T.S. ELIOT'S EARLY POETRY IN THE LIGHT OF HIS OWN OBSERVATIONS ON IT

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by

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SYNOPSIS

Eliot's poetry does not make sense at once. Highly elusive and suggestive, it leans heavily on 'faint clews and indirections'. This poetry has, therefore, been taken in different ways by different readers and responses have varied from warm acclaim to severe criticism and downright denunciation. In any case, the search for the meaning of Eliot's poetry has continued ceaselessly and enthusiastically. But most often readers and scholars have resorted to speculations whenever facts failed them, thus creating a situation of uncertainty and confusion.

The contention of the present dissertation is that the surest guide to the meaning of Eliot's poetry through its dense texture of complexity, ambiguity and obscurity is Eliot himself. Reputed to be very reticent, Eliot nevertheless said many things about himself during his long literary career. None of these observations in the form of formal enunciations, remarks, asides, parries, outbursts, reminiscences, etc., can be taken at its face value. But a careful compilation and a critical analysis of Eliot's self-commentary do provide a rare insight into his poetic theory and practice.

Chapter I deals with the value of Eliot on Eliot in correcting errors in the reader's judgment of his poetry. It enumerates the various ways in which Eliot comments on himself and attempts an evaluation of what this self-commentary signifies in the last analysis.

Chapter II reconstructs Eliot's poetic autobiography up to his early masterpiece 'Prufrock' by piecing together his own observations on himself. It focuses on the earliest influences on his poetic sensibilities, his poetic interests and exercises and the basically personal nature of his poetic concepts and practices.

Chapter III collects and analyses Eliot's observations on his own poetic practice, in respect of both 'inspiration' and 'form', to show its essentially romantic character. The point is illustrated by a detailed examination of Eliot's early masterpiece, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.

Chapter IV follows Eliot's observations on the various phases of his poetic production and on individual poems up to 'Gerontion' to arrive at a dependable reading of these poems.

Chapter V examines Eliot's observations on The Waste Land to show what this enigma of 20th-Century poetry, made out of a sprawling mass of disparate compositions subjected to a very competent but ruthless editing of Pound may really purport.

Instead of attempting a definite interpretation based, whenever necessary, on speculation, the present dissertation satisfies itself with an outline of meaning, with the aid of Eliot's observations on himself, and accepts the limit to a reader's understanding where the obscurity persists, due mostly to Eliot's being of no further assistance on the issue.

CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ii

Synopsis iv

Contents vi

Chapter I Eliot on Himself 1

Chapter II A Poet in the Making 21

Chapter III The Making of a Poem 79

Chapter IV Degrees of Drought 130

Chapter V Drizzle over *The Waste Land* 192

Abbreviations 271

Notes 272

Bibliography 295

CHAPTER I

ELIOT ON HIMSELF

I

ELIOT HIMSELF, in his usual vein, would have little favoured taking into account an artist's opinion on his own work. Not only the opinions, but also the facts of his life, historical context, or intellectual background, would have been considered accidents not to interfere in the assessment and appreciation of his art. Eliot upheld the autonomy of art as few other artists.[1] Some of his early critical remarks anticipated a formalistic school known as 'New Criticism',[2] which focused attention on the word on the page. Historical and biographical scholarship, on the contrary, for ever referring to extraneous circumstances, met generally with his disapproval. The latter, especially, encroaching on the private as well as the moral life of the artist, elicited a personal reaction from Eliot. A shudder runs perceptibly through his ironically good-humoured compliance in the 'The Frontiers of Criticism'(1956) :

> I do not suggest that the personality and the private life of a dead poet constitute sacred ground on which the psychologist must not tread. The scientist must be at liberty to study such material as his curiosity leads him to investigate -- so long as the victim is dead and the laws of libel cannot be invoked to stop him.[3]

In his patently pre-emptive and disarming manner, he would claim the authorship of just a few good verses[4] and a niche in history as a minor poet.[5] Instead of perplexing the reader's mind with problems and paradoxes, to leave behind a handful of poems, self-contained and satisfying, would have been a consummation devoutly to be wished. A pathetic charm lights up Eliot's desire to be the author of the poem entitled 'The Appeal' which concludes Kipling's collected poems:[6]

If I have given you delight
   By aught that I have done,
Let me lie quiet in that night
   Which shall be yours anon :

And for the little, little, span
   The dead are borne in mind,
Seek not to question other than
   The books I leave behind.

But this longing, even from beyond the grave, has little succeeded in keeping the critics away, who, like the frightful Dog in 'The Burial of the Dead' dig up the planted corpse with relentless inquisitiveness.

The critics, however, are not all to blame for this. Early in his literary career, Eliot succeeded in setting a trend against biographical criticism and presently his opinions became the most widely accepted critical dicta of the age. Not only Eliot wrote a new kind of poetry, but also provided a theoretical frame for it; and, as Helen Gardner puts it, 'created the taste by which he is enjoyed.'[7] For quite some time the critical approaches to Eliot were by and large in Eliot's own terms. The placing of the poet 'at the most conscious point of the race'[8] by F.R. Leavis, one of the most influential early critics, agrees with Eliot's emphasis on the poet's 'historical sense'[9] and the 'sense of the age'.[10] Gardner based her study of Eliot's poetry on Eliot's concept of the 'auditory imagination'.[11] Elizabeth Drew made much of Eliot's 'mythical method'.[12] The method of F.O. Matthiessen, one of the most perceptive Eliot-critics, is, according to C.L. Barber, 'to use Eliot's prose to define the qualities of his poetry'.[13] Eliot's theory of 'Impersonality' conditioned much of the early criticism of his poetry.

It is true that Eliot had a line of stout critics who, from the start, attacked his poetry with vigour and conviction. But with a few notable exceptions, they were so bigoted and unresponsive to his true merits that they failed to make a serious dent in what in course of time turned out to be the establishment of Eliot criticism.

On the contrary, it was Eliot himself who from time to time indulged in self-criticism, shifted positions and made unexpected revisions and recantations. More than embarrassing himself (his much-cultivated 'humility' coming to his aid in these circumstances), he embarrassed his followers, who had gone far afield with his weaponry of criticism and were poised for what looked like complete victory. His subsequent disparagement of the critical phrases such as 'objective correlative' and 'dissociation of sensibility'[14] let down many of his ardent disciples.

A glaring example is how I.A. Richards, one of 'the most ardent admirers of his first celebrity'[15] shaped a critical viewpoint on The Waste Land, presumably in conformity with Eliot's own theory of poetry, which was flatly contradicted by Eliot himself.

In Science and Poetry (1926) Richards asserted that the poem effected 'a complete severance between his poetry and all beliefs.'[16] In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Eliot compared the poet's mind to a shred of platinum which remains 'inert, neutral, and unchanged' in its strictly catalytic role in the creative act. Moreover, the diverse elements of Buddhism, Hinduism, and Christianity, of ancient vegetation myths and fertility cults co-exist in The Waste Land in such a way that an absence of commitment on the part of the author is not an unexpected inference. But this apparently deferential and innocent formulation of Richards put Eliot in an impossible position. The acknowledged exponent of the theory of 'Impersonality' had, in fact, a personal point of view to express in much of his poetry; and however insulated, in accordance with Eliot's own theory, 'the mind which creates' could be from 'the man who suffers', no piece of poetry could be expected to remain untouched by the poet's feelings, attitudes and also beliefs. It was too much for Eliot, therefore, to concede Richards' point of view. In a note to 'Dante' (1929), he termed Richards' remark 'incomprehensible' and later on made his position further clear : 'Either Mr. Richards is wrong, or I do not understand his meaning.'[17]

The situation is awkward for a common reader. When a poem is printed, or, for that matter, as soon as the finishing touches are put to it, it ceases to be a possession of the author, and becomes an object, an artifact, to be judged on its own merit. The intention of the artist, beyond what is meant or implied by the words themselves, becomes irrelevant. Eliot, of all artists, is keenly aware of this and dilates on it in different places. Still he joins issue when a scholar, whose critical insight into literary texts is particularly acknowledged, says something contrary to his own view of his work.

What should a reader do in this situation ? Should he still stick to the critic's point of view in the face of the author's even if he is otherwise inclined to do so ?

But there are bigger stumbling blocks in the way of the reader. Exasperated by the enthusiastic reception of his poetry as reflecting the disillusionment of the generation, Eliot came out with an angry outburst in 'Thoughts After Lambeth' (1931) :

> I dislike the word 'generation', which has been a talisman for the last ten years; when I wrote a poem called The Waste Land some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed the 'disillusionment of a generation', which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention.[18]

So here is Eliot declaring his 'intention' (at least by negative implication) in writing one of his poems. Though startled by Eliot's vehemence, very few really expected a positive statement of the so-called intention which, after all, came in the words quoted by Theodore Spencer during a lecture at Harvard University and put up by Mrs. Valerie Eliot as an epigraph to The Waste Land : a Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts (the status given to it leaves no doubts about its authenticity) :

> Various critics have done me the honour to interpret the poem in terms of criticism of the contemporary world, have considered it, indeed, as an important bit of social criticism. To me it was only the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life; it is just a piece of rhythmical grumbling.[19]

The reader should now be in a real dilemma as to what to do with these observations of the poet on his own work, more so because they seem to be in direct conflict with the dramatic and impersonal view of the poem propounded in conformity with Eliot's own critical doctrines.

Any further inclination of the reader to keep to his original point of view is finally undermined by the unexpected reappearance of the original drafts of The Waste Land in 1971, after these had been given up for lost for about half a century. More than double the length of the first published text, the drafts, indeed, bear witness to the lost 'intention' of the poet. Some expository passages being recovered, some connecting links being retrieved, the drift of the poem becomes a shade more explicit, and one is persuaded to make greater room for the opinion of the poet on his poem. The reading of The Waste Land, it is to be noted, has undergone some significant modifications during the recent past, and Eliot's own words have helped bring about this change. The modified interpretations could conceivably result from a closer examination of the text itself, as later illuminated by the drafts; but Eliot's observations facilitated the process and lent it an authoritative support, without which the new line of approach might have had a precarious existence among a multiplicity of interpretations that complicated Eliot studies from the beginning.

II

Reputed to be reserved and reticent to a fault, Eliot nevertheless goes on talking a good deal about himself during his long literary career. 'In spite of his rarely quite genuine "impersonality" and his always quite genuine reserve, he has in the end through his prose told us more about his poetry than any other English poet I can think of except perhaps Wordsworth,' comments Elisabeth Schneider.[20] Eliot's observations on himself, in the form of direct statements and assertions, reminiscences, asides, answers, parries, hints and suggestions made in the course of formal discussions, commentaries, talks, correspondence, private conversations, etc., add up to a considerable volume. Personal references may crop up in very unexpected circumstances. After clinching his arguments on the necessity of 'impersonality', in other words, 'escape from personality',towards the end of 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', he lets fall the strange remark : 'But,of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.' The aside is uncalled for, and by hinting that the writer himself has a pretty good share of these, violates the very norm of 'impersonality' the essay has been advocating. But the self-exposure, casual and brief, points to issues in the poetry of Eliot more vital than commonly suspected.

