eliot, and Auden chose to employ Bergsonism in their theologies of time.

On Eliot, the work of Lois Cuddy is closely akin to mine in topic. Cuddy's "Making a Space in Time: T. S. Eliot, Evolution, and *The Four Quartets*" (1994) sees time as an important poetic and philosophical device, though giving no substantial attention to the theological meaning of time in Eliot. For Cuddy, time is Eliot's way of drawing on an anti-theological tradition in order that the poem might produce a naturalistic experience between man and time. I hope to advance beyond Cuddy's work by showing time to be the province of theology in *Four Quartets*. While also

bringing in Eliot's other poems about time, I will argue that *Four Quartets* is Eliot's most concentrated work on theological time.

Barry Spurr's recent work on Eliot, "*Anglo-Catholic in Religion*": *T. S. Eliot and Christianity* (2010) moves in the same direction as my work, and though his approach is thoroughly biographical with less attention paid to close reading and prevalent themes, it is nevertheless helpful in its focus on the intersection of theology and literature that is so important to my project. Spurr's adeptness at merging the biographical with the literary serves as a model for how I framed aspects of my thinking.

Much in the same way that Glyer and Williams treat Lewis, Lee Oser places Eliot within a literary community of Christian writers in a non-Christian world. In *The Return of Christian Humanism: Chesterton, Eliot, Tolkien, and the Romance of History* (2007), Oser makes the claims: "At the heart of twentieth-century letters was the clash between a dogmatically relativist type of modernism and Christian humanism."[17] Oser goes on to deal with each author individually before positioning them together as Christian humanists against such anti-humanist writers as Samuel Beckett. Oser's work serves as a model for my own in structure, but his approach is more informed by philosophical categories than by text-based analyses. Indeed, his work is so abstract at times that one loses sight of the texts that produce Eliot's theological and literary tension.

Concerning Auden, Arthur Kirsch's *Auden and Christianity* (2005) traces the poet's complicated lifelong struggle with the Christian faith, a faith that Kirsch says, "can thus hardly be exaggerated, but as a subject of study, . . . nonetheless poses difficulties."[18] It is in its treatment of these difficulties that Kirsch's work is most useful to me. Kirsch accurately shows Auden to be a man professing the Christian faith but maintaining unconventional views about his expression of faith, for example, in not making explicit statements about theology in his prose or critical works. Kirsch's work does show the importance of theology for Auden's post-conversion work as well as how Auden implemented theology through theme, diction, and trope. I hope to capture Kirsch's ability to deal with the grey areas between the Christian faith and beliefs contradicting it when I deal with Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's concept of time, which while theologically informed cannot always be said to be entirely orthodox.

Mendelson's important *Later Auden* (1999) does a superb job of detailing the second half of Auden's life. Through a chronological approach,

17. Oser, *The Return of Christian Humanism*, ix.

18. Kirsch, *Auden and Christianity,* xiv.

Mendelson captures Auden's biography as well as the development of his worldview, setting forth an exhaustive portrait of the poet's life and work. Mendelson also provides remarkable readings of Auden's work, often capturing the essence of a poem before unpacking its literary elements. For example, Mendelson identifies "New Year Letter" as "Auden's *Faust*," before spending some twenty pages interpreting it. Mendelson's contribution to my work will be extensive.[19] From the biographical to the literary, Mendelson's is a thorough way to know Auden the man and writer, though individual categories like time are lost in his report of the constellation of Auden's themes.

Gareth Reeves's "Auden and Religion" (2004) includes a partial conclusion about Auden and time, one nascent in vision and limited in scope. In Auden, Reeves rightly says, "Poetry is time-ridden, it belongs to History and our fallen condition, but it can make us, within its enclosed arenas, its parables, conscious of the timeless."[20] It is this idea of enclosure that I want to overturn in my work on time, for the language of time in Auden (as well as Eliot and Lewis) does not merely serve to raise consciousness of the eternal in the reader's mind. The language of time is meant to open new literary understandings of Christian theology as well as to theologize secular philosophy, namely Bergsonism. Where Reeves sees Auden's language as working to evoke, I see it as working to create.

And while some scholars have placed Lewis in conversation with Eliot, and others have placed Eliot in conversation with Auden, and yet still others have placed Lewis in conversation with Auden, no one has thoroughly examined the literary commonalities among all three. This relationship occupied the same period in time, occurred between three authors who converted to the same faith in just over a decade, and saw each author take up the same literary themes. Because of this relationship, it can be argued that Lewis, Eliot, and Auden comprise a literary group of converts that has been under-investigated by scholars of twentieth-century literature.