The reputation for reserve is hard earned too. A patent example of Eliot's tight upper lip is provided by his role during a lively controversy that was going on in Essays in Criticism (January and July 1953) on a minor but quite pertinent question as to who 'Pipit' was in Eliot's 'Cooking Egg'. While suggestions of 'a little girl, an inamorata, a female relative, or an old nurse'[21] were advanced as desperate attempts at an explanation, Eliot himself maintained complete silence. Later on he condescended to remark in a private letter, which was as caustic as it was laconic, that the debate touched 'the nadir of critical futility ... so far as my own work is concerned.'[22] On another occasion, Eliot was found to be of little help in breaking a 'long silence' that followed his reading of Ash Wednesday at an evening party in 1930. Recalling the event, E. Martin Browne observed later: 'Our hesitating attempts to talk about the poem were not at all assisted by the author, who always believed that a work of art must speak for itself.'[23]

The exceptional reserve and sudden self-exposures may be interrelated at a deeper level : the former may really have occasioned the latter. Eliot's neo-classical restraint, as we shall have time to consider in detail, may alternate with fits of romantic self-exposure. His address on The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, it has been noted, has two levels of treatment : one concerned with the formal subject and the other with his private practices as a poet; for which W.W. Robson has termed the papers 'A Poet's Notebook'.[24] The two preoccupations in the paper are not sufficiently amalgamated either. The introductory paper abruptly digresses into a note 'On the Development of Taste in Poetry' which, further elaborated, could be the first chapter of the poet's unwritten poetic autobiography. Eliot's identification of himself with Coleridge (the lectures conclude on the statement : 'The sad ghost of Coleridge beckons to me from the shadows.') is embarrassingly personal and has been justly considered inept and injudicious.[25] The emotional undercurrent gathers force when he touches on the poet's 'pains of turning blood into ink' and induces a confessional strain in his calling a poet's career 'a mug's game', or 'mess(ing) up his life for nothing'[26] (the words echo his parents' belief, as he once confided to John Quinn, that he had made 'a mess of (his) life').[27] There are similar other occasions on which Eliot suddenly reveals his hidden self and, more often than not, betrays an inner chaos behind a formally stiff facade. This is why Wyndham Lewis's portrayal of his face as a mask is particularly appropriate and Hugh Kenner's title of his study of Eliot as The Invisible Poet (approvingly referred to by Eliot himself[28]) a good deal revealing.

III

Eliot's observations on himself took diverse forms. At times he made direct and categorical statements on himself and his writings. One such is his over-publicized and controversial announcement in the Preface to For Lancelot Andrewes (1927), that his general point of view in the essays was 'classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion.' Some of the specific comments on The Waste Land have already been cited. The direct commentary may range from Eliot's considered opinions as in a letter to his brother : 'Some of the new poems, the Sweeney ones, especially Among the Nightingales and Burbank, are intensely serious, and I think these two are among the best that I have ever done'[29] to whimsical and jocular observations such as his amusing self-portraiture : 'How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot' and the offhand reply to a newspaper reporter's blunt query at a railroad station as to what Prufrock's love life was.[30]

Eliot sometimes commented on himself when he generalized on poetry and poetics with really his own poetical ideal and practice in his mind. Eliot was aware of this and confessed it repeatedly in his writings. In The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1932-33) he concedes that the poet-critics may form 'their critical statements with a view to justifying their poetic practice'.[31] In 'The Music of Poetry' (1942) the apologia is exhaustive :

> But I believe that the critical writings of poets, of which in the past there have been some very distinguished examples, owe a great deal of their interest to the fact that the poet, at the back of his mind, if not as his ostensible purpose, is always trying to defend the kind of poetry he is writing, or to formulate the kind that he wants to write. Especially when he is young, and actively engaged in battling for the kind of poetry which he practises, he sees the poetry of the past in relation to his own; and his gratitude to those dead poets from whom he has learned, as well as his indifference to those whose aims have been alien to his own, may be exaggerated. He is not so much a judge as an advocate. His knowledge even is likely to be partial : for his studies will have led him to concentrate on certain authors to the neglect of others. When he theorizes about poetic creation, he is likely to be generalizing one type of experience; when he ventures into aesthetics, he is likely to be less, rather than more competent than the philosopher; and he may do best merely to report, for the information of the philosopher, the data of his own introspection. What he writes about poetry, in short, must be assessed in relation to the poetry he writes.[32]

There is a dogmatic reiteration of the point already made in his essay, 'From Poe to Valery' (1948) :

> No poet, when he writes his own art poétique, should hope to do much more than explain, rationalize, defend or prepare the way for his own practice : that is, for writing his own kind of poetry. He may think that he is establishing laws for all poetry; but what he has to say that is worth saying has its immediate relation to the way in which he himself writes or wants to write ...[33]

In 'The Frontiers of Criticism' (1956), he frankly admits that the best of his literary criticism 'is a by-product of my private poetry-workshop; or a prolongation of the thinking that went into the formation of my own verse.'[34] Finally in 'To Criticize the Critic' (1961), he calls his own theorizing 'epiphenomenal of my tastes', oddly conscious of this last bit of theorizing being 'a generalization about my generalizations'.[35]

The third way Eliot comments on himself is by way of commenting on other poets and writers. 'The best of my literary criticism', Eliot admits, 'consists of essays on poets and poetic dramatists who had influenced me.'[36] Elsewhere he reasserts : 'But I am certain of one thing : that I have written best about writers who have influenced my own poetry.'[37] Qualities in those writers highlighted by Eliot are often the qualities he nourishes in himself. 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1921), among writings of this category, deserves special mention. Sometimes what he says about somebody else better applies to himself. The essay on 'Hamlet' (1919) is a case in point. The problem in Shakespeare's mind he invites the reader to consider is pretty baffling, as, according to him, 'We should have to understand things which Shakespeare did not understand himself'. To a reader the essay suggests more of Eliot than of Shakespeare. The tenseness of Eliot's language ('we should like to know whether, and when, and after or at the same time as what personal experience ...') and the impetuosity of his assertions ('Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle; under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible ...', 'the play is most certainly an artistic failure', etc.) indicate a perturbation more in the critic's mind than in the supreme dramatic artist's. The problems raised by Eliot about Hamlet have later been raised by other critics about The Waste Land. Referring to what Eliot says about Hamlet, Anne Bolgan observes: 'I believe that whether or not this is true of Hamlet, it is certainly true of The Waste Land.'[38] She concludes that the poem 'far from being Eliot's masterpiece, (is) his most significant "artistic failure," to use the phrase Eliot himself applied to Hamlet.'[39] Bergonzi has pointed out how the essay on Blake 'is an illuminating example of Eliot using a poet seemingly remote from him as a means of examining his own problems,'[40] and Schneider has drawn attention to the indirect clue to Eliot's own poems 'planted with deliberation' in a statement on Browning which could be made 'only with considerable straining about Browning.'[41] 'In the admirable essay on F.H. Bradley included in his Selected Essays,' says Kristian Smidt, 'Eliot describes the philosopher in words which would be very applicable to himself.'[42]

Eliot often illuminates himself through parallel passages in his writings. As is well known, there are many recurrent themes and repetitive images in Eliot's poems and plays. As Eliot often uses an image or a motif without connecting links or contextual elaborations, a similar use elsewhere may be of considerable aid to a reader's understanding. Along with the parallel passages in published texts, we may consider the different versions of the same poem (such as 'Death by Water' and its French original in 'Dans le Restaurant'), different drafts of the same poem, if available (Helen Gardner has shown the evolution of Four Quartets through successive typescripts of the poem in her The Composition of Four Quartets), and also the unpublished poems having bearing on the published ones (Lyndall Gordon's Eliot's Early Poetry gives a profitable glimpse of Eliot's unpublished poems preserved in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library).

Finally, consideration may be made of Eliot's epigraphs, dedications, titles (including the discarded ones behind those ultimately coming out in print) and notes, as helpful clues to the meaning of his writings. George Williamson is quite emphatic on this point : 'The epigraph is never to be ignored in Eliot; for while it is not an essential part of the poem, it conveys hints of the significance or even genesis of the poem. Together with the title, it prepares the reader for the experience of the poem. Thus the first rule in reading one of Eliot's poems is to consider the possibilities suggested by the title and epigraph.'[43]

Along with the above considerations, the significant facts of Eliot's life would be seen to bear on and illuminate Eliot's poetry, as in the case of most poets and artists. Even Sencourt's sweeping generalization : 'It is becoming a critical truism to state that, without a knowledge of Elit's tragic first marriage, a complete appreciation of the poems is totally impossible' [44] cannot be ignored, as Eliot himself lent support to his contention when he wrote on the flyleaf of his wife's personal copy of Poems, 1909-1925 :'For my dearest Vivien, this book, which no one else will quite understand.'[45] A recent statement of Valerie Eliot regarding what Eliot personally felt about the matter also bears out Sencourt :

> He was quite aware that he would not have written The Waste Land if he had not been unhappy with Vivien. But he quite saw that if he had been happy with someone like Emily, he might never have written great poetry. He might have been just another professor of philosophy.[46]

IV

Eliot's observations on himself are not all of the same value and cannot all be accepted as they are. In fact, Eliot says so diverse things on different occasions that it is not possible to accept them without careful scrutiny. The critics who devoutly made use of Eliot's 'Notes' to The Waste Land in the interpretation of the poem, were later let down by Eliot himself, who pronounced them 'the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view today.'[47] Eliot's comments may at times be misleading and, more often, inadequately illuminating. His remark that in 'Sweeney Among the Nightingales' all he consciously set out to create was a 'sense of foreboding'[48] is not particularly helpful to the understanding of the poem. On occasions Eliot may just be whimsical or mystifying. E.M. Stephenson's presentation of Prufrock as 'that cadaverous humorist, climbing the stairs', otherwise designated 'a stuffed doll and a "mealy-boy"' and that of the lady in the 'Portrait' as a 'cartoon of the future woman' in T.S. Eliot and the Lay Reader[49] seem to have been approved by Eliot who, as Stephenson claims, saw each of her manuscripts and often made amendments 'humorously and with great kindness'![50] To a newspaper reporter's curt question at a railroad station as to what Prufrock's love life was, there was Eliot's prompt reply : '... he hadn't any!'[51]

What then are the implications of Eliot's self-commentary in the last analysis ? An extreme view is taken by George Watson, who thinks that 'altogether, his critical career might have been planned as a vast hoax to tempt the historian into solemnities for the sport of the Philistines,'[52] and specifically about the relationship between his critical writings and poetry : 'In a sense, his criticism is a smoke-screen to the rest of his career.'[53] The words 'hoax' and 'smoke-screen' are certainly too strong and unkind, though not without some support from Eliot himself. Regarding his reputation as a scholar, he observed in 'The Classics and the Man of Letters' (1942) :

> In my earlier years I obtained, partly by subtlety, partly by effrontery, and partly by accident, a reputation amongst the credulous for learning and scholarship, of which (having no further use for it) I have since tried to disembarrass myself.[54]

But the confession, which is not an isolated instance, takes away from the deliberateness of Eliot's practice, and emphasizes, rather, a compulsive vein of self-analysis in Eliot, resulting occasionally in Eliot on Eliot on Eliot.

The situation probably is that the kind of poetry Eliot was engaged in writing necessitated his talking about it to convince others as much as himself of its validity. He was shaping and perfecting a mode of poetic expression through an endless process of trial and error. 'Tradition', 'form' and 'influences' are inadequate to explain its coming into being. Ezra Pound, on his first acquaintance with Eliot's verse, recognized that his fellow-countryman had 'modernized himself on his own'.[55] The basically exploratory and experimental character of his early poetry does not wear out even in his later phase. 'Every attempt/Is a wholly new start' and 'Old men ought to be explorers' are statements which come from conviction. His major poetic achievements have been found to be essentially growing entities;[56] by contrast a minor work like 'Hippopotamus' is complete in itself. 'Prufrock', The Waste Land and Ash Wednesday grew over the years. It is well-known how Four Quartets grew in phases out of a few discarded bits of Murder in the Cathedral. Gardner points out Eliot's well-known habit of 'trying out his poems on his friends.'[57] After submitting the draft of a poem to the scrutiny and criticism of persons he valued for literary judgment, he incorporated their useful suggestions in diligent workmanship reaching after perfection. Not that he always finished on a note of satisfaction. He wrote to his friend John Hayward on the final draft of a section of Four Quartets : '... I am still unsatisfied .... But I think that there is a point beyond which one cannot go without sacrifice of meaning to euphony .... After a time one loses the original feeling of the impulse, and then it is no longer safe to alter. It is time to close the chapter.'[58]

Eliot liked to be assured of the value of his performance, with a tentativeness of conclusion at every stage, as could be expected from a conscientious artist. In 1933, he asserted that 'no honest poet can ever feel quite sure of the permanent value of what he has written.'[59] Asked about his attitude many years later during his famous Paris Review Interview, he reiterated, 'There may be honest poets who do feel sure. I don't.'[60]

In carrying on his exploratory work, in his critical writings as in his creative, Eliot was given to so many modifications and revisions, that an Eliot-scholar's tribute to the consistency of his work looked ridiculous to him. 'One very intelligent expositor of my work,' he wrote in 'To Criticize the Critic' (1961), 'who regarded it, furthermore, with a very favourable eye, discussed my critical writings some years ago as if I had, at the outset of my career as a literary critic, sketched out the design for a massive critical structure, and spent the rest of my life filling in the details.'[61] He was, therefore, he confessed, 'constantly irritated by having my words, perhaps written thirty or forty years ago, quoted as if I had uttered them yesterday.... When I publish a collection of essays, or whenever I allow an essay to be republished elsewhere, I make a point of indicating the original date of publication, as a reminder to the reader of the distance of time that separates the author when he wrote it from the author as he is today.'[62] 'But rare is the writer,' 'Eliot sighed, 'who, quoting me, says, "this is what Mr. Eliot thought(or felt) in 1933" (or whatever the date was).'[63]

It is true Eliot is often assertive, authoritative, even pontifical, in tone in his critical writings. But he is too self-conscious not to detect the excess and make amends for it when an opportunity offers itself.

In the Preface to the 1928 edition of The Sacred Wood, he admitted : '... especially I detect frequently a stiffness and an assumption of pontifical solemnity which may be tiresome to many readers.'[64] Eliot's comments on himself, in the last resort, are in the vein of apology rather than of assertion. As it appears, he felt a periodic need of straightening things out for himself. This might prove annoying to a critic at times, as it might be calculated to forestall or circumvent him. Eliot, indeed, once said : 'Better to confess one's weaknesses, when they are certain to be revealed sooner or later, than to leave them to be exposed by posterity.'[65]

Eliot's self-commentary turned out to be a continual and never-ending process. It was a way of knowing and understanding himself, and self-knowledge is an endless process. In 1961, when he was 73, Eliot wrote 'To Criticize the Critic',which is a review of his entire critical career to date. Had he lived a decade longer, he would probably have felt the need of writing 'To Criticize the Criticizing Critic.'

The importance of considering Eliot on himself cannot be overemphasized. C.L. Barber, in his preface to the 1958 edition of Matthiessen's The Achievement of T.S. Eliot, appreciates the value of the latter's extensive use of Eliot on Eliot.[66] John Press thinks that Eliot's criticism 'provides extremely valuable clues about the nature of his poetry and about the specific influences that formed his imagination and moulded his style.'[67] Gilbert Seldes, indeed, had said the same as early as 1922 : 'In turning to Mr. Eliot as poet I do not leave the critic behind since it is from his critical utterances that we derive the clue to his poetry.'[68] Eliot's critical writings, according to Press, 'are the best available introduction to his poetry',[69] and, according to Bergonzi, 'the best conclusion'.[70] For the wary, the words of John Press, with which the present study is in full agreement, should prove unexceptionable :

> 'By limiting ourselves to Eliot's own statements about his life and the development of his art we are minimizing the dangers of misinterpreting the significance of his work, although for any full understanding of his achievement we must supplement from other sources the few revelations that he chooses to make public.' [71]

It is known that Eliot grew more communicative about his poetry in the later phase of his career. In explaining his readiness to discuss Four Quartets with others, Helen Gardner says : 'the strongly autobiographical element in all his poetry appears undisguised in Four Quartets; but the painful and deeply troubling experiences which lie behind the earlier poetry, and to which he could not give direct expression, were now in the past.'[72] But it is the early phase during which Eliot's poetic concept and poetic skill took shape. The present investigation follows Eliot on Eliot through these difficult years up to the composition of The Waste Land, when the individual style and technique of Eliot was fully achieved. Whatever further developments, especially in thinking and communicativeness, Eliot may have had, the fundamentals of his poetic expressions were securely established. An analysis and examination of his early poetry, therefore, in the light of his own observations on it, should provide an approach to his poetical work as a whole.

CHAPTER II

A POET IN THE MAKING

I

ON ELIOT'S background and early life, some of the most significant observations have been made by Eliot himself. These have been repeated by scholars and critics times without number, with occasional regret that he has not said more.[73] Eliot attached particular importance to the first twenty-one years (the number must have signified something special to him) of an artist's life : 'a writer's art ... must be based on the accumulated sensations of the first twenty-one years.'[74] This entire period of his life, as it turns out, Eliot spent in America. He composed his 'Portrait of a Lady' and made his first transatlantic tour when he was 22. So in spite of his overwhelming European and British connections and indebtedness of the later days, he remained an American at heart, and admitted as much. Talking about his poetry late in his life, he asserted that 'in its sources, in its emotional springs, it comes from America.'[75]

The two places which served as the poles of his early imaginative life were Saint Louis, Missouri, in the south, where Eliot was born, and brought up till his sixteenth year, and Boston, Massachusetts, on the Atlantic coast, where he spent most of his holidays and resided during his University years. The two places had abiding influences on his character. The experiences gathered during these early years were permanent sources of inspiration in his poetry. 'I am very well satisfied,' he frankly admitted, 'with having been born in St. Louis : in fact I think I was fortunate to have been born here, rather than in Boston, or New York, or London.'[76] Elsewhere he said :

> As I spent the first sixteen years of my life in St. Louis, it is evident that St. Louis affected me more deeply than any other environment has done. These sixteen years were spent in a house at 2635 Locust Street, since demolished. This house stood on a large piece of land which had belonged to my grandfather, on which there had been negro quarters in his time; in my childhood my grandmother still lived at a house at 2660 Washington avenue, round the corner.[77]

What affected Eliot most was the confluence of the twin rivers, the Missouri and the Mississipi, that flowed by St. Louis. This 'strong brown god' keeping its 'seasons and rages', Eliot remembered for the rest of his life :

> The river also made a deep impression on me; and it is a great treat to be taken down to the Eads Bridge in flood time ....
>
> And I feel that there is something in having passed one's childhood beside the big river, which is incommunicable to those who have not. Of course my people were Northerners and New Englanders, and of course I have spent many years out of America altogether; but Missouri and the Mississippi have made a deeper impression on me than any other part of the world.[78]

In poetic terms :

> His rhythm was present in the nursery bedroom,
> 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.[79]

It is not only the natural setting, but also the urban features of St. Louis that left lasting imprints on the mind of Eliot; and it is surprising to note, on the poet's own admission, that the image of the megalopolis seeming to derive from Paris and London, is a mere veneer upon the urban image of St. Louis :

> In St. Louis, my grandmother -- as was very natural -- wanted to live on in the house that my grandfather had built; my father, from filial piety, did not wish to leave the house that he had built only a few steps away; and so it came to be that we lived on in a neighbourhood which had become shabby to a degree approaching slumminess, after all our friends and acquaintances had moved further west. And in my childhood, before the days of motor cars, people who lived in town stayed in town. So it was, that for nine months of the year my scenery was almost exclusively urban, and a good deal of it seedily, drably urban at that. My urban imagery was that of St. Louis, upon which that of Paris and London have been superimposed.[80]

Eliot retained forever the image of the river, bounded as it was by the dusty urban setting of St. Louis. At the New England coast, visited every summer, he had an expansive view of the sea. At Eastern Point, East Gloucester, Massachusetts, near Cape Ann, Eliot's father had built a large, solid house for his family in 1896. The fallow, wild coast was dotted by slabs of rock reaching down to the sea's edge. The house over-looked the granite shore and the open Atlantic to the east :

> From the wide window towards the granite shore
> The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying
> Unbroken wings.[81]

Out in the sea could be seen a cluster of rocks known till today as the Dry Salvages.

In later years Eliot admitted that his memories of the house were among the happiest of his life.[82] 'Whenever he talked of his boyhood at Cape Ann', testified Robert Giroux, 'his joy in remembering those days seemed to me to bring out the look of the boy he must have been, wide-eyed, intense, and very bright.'[83] In his talk on 'The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet'(1960), Eliot called himself a New England poet.[84]

'The river is within us, the sea is all about us.' At St. Louis and Eastern Point, Eliot came into contact with two important phenomena of nature : a mighty river and a great ocean. Around these two there accumulated a host of images which were complementary to each other :

> In New England I missed the long dark river, the ailanthus trees, the flaming cardinal birds, the high limestone bluffs where we searched for fossil shellfish; in Missouri I missed the fir trees, the bay and goldenrod, the song-sparrows, the red granite and the blue sea of Massachusetts.[85]

He was, in effect, as he later recognized, 'a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England; when I was sent to school in New England I lost my southern accent without ever acquiring the accent of the native Bostonian.'[86] This absence of permanent roots, as Eliot realized himself, cast him adrift on a cosmopolitan career. In a letter written to Herbert Read in 1928, he speculated :

> Some day I want to write an essay about the point of view of an American who wasn't an American, because he was born in the South and went to school in New England as a small boy with a nigger drawl, but who wasn't a southerner in the South because his people were northerners in a border state and looked down on all southerners and Virginians, and who so was never anything anywhere and who therefore felt himself to be more a Frenchman than an American and more an Englishman than a Frenchman and yet felt that the U.S.A. up to a hundred years ago was a family extension.[87]

Eliot's intimacy with the sea and sea life developed into a passion. He took to yachting as a hobby and, as his Harvard friend W.G. Tinckom-Fernandez recalled, 'he could handle the sail with the best in Gloucester harbour'[88] ('the hand expert with sail and oar'). Admiral Samuel Eliot Morison, an eminent navigator of the day and a distant cousin of Eliot, testified to Eliot's familiarity 'with the encompassing ocean':

> Cruising in college days with his friend Harold Peters, the Dry Salvages was the last seamark they passed outward bound, and the first they picked up homeward bound. Approaching or departing in a fog, they listened for the mournful moans of the 'groaner', the whistling buoy east of Thacher Island...[89]

In a note to the third of the Four Quartets, Eliot described the Dry Salvages as a 'small group of rocks, with a beacon, off the N.E. coast of Cape Ann, Massachusetts' and explained the 'groaner' as 'a whistling buoy'.

The deep intimacy with the sea was reinforced by Eliot's real and imaginary family links. Eliot's elder brother, Henry Ware Eliot Jr., had been taught to sail by an East Gloucester sailor, and he passed on his lessons to Eliot.[90] They read about an Andrew Eliot, a minister who was shipwrecked off Gloucester in 1635, whom they mistakenly thought to have been a lineal ancestor.[91] So Eliot may have felt, consciously or unconsciously, an identification with one of his forebears, who met with death by water. The image of a drowned man ('Those are pearls that were his eyes'), one must note, haunts all Eliot's poetry.

Eliot acquainted himself with the ways of the people who lived on the sea : seamen and fishermen, and steeped himself in sea lore. He took great delight in the seaman's jargon and the seaman's yarn. He employed these to considerable advantage in his two schoolboy stories published in Smith Academy Record (April and June 1905) : 'A Tale of a Whale' (three whalers hurled along with their gigs 73 feet into the air land upon the whale's back and feed upon flying-fish and cakes made of sponges growing on the whale's body !) and 'The Man Who Was King'.

Fishing being the main profession of Gloucester from the beginning, Eliot saw the fisherman's life from close quarters and developed a special admiration for it. Between trips the fishermen lounged at the corner of Main Street and Duncan Street.[92] ('... I can sometimes hear/Beside a public bar in Lower Thames Street,/The pleasant whining of a mandoline.../Where fishmen lounge at noon'). The fishermen sailing out in mist, snow and storms were transformed in Eliot's boyish imagination into symbols of daring and hardihood.