As writers bound together by the thematic commonality of theo-poeticized time, Lewis, Eliot, and Auden complicate the lines of demarcation between the secular philosophy of Bergson that existed outside the scope of their personal faiths and the Christianity to which they converted.[21] Perhaps most appealing about the idea of time as taken up by Lewis,

19. Mendelson, *Later Auden*, 101.

20. Reeves, "Auden and Religion," 193.

21. Though the conversions of Lewis, Eliot, and Auden gave each author a newly

Eliot, and Auden is how for every disconnection between Bergsonism and Christianity, there seems to be another inseparable connection. Each author came to slightly different conclusions and certainly took different textual paths to reach them, but each saw himself as poeticizing Christian theology to a secular philosophy to which he remained ideologically connected. Thus, I intend to identify and further complicate those connections between Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's Christian faith and the Bergsonism from which they drew to construct theology, in hopes that a richer understanding of their theologies of time will emerge.

Obviously, the work of Henri Bergson is foundational to my argument, Bergson being a philosopher whose ideas about time permeate the post-conversion works of Lewis, Eliot, and Auden. Though Lewis, Eliot, and Auden wrote definitively theological works, their Christian writings did not necessarily need to employ Bergson's secular philosophy. It could have been that each author would have chosen to write theological works on time that possessed no distinctly philosophically secular trait. Indeed, it is surprising that each author did not choose to theologize time from a purely biblical vantage point, e.g., that they did not espouse a Pauline, or Mosaic, or Deuteronomistic notion of time. Yet all three authors were certainly capable of such religious writing.

For example, many of Lewis's apologetic works—*The Problem of Pain* (1940), *The Abolition of Man* (1943), and *Miracles* (1947)—are explicitly directed against certain twentieth-century philosophies and show little sympathy for other philosophical views. Eliot's published lectures at the University of Virginia, *After Strange Gods* (1933, published 1934), or his *Christianity and Culture* (1939) read like anti-modernist religious pamphlets. Auden's later poetry became more and more conservative and reactionary against his earlier radically modernist verse. His last decade of work is remarkably void of all his earlier modernist trademarks of anxiety and social consciousness, and his late writings—poems like "Insignificant

directed poetic intensity, I will not look at the actual details of the authors' conversions. In fact, the biographical minutiae involved in these authors' conversions will not factor into my analysis of their Christian poetics. What I am most interested in is the theology—or theologies that—their conversions produced. It is on their theological constructs of time in relation to Bergson's ideas, rather than the particulars of their conversions, that this study will focus. For more on conversion to Christianity, see the chapter "Conversion" in Williams James's definitive work, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, 171–201. For more on Lewis's conversion, see David Downing's *The Most Reluctant Convert* (2004); on Eliot's, see Lyndall Gordon's *Eliot's New Life* (1989); on Auden's, see Mendelson's *Later Auden* (2000).

Elephants" (1966) and his theoretical *On Secondary Worlds*—mark a distinctly religious turn from his works of high modernism.

What makes Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and Auden's "Kairos and Logos" remarkable conflations of Christian theology and secular philosophy is their use of the ideas of Henri Bergson. Bergson's work is in part a response to the Darwinian science so prevalent in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, in part a reaction to the de-humanizing implications of mechanistic positivism, and in part a post-Einsteinian, metaphysically vitalist approach to human consciousness in time. It stands at the crossroads of some of the most formative ideas of the early twentieth century. And what makes Lewis, Eliot, and Auden's articulations about time remarkable intersections of theology and twentieth-century literature is their adoption of Bergson's non-theological duration.

In order to investigate each author's treatment of time and to unearth the blend of Christian and Bergsonian ideologies implemented by all three, I will focus on those works by each writer that best demonstrate the precarious intersection between their Christian faiths and Bergsonism and also speak to their Christian theologies of time. Specifically, I will look at Lewis's *The Great Divorce*, at Eliot's *Four Quartets*, and at Auden's "Kairos and Logos." Of course, I will also consider the pertinent Christian critical writings and other selected literary works of each author. In chapter 3, I will look at Lewis's *The Great Divorce* in light of Bergson's notions of the force of time as well as Bergson's emphasis on the durative present. To frame Lewis's theological approach, I will compare his way of structuring thought in terms of dualism and dynamism with Bergson's own affinity dualistic and dynamistic themes. In chapter 4, I will closely read Eliot's *Four Quartets* through the Bergonsian lenses of durative force, the splintered self, and the consciousness's experience of time. And in chapter 5, I will reiterate Bergson's sense of dualistic time and experience as I close read Auden's "Kairos and Logos." In each chapter I will emphasize the nuances of each author's theological treatments of time as well as show how their theological articulations cohere with Bergson's ideas. Ultimately, I will produce a synthetic reading of Bergsonian philosophy and the theological articulations of Lewis, Eliot, and Auden, and with that reading, a new framework for understanding how these important authors constructed their theologies.