In a patently Eliotic manner, the image of the daring fisherman and the motif of the drowned sailor are combined in the discarded introductory fragment of the 'Death by Water' section of The Waste Land,[93] in which a fishing expedition 'From the Dry Salvages to the eastern banks'(1.16) is caught in a storm and ends up in disaster. It cost Eliot a lot to acquiesce in Pound's insistence on expunging the passage and he saw no point in retaining the Phlebas lines without it.[94]

Lyndall Gordon thinks that Eliot returned again and again to the sea 'for scenes of crisis and revelation in his poetry',[95] and according to Cattaui :

> All Eliot's poems are to a certain extent a sailor's poems, making constant use of maritime metaphors.... full of the "lost sea-smell', foam, atolls, seaweed, mermaids, bell-buoys, sea-mist, currents, the Gulf Stream, reefs, the cry of gulls flying against the wind, cargoes of tin and the Cornish surf; and also -- from Apollinax to Phlebas :
>
> "the old man of the sea,
> Hidden under coral islands
> Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence."[96]

II

Eliot attached considerable importance to the family in the life of a man and recognized, among other things, that the 'primary channel of transmission of culture is the family : no man wholly escapes from the kind, or wholly surpasses the degree, of culture which he acquired from his early environment.'[97] Eliot's idea of the family, however, stretches behond the immediate environment to include 'a piety towards the dead, however obscure, and a solicitude for the urborn, however remote.'[98] On this consideration, Eliot traces his links with his forefathers from the village of East Coker, Somerset, and felt that the U.S.A., at least up to a hundred years ago, was a family extension.[99]

About the individual members of his family Eliot is laconic; but on the image and influence of Reverend William Greenleaf Eliot, the poet's grandfather, who brought the family into prominence, he is quite eloquent, with a touch of irony too :

> I never knew my grandfather : he died a year before my birth. But I was brought up to be very much aware of him : so much so, that as a child I thought of him as still the head of the family -- a ruler for whom in absentia my grandmother stood as vicegerent. The standard of conduct was that which my grandfather had set; our moral judgments, our decisions between duty and self-indulgence, were taken as if, like Moses, he had brought down the tables of the Law, any deviation from which would be sinful. Not the least of these laws, which included injunctions still more than prohibitions, was the law of Public Service; it is no doubt owing to the impress of this law upon my infant mind that, like other members of my family, I have felt, ever since I passed beyond my early irresponsible years, an uncomfortable and very inconvenient obligation to serve upon committees. This original Law of Public Service operated especially in three areas : the Church, the City, and the University. The Church meant, for us, the Unitarian Church of the Messiah, then situated in Locust Street, a few blocks west of my father's house and my grandmother's house; the City was St. Louis -- the utmost outskirts of which touched on Forest Park, terminus of the Olive Street streetcars, and to me, as a child, the beginning of the Wild West; the University was Washington University, then housed in a modest building in lower Washington Avenue. These were the symbols of Religion, the Community and Education : and I think it is a very good beginning for any child, to be brought up to reverence such institutions, and to be taught that personal and selfish aims should be subordinated to the general good which they represent.[100]

This rather longish passage gives an inkling of the quite complex relationship that Eliot developed with his family. The towering figure of William Greenleaf Eliot, founder of the first Unitarian church in St. Louis and an Academy of Science, and one of the founders and third chancellor of Washington University,[101] not only exerted a strong influence on Eliot, but also turned out to be a father figure whom Eliot fought hard to ensure his own development along a different line. The grandfather's missionary spirit touched Eliot; and even as a boy, testified one of his cousins, 'Tom had a great sense of mission.'[102] The preceptor's high moral purpose and self-denial (tempered as these were by some very human qualities) so affected Eliot that all his life, on his own admission, he could never have a box of candy to himself without feeling selfish.[103] But what irked Eliot by and by was the religious belief of his grandfather, which was 'morally strict rather than spiritual'.[104] It was less a creed than a code (hence Eliot's analogy of the Mosaic tables of the Law). All that concerned his family, Eliot once complained, was 'right and wrong' or what was 'done and not done' rather than 'good and evil' in which every act of ours inevitably resulted.[105] Eliot gradually discarded the family motto along with the Unitarian faith for a version of Christianity that ultimately identified itself with Anglo-Catholicism.

The next greatest family influence on Eliot, bearing directly on his poetry this time, was that of his mother, Charlotte Champe Eliot, whom the poet resembled closely in features.[106] One reason behind Eliot's eagerness to bring out the first volume of his literary work was to impress on his mother that he had done something worthwhile;[107] and a mark of his strong attachment to her is left on the flyleaf of a copy of Union Portraits which he sent her 'with infinite love'.[108]

Eliot wrote to his mother about the composition of The Waste Land, in which, he confessed, he put much of his life; and while other members of the family were baffled by the poem, she, as we are told, read it with sympathy and defended it.[109]

The bond of sympathy and understanding ran deep in the literary pursuits of mother and child. A high-minded and educated woman, Charlotte Champe was debarred from further studies by her sex and circumstances of life, and with her very limited success as a devoted poet all her life, she hoped that her youngest child would redeem her sense of failure.[110] Later analyses of the poetic compositions left by her show Eliot's poetry, in a way, and on a much loftier level indeed, a continuation of what she had been doing. Gordon states :

> Her son, using exactly the same traditional images, rescued them from triteness -- the beatific light, the fires of lust and purgation, the pilgrimage across the 'desert waste', and the seasonal metaphor for spiritual drought that pervades Charlotte's poetry. In the extremity of 'the dying year' the boughs in her garden go stiff and dry, no flower blooms, while a new power awaits its birth. 'April is the cruellest month,' T.S. Eliot was to write, 'breeding lilacs out of the dead land'. Mother and son used the same group of traditional images to register grace. In 'The Master's Welcome' Charlotte hears children's voices. Bells signal recovery of faith after a period of doubt. Water -- the 'celestial fountain' and 'the healing flood' - promises relief after long ordeals.
>
> Charlotte mapped out the states of being between loss and recovery of grace, a map her son redrew in his poetry with vivid, ingenious twentieth-century touches.[111]

How the mother anticipated the son can be seen in the lines from the soliloquy of Giordano Bruno in one of her poems :

> In the beginning seest thou the end,
> And in the end a mere beginning still.[112]

and the use of the musical form in her experimental A Musical Reverie[113] (cf. Eliot's use of the terms 'Prelude', 'Interlude', 'Rhapsody', 'Song', 'Quartet', etc., in his titles).

Eliot is very laconic about his father, Henry Ware Eliot, who broke away from the family tradition to choose a career of business (starting from scratch and becoming President of the Hydraulic-Press Brick Company at the peak of his professional success) and who totally failed to understand and indeed, disapproved of his son's decision to take up a poetic career. But apart from his choice of a profession, Henry Ware had the Eliotic fervour for public service and had a taste for music and painting.[114] Eliot, on the other hand, came, for a moment at least, close to regretting what he called the 'mug's game' of a poet's career and seeing eye to eye with his father (dead by that time) that he had 'messed up his life for nothing'.[115] What remorse it may have caused Eliot to have failed to come to terms with his father in his lifetime can only be surmised; but the striking note of atonement in the son's belated realization of the father's correctness in The Confidential Clerk, seems more than a coincidence :

> My father -- your grandfather -- built up his business
> Starting from nothing. It was his passion.
> He loved it with the same devotion
> That I gave to clay, and what could be done with it --
> What I hoped I could do with it. I thought I despised him

> When I was young. And yet I was in awe of him.
> I was wrong, in both. I loathed this occupation ....
> My father knew I hated it :
> That was a grief to him. He knew, I am sure,
> That I cherished for a long time a secret reproach :
> But after his death, and then it was too late,
> I knew that he was right. And all my life
> I have been atoning.[116]

A minor character in the family, a nurse, Annie Dunne by name, left a significant mark on Eliot's mind. Eliot fondly recollected later: 'The earliest personal influence I remember, besides that of my parents, was an Irish nursemaid named Annie Dunne, to whom I was greatly attached; she used to take me to my first school, a Mrs Lockwood's ....'[117] She discussed with Eliot, at the age of six, the existence of God,[118] and took him to a Catholic church in which she prayed. As Sencourt elaborates :

> His Irish nurse gave him another sense of the numinous when she occasionally took him with her to something very different from that Church of the Messiah founded by his grandfather. For an impressionable child the Irishwoman's church had an atmosphere all its own.... When in later years Eliot considered the phenomenon of religion, he was to believe that in Catholicism there was something far more generally and pervadingly Christian and historic than the prim moralizing Unitarianism which he had learned at home as the religion of a model grandfather.[119]

The pronouncedly moral and religious atmosphere in which Eliot was brought up left its mark on his mental development. The earliest extant composition of Eliot, written at the age of seven, a highly abridged biography of George Washington, carries a distinct moralistic note (with an ardour for the sea too) :

> George Washington was born in a plantation. He wanted to go to sea but his mamma didn't want him to, so he took to the army..../ He freed his country and was president.... And then he died, of course. He was never said to say a lie. He died at Mt. Vernon.[120]

'With hindsight', Moody comments, 'we perceive there the indelible impress of the family code upon his individual temperament.'[121]

The same moralistic bias persisted in his earliest critical preferences. On his first acquaintance with Homer and Virgil, he 'instinctively preferred the world of Virgil to the world of Homer -- because it was a more civilized world of dignity, reason and order.'[122] The family motto asserts itself when Eliot says : 'The obstacle to my enjoyment of the Iliad, at that age, was the behaviour of the people Homer wrote about. The gods were as irresponsible, as much a prey to their passions, as devoid of public spirit and the sense of fair play, as the heroes. This was shocking.'[123]

The Eliots were shocked by a great many things. They were brought up on a strict regimen of moral precepts. Eliot's mother exhorted her children to perfect themselves each day, and 'to make the best of every faculty and control every tendency to evil.'[124] Eliot's father considered sex nasty and summarily condemned it. He went to the extent of saying that it might be necessary 'to emasculate our children to keep them clean'.[125] The youngest child of the family, Eliot endured an overbearing moral influence from his elderly sisters. It is not surprising that one day he would feel the need of outgrowing his family norms. It was pretty comprehensive revolt against the family when, as a young man, Eliot decided to settle down in England with an English wife in search of a poetic career.[126] 'The Arts insist that a man shall dispose of all that he has, even of his family tree, and follow art alone,' Eliot asserted in 1920.[127] But the burden of moral seriousness which he inherited from his family weighed on his mind all his life.

III

Eliot received his early education at Smith Academy, the preparatory department of Washington University, with which he had family associations. 'My memories of Smith Academy,' Eliot reminisced later in his life, 'are on the whole happy ones; and when, many years ago, I learned that the school had come to an end, I felt that a link with the past had been painfully broken.'[128] Commenting on it as a good school, Eliot continued :

> There one was taught, as is now increasingly rare everywhere, what I consider the essentials : Latin and Greek, together with Greek and Roman history, English and American history, elementary mathematics, French and German. Also English ! I am happy to remember that in those days English composition was still called Rhetoric.

Lest one should infer that the curriculum was 'incredibly primitive', Eliot boastfully claimed, 'there was a laboratory, in which physical and chemical experiments were performed successfully by the more adroit.' As he himself failed to pass his entrance examination in Physics, he jokingly added, he forgot the name of the teacher who taught it. But he remembered the names of the teachers who taught him Latin, Greek, French, German and mathematics (though he was not a good student of it). Eliot's pseudo-boastful reference to science and admission of his own failure in it, point to a significant feature in his writings : though Eliot has a professed aversion to science, he makes use of the concepts and terminology of science quite a lot in both his poetry and criticism. The striking image of 'a patient etherized upon a table' at the beginning of the first of his Collected Poems and the 'Catalyst' theory in the first essay in his Selected Essays, i.e., 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', give a foretaste of this predilection. Scientific and semi-technical terminology ('synthetic', 'phthisic', 'pneumatic', 'magic lantern','fever chart', 'correlative', 'dissociation', etc.) contributes to the aura of modernity in Eliot. His use of such phrases as 'Dead mountain mouth of carious teeth', 'toothed gullet of an aged shark', 'anfractuous rocks', 'fractured atoms' implies scientific observation and scientific concepts. Eliot once described the accumulation of poetic inspiration in terms of a 'tantalus jar'[129] and in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', he went to the extent of saying that 'It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science.'[130] The failed student of science, however, is not always dependable about scientific data. An anonymous reviewer of Eliot's Selected Essays in The Criterion pointed out that Eliot's description of the chemical process in the 'Catalyst' theory had a basic inaccuracy in it.[131] And 'Hermit crab', indeed, should be 'horseshoe crab', as admitted by Eliot himself.[132]

It is at Smith academy that Eliot seems to have been initiated into the art of verse-writing. 'Mr. Hatch, who taught us English,' Eliot noted, 'commended warmly my first poem, written as a class exercise, at the same time asking me suspiciously if I had had any help in writing it.'[133] '... If I had not been well taught there,' Eliot gratefully acknowledged, 'I should have been unable to profit elsewhere.'[134]

What poetic venture Mr. Hatch so warmly commended we do not know; nor do we have any specimens of Eliot's compositions till a much later date. But on one occasion Eliot lets us into the world of his boyish poetic interests and exercises. In an abrupt autobiographical digression, in the form of a note to his introductory Charles Eliot Norton Lecture at Harvard (1932), Eliot discusses his own poetic development, by way of theorizing about the psychology of boyish and adolescent interest in poetry. 'I may be generalizing my own history unwarrantably,' Eliot proceeds self-consciously, 'or on the other hand I may be uttering what is already a commonplace amongst teachers and psychologists, when I put forward the conjecture that the majority of children, up to say twelve or fourteen, are capable of a certain enjoyment of poetry."[135] Listing a number of pieces which were obviously his own favourites : Horatius, The Burial of Sir John Moore, Bannockburn, Tennyson's Revenge and some border ballads, he adds :

> ... a liking for martial and sanguinary poetry is no more to be discouraged than engagements with lead soldiers and pea-shooters. The only pleasure that I got from Shakespeare was the pleasure of being commended for reading him; had I been a child of more independent mind I should have refused to read him at all.[136]

'Tom, in fact, complained', Sencourt informs, 'that one of his masters gave him a distaste for Shakespeare which lasted well into his maturity.'[137]

From his experience that his early liking for the sort of verse that small boys like vanished at about the age of twelve, 'leaving me for a couple of years with no sort of interest in poetry at all', Eliot generalizes :

> ... at or about puberty the majority of these (children) find little further use for it (i.e. the sort of verse that small boys do like), but that a small minority then find themselves possessed of a craving for poetry which is wholly different from any enjoyment experienced before.[138]

The overwhelming power of this new interest Eliot describes in glowing terms :

> I can recall clearly enough the moment when at the age of fourteen or so, I happened to pick up a copy of Fitzgerald's Omar which was lying about, and the almost overwhelming introduction to a new world of feeling which this poem was the occasion of giving me. It was like a sudden conversion; the world appeared anew, painted with bright, delicious and painful colours.[139]

The impact of Omar Khayyam was comprehensive, as it not only introduced a spiritually absorbing interest in poetry in Eliot, but also led to what seems to be his first really significant poetic outburst. In his famous 'Paris Review Interview', he notes :

> I began I think about the age of fourteen, under the inspiration of Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam, to write a number of very gloomy and atheistical and despairing quatrains in the same style, which fortunately I suppressed completely -- so completely that they don't exist. I never showed them to anybody. The first poem that shows is one which appeared first in the Smith Academy Record, and later in The Harvard Advocate, which was written as an exercise for my English teacher and was an imitation of Ben Jonson. He thought it very good for a boy of fifteen or sixteen.[140]

If this imitation of Ben Jonson is the poem Mr. Hatch, his English teacher at Smith Academy 'commended warmly', then the quatrains after Omar Khayyam are his really first poetic exercises. In nay case, the quatrains appear to have been the first genuinely conceived verses. But Eliot suppressed them successfully, as he boastfully claims. The satisfaction with which Eliot states this fact seems to have been shared by many of his critics too. They seem to avoid the issue of Eliot's atheism as much as he would like them to. Moody mentions his 'gloomy quatrains in the form of the Rubáiyát',[141] but not his atheism. But this deference to Eliot is unwarranted. To understand a poet properly, it is necessary to recognize every essential stage of his development. Eliot's atheistic phase belongs to a crucial period of his life and no later revisions could be expected to wash it out completely. Eliot himself emphasised the importance of the experiences in the life of a man during his teens. In referring to Fitzgerald's impact on his adolescent imagination, Eliot used the word 'conversion'. We are so much preoccupied with Eliot's 'conversion' to Anglo-Catholicism at a later date that this conversion may appear no more than a figure of speech. But a little attention will bring out its full implications. It will be recognized that the earlier conversion from the Unitarian Christian faith to the atheistic point of view was an all-embracing affair with an overwhelming emotional effect. The much-publicized later conversion was prompted by a spiritual need with what emotional support it is not easy to determine. It is not difficult to find, however, that dogma, at that stage,outstripped emotional assent. This makes a difference. The passionate belief of early youth can be suppressed but not totally obliterated by the prudent and rational understanding of age. The atheistic and pessimistic outlook of the Rubayyat is more persistant in Eliot's poetry than is commonly suspected. Sadness and despair are more genuine in Eliot's poetry than the consolation and joy of religion, as no serious student of Eliot's poetry can deny. The generally frigid tone of Eliot's poetry and his gradual farewell to poetry as such, may have been caused partly by the suppression of a genuine urge conceived in a sensitive period of his life. Eliot's comments that Tennyson, by all means a kindred spirit, was 'the most instinctive rebel against the society in which he was the most perfect conformist'[142] and In Memoriam 'is not religious because of the quality of its faith, but because of the quality of its doubt' [143] throw some light on Eliot's own conformism and the religous character of his poetry. Critical analysis and introspection seem to have equal share in Eliot's diagnosis of Tennyson's emotional life :

> ... there is plenty of evidence of emotional intensity and violence — but of emotion so deeply suppressed, even from himself, as to tend rather towards the blackest melancholia than towards dramatic action.[144]

Eliot may have suppressed his atheistic quatrains all too successfully, as he claims, but he allowed some blasphemous ones, written as late as 1911, to survive among his unpublished poems. In the first of these ('He said : this universe is very clear ...' dated March 1911), in Gordon's summing-up, 'God appears to be a sexual monster, a degenerate female who entraps her victims. Here (Eliot) contrasts the enlightened view of the universe, a scientific ordered structure of atoms and geometric laws, with his own comic fantasy of an Absolute with arbitrary powers sitting in the middle of a geometric net like a syphilitic spider.'[145] An amalgam of anti-religious spirit and scientific predilection, the piece of blasphemy proves Eliot's ability to reach the extreme in whatever direction he chose to follow. Blasphemy, however, as Eliot makes sufficiently clear, is not simple disbelief in God, but a sort of belief in a perverted form. Later in his life, Eliot dwelt on the question of blasphemy on several occasions. In his essay on 'Baudelaire' (1930), he called genuine blasphemy — 'genuine in spirit and not purely verbal' — 'the product of partial belief, and is as impossible to the complete atheist as to the perfect Christian. It is a way of affirming belief.'[146] In After Strange Gods (1934), Eliot begins the third section with a look into the 'history of Blasphemy' and examines its 'anomalous position' in the modern world. According to him, 'no one can possibly blaspheme in any sense except that in which a parrot may be said to curse, unless he profoundly believes in that which he profanes.'[147] Repeating that he is not defending blasphemy, but reproaching a world in which blasphemy is impossible, he asserts : 'first-rate blasphemy is one of the rarest things in literature, for it requires both literary genius and profound faith, joined in a mind in a peculiar and unusual state of spiritual sickness'.[148] Concluding his arguments he says :

> Where blasphemy might once have been a sign of spiritual corruption, it might now be taken rather as a symptom that the soul is still alive, or even that it is recovering animation : for the perception of Good and Evil — whatever choice we may make — is the first requisite of spiritual life.[149]

This is certainly a very understanding view of blasphemy. If we graph Eliot's atheism from around 1902 to his baptism in 1927, the period around 1911 could mark the stage of spiritual sickness disturbed by signs of reawakening.

The apologetic tone in Eliot's reminiscences of his teen-age poetic enthusiasm is marked in his reference to the poets who possessed him after the Rubayyat fired his imagination : 'Thereupon I took the usual adolescent course with Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne.'[150] This period, Eliot admits, persisted until his nineteenth or twentieth year, i.e. around 1908. In 'Song' ('The moonflower opens to the moth') (1909), according to Piers Gray, can be traced the influences of Keats by way of Dowson.[151]

Eliot calls this adolescent stage 'a period of keen enjoyment'. But cautioning us against confusing 'the intensity of poetic experience in adolescence with the intense experience of poetry', he states :

> We do not really see (a poem) as something with an existence outside ourselves; much as in our youthful experience of love, we do not so much see the person as infer the existence of some outside object which sets in motion these new and delightful feelings in which we are absorbed.[152]

At this period, Eliot introspects :

> ... the poem or the poetry of a single poet, invades the youthful consciousness and assumes complete possession for a time .... The frequent result is an outburst of scribbling which we may call imitation, so long as we are aware of the meaning of the word 'imitation' which we employ. It is not deliberate choice of a poet to mimic, but writing under a kind of daemonic possession by one poet.[153]

Eliot's mention of a state of self-absorption and being possessed confirms the truly romantic beginning of his poetic career. The word 'daemonic' should not be passed over, again, as a figure of speech. Eliot will have a good deal more to say about it in the future. The romantic possession, as we shall have occasion to see, could not be cured altogether, but will remain an ague clinging to the bone, forcing him ultimately to the abject admission that 'a poet in a romantic age cannot be a 'classical' poet except in tendency.'[154]

The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, called by W.W. Robson 'A Poet's Notebook',[155] also throws light on how Eliot had been storing his mind with poetic materials since his early days.

Discussing the part played by memory in imagination, Eliot says :

> the mind of any poet would be magnetised in its own way, to select automatically, in his reading (from picture papers and cheap novels, indeed, as well as serious books, and least likely from works of an abstract nature, though even these are aliment for some poetic minds) the material — an image, a phrase, a word — which may be of use to him later. And this selection probably runs through the whole of his sensitive life.[156]

Showing how the personal experience of the poet can also supply poetic images, Eliot gives an example which may very well have been taken from his own life :

> There might be the experience of a child of ten, a small boy peering through sea-water in a rock-pool, and finding a sea-anemone for the first time : the simple experience (not so simple, for an exeptional child, as it looks) might lie dormant in his mind for twenty years, and re-appear transformed in some verse-context charged with great imaginative pressure.[157]

In the case of a very exceptional child like Eliot, the image might have waited twice twenty years to appear poetically rendered, in The Dry Salvages :

> The pools where it offers to our curiosity
> The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.

Elsewhere in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, Eliot discusses the 'personal saturation value' of a striking image appearing in the writing of a poet :

> what gives it such intensity ... is its saturation — I will not say with 'associations', for I do not want to revert to Hartley —— but with feelings too obscure for the authors even to know quite what they were. And of course only a part of the author's imagery comes from his reading. It comes from the whole of his sensitive life since early childhood.[158]

Wondering why certain images, not others, recure, charged with emotion, such as the song of one bird (Cattaui would identify the bird with a hermit-thrush[159], the leap of one fish, at a particular place and time, the scent of one flower (lilac or hyacinth, according to Cattaui[160], an old woman on a German mountain path ('Bin gar keine Russin, stamm'aus Litauen, echt deutsch' (?)[161]),six ruffians seen through an open window playing cards at night at a small railway junction where there was a water-mill (Cattaui connects the image with one in 'Journey of the Magi'[162]),etc., Eliot ruminates :

> such memories may have symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they come to represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer. We might just as well ask why, when we try to recall visually some period in the past, we find in our memory just the few meagre arbitrarily chosen set of snapshots that we do find there, the faded poor souvenirs of passionate moments.[163]

The introspective remarks show the origin and basis of the imagistic poet in Eliot's and his repeated assertions of the inexplicable nature and mysterious symbolic implications of some persistent images in their submerged emotive contexts hint at a poetic theory very different from his celebrated theory of 'Impersonality'.

IV

Eliot was in the grip of the adolescent emotional ferment mentioned above, when he entered Harvard as an undergraduate. The circumstances around him reflected his mood and reinforced it. He found his environment thin and starved. The hopeful, imaginative child had grown into a young man of lonely ruminations and sorrowful meditations. In 'Animula', Eliot traces the development of a pure young soul into a careworn, unhappy spirit : 'the simple soul'/...Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs,/...taking pleasure/In the fragrant brilliance of the Christmas tree,/Pleasure in the wind, the sunlight and the sea' is curled up 'in the window seat/ Behind the Encyclopaedia Britannica' by 'The pain of living and the drug of dreams'. The process must have taken place in Eliot's life in the meantime.

The dreams, seductive and, at the same time, tormenting as drugs, had a large component of the poetic aspiration Eliot was given to for quite some years. The matter proved so tantalizing that later on, in a moment of exasperation, Eliot called the poet's career 'a mug's game'.[164] The agony had started quite early.

The infatuation with Byron continued till 1909, i.e. the third year at Harvard.[165] Eliot had entered Harvard, as Gordon notes, 'completely indifferent to the Church'.[166] The 'conversion' to Omar Khayyam had not yet worn out.

The poetic preoccupations during the Harvard years were complicated by philosophic contemplations and pursuits. In fact, the two were part of the same eager self-searching. That philosophy and poetry were directed to the same personal end is demonstrated by the fact that during the ensuing University years, he alternated between the two several times, and finally opted for poetry, forgoing a certain Doctoral degree in philosophy and an assured academic career at Harvard.

Eliot had an unusual view of the relationship between metaphysics and poetry, originating most probably in his attempt to solve a personal problem in his own peculiar manner. In 'The Perfect Critic', Eliot makes a startling statement : 'Coleridge's metaphysical interest was quite guneine, and was, like most metaphysical interest, an affair of his emotions.'[167] Elsewhere, in his essay on 'Rudyard Kipling', he states that 'the first condition of right thought is right sensation.'[168] 'But a literary critic,' Eliot asserts to the contrary, in 'The Perfect Critic', 'should have no emotions except those immediately provoked by a work of art,'[169] and further on : 'The end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed.'[170] Metaphysics begins in emotions and poetry ends in pure contemplation : this is therefore the strange conclusion Eliot arrives at. The paradox may be resolved by tracing the origin of Eliot's metaphysical explorations in an emotional need which sought answer (the long metaphysical search failing to supply one) in the equipoise of poetic art. The 'still point' he reached after could be better perceived in a poetic image than in a syllogistic inference :

> at the still point, there the dance is ....
> Neither movement from nor towards
> Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point,
>   the still point,
> There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.

A lot has been said about Eliot's philosophy and the metaphysical content of his poetry. But a fact often lost sight of is that Eliot's metaphysical interests are not dispassionate or academic, (emotion is recognized as indispensable part of them), but personal and purposive. Eliot is attracted to a philosopher (e.g., Bradley) or a school of philosophy (e.g., Indian philosophy), either because he wants a confirmation of what he already has in him, or because he seeks an answer to a deeply-felt need. Eliot's appreciation of Bradley's description of metaphysics as 'the finding of bad reasons for what we believe upon instinct' is not altogether facetious.[171] His attachment to Bradley's philosophy derives not from pure metaphysical considerations, but from some personal, even temperamental, affinities. In Bradley, he found confirmation of his own attitude to reality. Sencourt's words that with F.H. Bradley 'he had an intuitive sense of personal communion'[172] are borne out by Eliot's acknowledgement of the philosopher 'whose works — I might say whose personality as manifested in his works — affected me profoundly.'[173] 'The lack of belief in an absolute spiritual reality,' according to Smidt, '... links the first phase of Eliot's poetry very closely with the first phase of knowledge as described in F.H. Bradley's main metaphysical work, Appearance and Reality.'[174] 'Bradley was led to deny the reality of the soul,' Smidt adds, 'and Eliot followed him until his conversion to Christian belief.'[175] Bergonzi clinches the issue when he says that 'Eliot is not so much drawing a doctrine from Bradley as using Bradley to formulate his own deep-rooted skepticism.'[176] It is likely that Eliot had not read Bradley as early as 1910,[177] around which date he composed 'Preludes', 'Prufrock', etc., which show considerable affinity with the philosophical standpoint of Appearance and Reality.[178]

Eliot's absorption with Indian philosophy was limited to a period at Harvard. He weaned himself from it afterwards, as he himself admitted, 'for practical as well as sentimental reasons' of safeguarding his right to 'think and feel as an American or a European.'[179] Eliot may have had, among others, a private reason (which will be referred to later) for exploring Indian philosophy, and the reason he assigns for abandoning it (not all its influences, by any means) is not at all a philosophical one. He sums up the results of the period of devoted attention in his inimitable phrasing : 'Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lenman, and a year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Woods, left me in a state of enlightened mystification.'[180]

Eliot's subordination of his metaphysical interests to the requirements of poetry, in which he ultimately found the more satisfactory resolution of the emotions that had set the process in motion, estranged him so much from academic philosophy that in later years he disconcertingly admitted that he no longer understood his own Bradley and allowed it to be published by Faber 'as a sort of curiosity'.[181] The gains of his philosophical training over the years he tried to sum up in a question and reply : 'What remains to me of these studies ? The style of three philosophers : Bradley's English, Spinoza's Latin and Plato's Greek.'[182] This statement, which may be termed, after Bolgan, 'problematical — indeed almost perverse',[183] throws light on the literary, or in the last analysis, poetic conclusion of Eliot's metaphysical endeavours. There is no belittling Eliot's lifelong philosophical interests and the philosophic saturation of his poetry, but the philosophy in question bears relationship to a felt personal need and is blandly disowned by him when that need is over.

The same tandency persists in Eliot's attitude to religion. In this also the personal need, rather than the validity of the thing in itself prevails. In his introduction to J. Pieper's Leisure : the Basis of Culture (1952), Eliot confessed that what drove him away from philosophy was its divorce (since the Middle Ages) from theology.[184] He criticized anthropologists like Frazer, Durkheim and Lévy-Bruhl for not treating religious rituals 'in terms of need'.[185] In 'Thoughts after Lambeth' (1931), he advocated the harsher role of religion in disciplining the emotions, 'the unruly passions'.[186] In 'Lancelot Andrewes' (1926), he treated Donne (in whom he found 'a genuine taste both for theology and for religious emotion') as one of those who 'seek refuge in religion from the tumults of a strong emotional temperament which can find no complete satisfaction elsewhere,'[187] and adds that there are 'one or two examples in the modern world' of that class of persons. The last statement is one of those dark hints Eliot drops intermittently in his writings, which a reader will certainly not be wrong to take as personal in the last analysis. In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Eliot had written in a similar parenthesis : 'But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from those things', giving a broad hint of his hidden passionate life. Sencourt points out the conflict between his desire for a passionate life and the inhibitions of a Puritan upbringing.[188] He had once revolted against his forefathers' Unitarian faith which was 'morally strict rather than spiritual', [189] but later in his life he emphasized the strict disciplinarian role of religion.

Eliot's poetic conclusion skips rational and logical requirements; and nobody is more keenly aware of this than Eliot himself. In a personal letter written to Paul Elmer More, Eliot confessed :

> I am not a systematic thinker, if indeed I am a thinker at all. I depend upon intuitions and perceptions; and although I may have some skill in the barren game of controversy, (I) have little capacity for sustained, exact, and closely knit argument and reasoning.[190]

Analysing the weakness objectively, Smidt rightly concludes :

> ...the limitations which make themselves felt in Eliot's criticism impose no restrictions- or much less noticeable ones, on his verse. The 'incapacity for abstruse thought' does not matter so much in poetry, where truth may be expressed by other means than rational argument. Logical inconsistencies, even, if rightly managed, often lend depth to poetic speech....In poetry he has also made a virtue of the unsystematic and fragmentary form of composition.[191]

It is not the rational and logical apparatus, but the mysterious workings of poetry that provided the mode of expression for Eliot.

Eliot's alternation between poetry and philosophy, however, took him from Harvard to Paris, where he spent a 'Romantic year', attending lectures on literature and philosophy at the Sorbonne, and writing poetry, before returning to Harvard for a doctoral course in philosophy, and eventually to Europe and England, where he finally settled down to an uncertain and penurious career of a poet caring little for the secure position of a teacher of Philosophy at Harvard. Poetry emerged as the prime occupation of his life.

V

Up to his second undergraduate year at Harvard (1908), Eliot bore the marks of his acknowledged poetic masters, 'Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne', and a few others.[192] 'The Fable for Feasters' (1905), later referred to by Eliot as 'some verses in the manner of Don Juan',[193] mimics Byron in both technique and tone. Eliot imitates the ottava rima of the earlier poem and its hilarious spirit of profanity.The story of the carousing abbot being taken away by the devil 'up the chimney' shows an unabashed anti-clericalism which Eliot regretted in later life. In fact the cynicism along with the comic spirit — an essential element in Eliot — was subjected to a kind of suppression, like the pervasive pessimism of Khayyam. But during the Harvard years Eliot kept up the boisterous comic vein in his verses on King Bolo and his hairy big black queen, cultivated for a number of years for the entertainment of a small number of friends.[194] Eliot also regaled the coterie with 'Bullshit' and 'Ballad for Big Louise', described by Wyndham Lewis as 'excellent bits of scholarly ribaldry'.[195]

Concurrently Eliot wrote the genteel and conformist poetic exercises which generally got into print, such as 'At Graduation 1905', a class valedictory poem (on leaving Smith Academy) and 'Ode' (1910) written on his graduation at Harvard. They issue from the formal and moralistic upbringing of Eliot, and have no roots in what may be called his submerged emotional life.

The shorter lyrics, 'If Time and Space as Sages say' (1905), 'When we came home across the hill' (1908), 'Before Morning' (1908), 'Circe's Palace' (1908), 'On a Portrait' (1909) and 'The moonflower opens to the moth' (1909) bear telltale marks of the influence of the nineteenth-century romantics and have been generally passed over by critics as 'conventional late blooms of English romanticism'.[196] What is to be noticed is that they have some character of their own and point to various significant undercurrents in Eliot. They have a pessimistic tone that is more than derivative and the note of 'withering' (the word is repeated in poem after poem) anticipates Eliot's preoccupations with aging and the transitoriness of things. The awareness of love and beauty fading every moment, excites in him momentarily a passionate desire for 'brighter tropic flowers with scarlet life', but in 'Circe's Palace' the 'red' petals of flowers are fanged and sprung from the limbs of dead lovers. This attraction-repulsion formula would go on working in Eliot's poetry for a long time to come. The female stereotype as mindless and baffling, and, at the same time ensnaring, as exemplified by the lady in 'Portrait of a Lady' and Grishkin, is anticipated by the woman in 'On a Portrait', composed on Manet's famous painting, 'La Femme an perroquet'.

The poem is linked with 'Portrait of a Lady' not only by the title, but also the basic theme. The horror of women characteristically present in Eliot's poetry is forshadowed by the 'pensive Lamia' that the portrayed figure seems to be and Circe, the legendary enchantress, in 'Circe's Palace'.

The poems seem to be some pallid flowers from a romantic graden, but they already feel the nip of the winter. Romantic terminology is already suspect. The lines in the lyric, 'If Time and Space, as Sages say'

> So why, Love, should we ever pray
> To live a century ?
> The butterfly that lives a day
> Has lived eternity.

are reworked as :

> But let us live while yet we may,
> While love and life are free,
> For time is time, and runs away,
> Though sages disagree.

The replacement of words like 'Love', 'butterfly', and 'eternity' by discursive terminology is calculated to tone down the romantic aura. The phrase 'For time is time' is the first definite stroke on a note that will go on ringing like a knell in all Eliot's poetry.

It may be noted that the poems up to this time do not yet show any concern with religion, and have a contemplative bent and a pessimistic tone, assumed as well as genuine. They already confront the problem of defining the relationship to the opposite sex, which appears simultaneously fascinating and repellent. The last proposition will absorb Eliot for quite some years. For the time being, he treats it in subdued romantic terms or a tentatively unromantic way. But this low-key performance fails to bring out the genuine personal urgency underlying the issue. It was not in a subdued self accommodating itself to a drained romantic manner that the true scope of his poetry lay. He was really in need of a more effective strategy of self-expression.

VI

Writing on poetry in England and America in Poetry (Sept.,1946), Eliot remarked :

> I do not think it is too sweeping to say that there was no poet, in either country, who could have been of use to a beginner in 1908. The only recourse was to poetry of another age and to poetry of another language.

Eliot's first acquaintance with this poetry was accidental. Towards the end of 1908, when Eliot was in his twenty-first year, he chanced upon a copy of Arthur Symons' The Symbolist Movement in Literature in the Harvard Union Library. Later on he admitted that 'the Symons book is one of those which have affected the course of my life.'[197] It introduced him to, among others, Jules Laforgue, to whom, Eliot summed up in 'To Criticize the Critic' (1961) : 'I owe more than to any one poet in any language.'[198] It may be noted that about Laforgue Eliot wrote very little compared with his detailed treatment of Dante, the Jacobean playwrights, or the Metaphysicals, whose influences he publicly acknowledged. The reason, as Eliot himself admitted, is accidental and curious : 'The reason, I believe, is that no one commissioned me to do so. For these early essays were all written for moeny, which I needed, and the occasion was always a new book about an author, a new edition of his works, or an anniversary.'[199]

This major poetic influence on Eliot in his twentyfirst year, the last year of the most significant formative period of a man's life, according to Eliot, took possession of him as quickly as he absorbed and outgrew it. The resultant transformation is one of the major events in modern poetry.

Eliot's indebtedness concerned both matter and manner. The vers libre that he used so extensively in his major early achievements like 'Preludes', 'Portrait of a Lady', and 'Prufrock', he learnt from Laforgue. In his Introduction to Ezra Pound : Selected Poems, he states :

> My own verse ... at least, the form in which I began to write, in 1908 or 1909, was directly drawn from the study of Laforgue together with the later Elizabethan drama; and I do not know anyone who started from exactly that point.[200]

Elaborating his view of the vers libre of Laforgue, he writes :

> The verse libre of Jules Laforgue, who, if not quite the greatest French poet after Baudelaire, was certainly the most important technical innovator, is free verse in much the way that the later verse of Shakespeare, Webster, Tourneur, is free verse : that is to say, it stretches, contracts, and distorts the traditional French measure as later Elizabethan and Jacobean poetry stretches, contracts and distorts the blank verse measure.[201]

Considering the later developments of verse libre, especially by Ezra Pound and Whitman in English poetry, he observes : 'The term, which fifty years ago had an exact meaning, in relation to the French alexandrine, now means too much to mean anything at all.'[202] But Eliot was aware of the limitations of vers libre for a long time and reiterates his old view that 'no vers is libre for the man who wants to do a good job.'[203]

Regarding the language of his poetry Eliot goes to the extent of saying that 'he (Laforgue) was the first to teach me how to speak.'[204] Elsewhere he admits : 'The kind of poetry that I needed, to teach me the use of my own voice, did not exist in English at all; it was only to be found in French.'[205]

It is commonly known that Eliot derived from Laforgue his colloquial-conversational tone, his drollery, his piquancy and ironic wit. The serio-comic vein of Laforgue and his flair for self-parody infused Eliot's poetry with a new energy. But it requires further analysis to understand the true nature of this indebtedness; and Eliot's own words are most helpful in this. It is not that Eliot, an upholder of 'tradition', turned to Laforgue's poetry as the greatest manifestation of it at that point of history. Had this been his reason, he would have chosen Baudelaire, a superior artist, rather than Laforgue. Eliot himself hesitates to rank Laforgue as 'one of the great masters'.[206] But still he opted for him, because, as he states :

> he was the first to teach me ... the poetic possibilities of my own idiom of speech. Such early influences, the influences which, so to speak, first introduce one to oneself, are, I think, due to an impression which is in one aspect, the recognition of a tempera-

> ment akin to one's own, and in another aspect the discovery of a form of expression which gives a clue to the discovery of one's own form. These are not two things, but two aspects of the same thing.[207]

Elsewhere, while reminiscing about his early life, Eliot admitted the same :

> A very young man, who is himself stirred to write, is not primarily critical or even widely appreciative. He is looking for masters who will elicit his consciousness of what he wants to say himself, of the kind of poetry that is in him to write. The taste of an adolescent writer is intense, but narrow : it is determined by personal needs.[208]

It is, therefore, clear that in resorting to Laforgue, Eliot was impelled by a personal need and the French poet was helpful in providing an outlet for what was latent in him and in finding his own individual style and form. This gives an account of the relationship between tradition and the individual talent quite different from what is said in Eliot's essay exclusively devoted to the subject. The voice that the French poet taught him to use was not the impersonal voice of tradition, but Eliot's own; and it is an interesting study to follow the development of this voice in European poetry from cruder beginnings. As it turns out, at each successive stage — and one is not strictly a refinement on the previous — the personality of the poet determined the modulation. Edmund Wilson, in Axel's Castle, traces the development of this voice from Corbière to T.S. Eliot.

Ungainly and consumptive and living the life of an outcast, Corbière indulged, Wilson says, in writing verses 'often colloquial and homely, yet with a rhetoric of fantastic slang; often with the manner of slapdash doggerel, yet sure of its own morose artistic effects; full of the parade of romantic personality, yet incessantly humiliating itself with a self-mockery scurrilous and savage....'[209]

Laforgue, nineteen years younger than Corbière, independently developed a poetic mode which has much in common with that of Corbière. Wilson characterizes Laforgue's style as 'poignant-ironic, grandiose-slangy, scurrilous-naive.'[210] Consumptive like Corbiere, he was the son of a schoolmaster and a professional man of letters. In consequence, 'what with Corbiere seems a personal and inevitable, if eccentric, manner of speech, in Laforgue sounds self conscious and deliberate, almost sometimes a literary exercise.'[211] But as Wilson continues, 'his gentleness and sadness are still those of sick well-cared-for child; his asperities, his surprising images, his coquetries, his cynicism, and his impudence, are still those of a clever schoolboy.'[212]

Eliot, according to Wilson, eschewed the Mallarme line of French Symbolist poetry, which is classical in temper and sustains a certain grandeur of tone. 'But it is from the conversational-ironic, rather than from the serious-aesthetic, tradition of Symbolism that T.S. Eliot derives. Corbière and Laforgue are almost everywhere in his early work.'[213]

Earlier it has been noted, in the light of Eliot's own observations on himself, that Laforgue did not shape him, but only sparked what was latent in him. So the three poets belong to a line, but they are basically independent and personal. The interesting point to note is that the reckless and irreverent outbursts of Corbière, the social outcast, who makes 'a pose of his unsociability and of what he considered his physical ugliness, at the same time that he undoubtedly suffered over them.,[214] looks personal; whereas the utterences of Eliot and Laforgue — each in a way 'a sick, well-cared-for child' and 'a clever schoolboy', both developing a preponderate interest in philosophy[215]— may be mistaken as literary exercises.

Not only his true voice, but also the real material for his poetry, Eliot discovered in Laforgue along with Baudelaire, his predecessor, as he admits :

> From him (Baudelaire), as from Laforgue, I learned that the sort of material that I had, the sort of experience that an adolescent had had, in an industrial city in America, could be the material for poetry; and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded hitherto as the impossible, the sterile, the intractably unpoetic. That, in fact, the business of the poet was to make poetry out of the unexplored resources of the unpoetical; that the poet, in fact, was committed by his profession to turn the unpoetical into poetry.[216]

Referring to Baudelaire in particular, Eliot had to say :

> I think that from Baudelaire I learned first, a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet writing in my own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic.[217]

One may note that the above statements contain a straightforward recognition of the importance of a poet's experience which the poet's formal exposition in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' would not support : 'Impressions and experiences which are important for the man may take no place in the poetry,'[218] and 'emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him.'[219] Eliot now frankly acknowledges the extension of the scope of poetry with the expansion of the areas of experience.

As early as 1909, Eliot had been striving for what Howarth calls a 'poetry of the city', in a poetic language 'made from his daily, living idiom.'[220] But this description should be taken with due qualifications. Though Eliot used the city as the encompassing reality, what he was really concerned with was himself. The city was what it meant to him. How the city was allowed to play a strictly limited role in his poetry is, in fact, indicated by the way he sums up his indebtedness to Baudelaire, the chief exponent of the poetry of the city :

> It may be that I am indebted to Baudelaire chiefly for half a dozen lines out of the whole of Fleurs du Mal; and that his significance for me is summed up in the lines :
>
> Fourmillante Cité, cité pleine de rêves,
> Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant ...
>
> I knew what that meant, because I had lived it before I knew that I wanted to turn it into verse on my own account.[221]

What drew Eliot to the French poets at that important point of poetic departure was not the imagery, metre or diction, but a total strategy of expression. Kenner rightly points out that the 'sonorities' and 'tricky virtuosity' of Laforgue's verses expose 'not a freedom from psychic involvement but the debonair panic of a man whose strategy (for all its look of elegant stasis) is to hasten across abysses he has no taste for exploring.'[222] At 21, Eliot had abysses within himself which he was incapable of fathoming. These he tried to cross with the aid of — or in the fashion of — Laforgue. His serio-comic tone and satirical jibes, his self-rockery and sophistication play around issues he can neither fully face, nor bypass with equanimity. As Cattaui puts it, 'he found in Laforgue's Complaintes a living language and themes which answered his own requirements, his uncertainties, his taste for irony, his discretion, his refinement, his "dandyism"'.[223] Gordon, who had the advantage of examining some unpublished and almost inaccessible early writings of Eliot,[224] probes deeper the 'wilfully defeatist identity' which Eliot took over from Laforgue :

> From Laforgue, Eliot learnt to broadcast secrets, to confess through the defeatist persona his own despair and, at the same time, to shield himself by playing voices against one another — the wry voice of the sufferer, the scathing or flippant voice of a commentator, the banal voice of a woman. He learnt, too, another confessional strategy useful to a cautious and sly sensibility : to dramatize his most serious ideas as irrational, even ridiculous, emotions.[225]

The release that Eliot found through the method suggested by Laforgue was, to use Eliot's own words, an 'enlargement and liberation which comes from a discovery which is also a discovery of oneself.'[226]

Eliot's temperamental affinity with Laforgue, however, had an extra-literary dimension which should also be taken note of. Howarth pins down the 'temperament' Eliot identified in Laforgue :

> He was, according to Symons, the most reticent of reticent men, of whom we know nothing 'which his work is not better able to tell

> us'. He preserved his inviolability under a disguise; and the disguise he chose was the vestiture, sober and correct, of a clergyman, complete with umbrella.... To a young man the acquisition of the dress and behaviour of his heroes is the first step towards acquiring their strength; and Eliot has retained and elaborated something of Laforgue for the mask he wears in public.[227]

Apart from these similarities in behaviour and dress, natural and assumed, there is yet another factor in the personal bond Eliot felt with Laforgue. In a letter to E. Greene written in October 1939, Eliot admitted that his passion for Laforgue possessed him like a spell cast by a more powerful personality.[228] In his address to the Italian Institute in 1950, he categorized Laforgue as a smaller poet and not one of the great masters : 'The latter are too exalted and too remote. They are like distant ancestors who have been almost deified; whereas the smaller poet, who has directed one's first steps, is more like an admired elder brother.'[229]

Eliot's statement of being 'possessed' by a personality that is his own flesh and blood born just before him, is in fact, a round-about way of admitting a fantastic idea of reincarnation which gripped him for some years. Apart from the close affinities with Laforgue in poetic attitudes, Eliot noticed an uncanny resemblance in personal details, down to their tastes in dress. As Sencourt catalogues the similarities, 'he dressed in the English style, with high collars and dark ties and often carrying an umbrella under his arm. The face of this young dandy of the Third Republic gave no hint of his inner feelings; he published no indiscretions.'[230] A fact that struck Eliot particularly is that he had died just the year before Eliot was born, i.e., 'the year he himself had been conceived'.[231] In consequence, Sencourt says :

> it almost seemed to him that in his body the fleeting soul of Laforgue had sought a reincarnation. Indeed, Eliot described his feeling for Laforgue as one of profound kinship, or rather of peculiar personal intimacy. Seized by this surprise of an unimagined affinity, he was transformed within a few weeks. Like meeting a friend in the flesh, this meeting through the medium of verse brought a new development to Eliot's personality. He himself told me that the impact of this encounter was basic. He did not imitate Laforgue, he was changed in his personality.'[232]

From the above sense of identity, Eliot tried to model his life on Laforgue, or, as in poetry, allowed his life a Laforguian course. Shortly after making the acquaintance of Laforgue through Symons — Eliot was twenty-one at that time — he went over to Paris; as Laforgue had emigrated to France from Uruguay when a boy and was living in Paris at the age of twenty.[233] 'I had at that time,' Eliot confessed, 'the idea of giving up English ... and gradually write French'.[234] As Laforgue did, one could add. It is more than a coincidence that Eliot married his second wife, an English woman, in the same Anglican church in Kensington where seventy years earlier Laforgue had married an English girl.[235]

This strange relationship between Laforgue and Eliot should not be altogether forgotten in considering what Eliot sets forth, in a formal and theoretical way, about the relationship between tradition and the individual talent. It may also be interesting to investigate to what extent, if at all, his preoccupation with the concept of reincarnation prompted him to devote a period to Indian philosophy, a fertile field of study of this kind of subject. 'Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lanman, and a year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Woods', Eliot ruefully confessed, 'left me in a state of enlightened mystification'[236] — an almost inevitable conclusion of this kind of mystical-metaphysical pursuit.

However fervently Eliot might have identified himself with Laforgue, and whatever release and enlargement he might have expected from the contact, his immediate output in the Laforguian mould was paltry and pretty thin. It was soon to be followed by a changed mode of expression of far greater scope than Laforgue's. The four patently Laforguian pieces — 'Nocturne', 'Humouresque', 'Conversation Galante' and 'Spleen' — are poems of strictly limited appeal. They also suffer from the constraining circumstance of Eliot's first acquaintance with Laforgue through another author. 'Humouresque' and 'Conversation Galante', as Howarth points out, are based on a poem quoted by Symons.[237] Eliot made the most of the Laforguian qualities of drollery and piquancy focussed on by Symons, but not his characteristic cityscape, which Eliot discovered later and made enthusiastic use of in the 'Preludes', 'Prufrock' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'.[238] But the fundamental fact is that Eliot was no incarnation of Laforgue, however, fondly he might have taken up the idea. The poet who would write 'Profrock' had, in fact, a far greater imaginative scope. Eliot is not ordinarily helpful in getting at his highly guarded and secluded inner world. But some early manuscripts (these Eliot never allowed to be published and may not have considered more than drafts), given up for lost for long years and still inaccessible to common readers,[239] allow us a peep into Eliot's swift imaginative development from 'Nocturne' to the early masterpieces.

The sheaf of Laforguian poems composed in November 1909, were followed immediately by a very different kind of verse by Eliot. As Gordon puts, 'in 1910, he suddenly dropped his newly-acquired facades for the autobiographical "I".'[240] What strikes one at once is the personal and frankly confessional tone of these unpublished pieces, which may be exactly the reason why they were never published. These early drafts reveal too much of Eliot too artlessly. From these one is led to generalize on the genesis of a patent Eliot poem : the transcript of a moment's feeling or mood. 'From the first', Gordon states, 'Eliot took up the task of recording the private habits of mind....'[241] He was pretty diffident about the permanent value of these records and termed quite a few of them 'Caprices'. He also used the title 'Interlude' for some of these sketches. Other titles like 'Easter : Sensations of April' and 'Do I know how I feel ?' indicate the poet's lack of confidence in his own feelings. Inventions of the March Hare, indeed, was the general title Eliot inscribed on the marbled notebook in which he diligently copied these drafts after November 1909.[242] Finished poems arising out of the basic stuff are entitled more formally 'Preludes' or ironically a 'Song' or 'Rhapsody'.

The poems display Eliot's attempt to record current impressions and feelings ranging from agonies and yearnings to whims and fantasies. Fantasies may at times show signs of acute morbidity. Eliot had reason to be baffled by the working of his own brain and he was surely groping for a clear direction. He showed the artistic courage of putting in black and white the most disturbing and disreputable thoughts that crossed his mind. His readiness to tap the subconscious ensures him a place in the Freudian era. Eliot does not mention any indebtedness to Freud and shows a distrust for subjects like psychiatry.[243] In his finished writings the psychological crudities are always toned down and assimilated with other elements. But the psychological undercurrents in most of his poems are one of the elements that qualify him as a characteristically modern poet.

Thematically, the unpublished poems start with the crude facts of life around the poet and end with a total denial of them and a vision of a reality beyond. But the progress is irregular and there is no easy formulation or conclusion. The beatific moments, extremely fitful, are as yet of no definite significance, at least of a religious kind, to Eliot. The descriptions seem to be faithful recordings of actual experiences, more teasing than illuminating. These intimations of infinity (cf. the 'Intimations of Immortality' of Wordsworth, 'immortality' meaning 'infinity' to the poet[244])are in sharp contrast to those in Eliot's later poetry, where, faint as they are, they take on a dogmatic religious frame.

In 'Caprices in North Cambridge'(1909), Eliot sketches a dismal picture of the world around. In Gordon's paraphrase :

> he described bottles, broken glass, dirty window panes, trampled mud mixed with grass, broken barrows, and tatty sparrows scratching in the gutter. His mind came to rest, with a curious sense of repose, on vacant lots filled with the city's debris, ashes, tins,

> bricks, and tiles. He was both horrified and, in a way, engaged. It seemed a far world from his studies, the neat definitions and laws he was piling up at college, but it touched him as Harvard did not. It was his first image of a waste land, a scene he was to make his own.[245]

The description in the poem mirrors the external world as much as it reflects the inner world of the poet, and the subjective predilection is pronounced. The 'Preludes', the first three of which were originally called 'Preludes in Roxbury', (note the similarity with the title 'Caprices in North Cambridge'), keeps the poet out of the poem and makes the images look as objective as possible. The transition from 'Caprices' to 'Preludes' shows the process in which the personal reality takes the objective, artistic appearance.

It may be noted that, among other things, the 'Preludes' which may be said to have grown out of the 'Caprices', is a distant reminder of The Prelude of Wordsworth, which also contains the images that affected the poet's soul. The urban setting in contrast to the natural one, shows the change that the passage of time has brought about. It may be further pointed out that Eliot's morbid preoccupation with urban squalor ('Eliot deliberately courted squalor,' Gordon says, 'but found that as life-destroying as the well-to-do Boston squares. He was physically repelled by smells and depressed by slums.'[246])had its parallel in the neurotic fascination nature exercised on Wordsworth.[247] Most strikingly the attraction-repulsion ambivalence ('both horrified and, in a way, engaged'[248])in Eliot's attitude to the squalid urban scenes resembles closely what Bateson describes as Wordsworth's 'ecstatic, terrified absorption in natural scenery'.[249]

From the start Eliot's dissatisfaction with the life around tended to centre on its feminine part. In 'Convictions' (January 1910), Eliot tries to show the vacuity of the feminine temperament — a theme recurring in the published 'Conversation Galante', 'Humouresque', 'Portrait of a Lady', etc.

Probably during the summer of 1910, Eliot wrote a series of 'Goldfish' poems about his family and friends. As Gordon sums up :

> He was impatient with white flannels, with porcelain teacups at a window, the delicate, sharp outlines of women's gowns, the summer afternoons on the verandah, the waltzes turning on hot August evenings,The Chocolate Soldier and The Merry Widow, the sunlight on the sea, the salty days, and boys and girls together.[250]

Not only in Boston but also in Paris where he went later that year, he experienced the same disappointment. It is strange that his ardent literary pilgrimage yielded the same sense of frustration. The city life turned out to be as barren and pointless as before. Using 'Caprice' as the title again, in 'Fourth Caprice in Montparnasse' (Dec. 1910), Eliot sets forth his amazement at the self-confidence of a life that may crumble any moment. In 'The smoke that gathers blue and sinks ...', he narrates his bored reactions to an evening in a Parisian nightclub : 'A lady of indeterminate age, all breast and rings, singing "Throw your arms around me — Aren't you glad you found me", does not enliven him.'[251] 'Inside the Gloom' (Feb. 1911) describes a poet in a gloomy garret looking at the constellations but finding no enlightenment in them. In 'Interlude in a Bar' written about the same time, he observes 'scarred lives symbolized by dirty, broken fingernails tapping a bar and by floors that soak the dregs from broken glasses.'[252] Commenting on Eliot's predilection these days, Gordon remarks :

> It was not the sophisticated or innovative of Paris who interested him but the prostitutes and maquereaux of the Boulevard Sébastopol, the grave facades of the big black buildings which seemed to darken the sidewalks, the garish white arc lights among rows of trees, and the men who nosed after pleasure, especially men who had never known it. Slumming, for Eliot, was no pastime : he took it too seriously. He hunted down decadence, and allowed lust and drunkenness to circle round him, so that he might contemplate with horror a life bereft of morale or dignity.[253]

Eliot suffered the same strain of disappointment when he visited London. In 'Interlude in London' (Apr. 1911), he sees Londoners 'hibernating behind their bricks, shut in by sudden rains, and tied to their routines — tea and marmalade at six.'[254]

The sameness of the impressions of different cities implies their subjectivism and corroborates Eliot's later assertion : 'My urban imagery was that of St. Louis, upon which that of Paris and London have been superimposed.'[255]

The world around him grew oppressive to Eliot and drove him to acute mental depression. In 'Oh little voices ...' (an undated poem belonging to the post-Paris period), a shadowed abject self in all night vigil (a typical Eliotic posture in those days), contemplates the futility of his search for the ways, by-ways and dark retreats ending in an intellectual maze. 'The philosophic self replies that what he has seen are appearances not realities, and exhorts him not to delay to take possession of some truth. Yet to the abject self the babbling men and women of this world are real, for they seem so comfortably at home while he feels so uneasy, consumed by his impulse to blow against the wind and spit against the rain.'[256] Written about the time he was working on 'Prufrock', the account of streets leading nowhere reminds one of the 'Streets that follow like a tedious argument' in the latter piece. The immediacy and rawness of the experience in the draft are refined and subdued in the published poem.

The rough draft of one poem, 'Do I know how I feel ? Do I know what I think', gives a glimpse of the poet's inside in total disorder. In Gordon's summing up again :

> He thinks, with horrow, of the common plots of human fate, of beauty wasted in convenient marriages, or worn away in commuter trains, or stifled in dark rooms. He feels reverent love for an ethereal woman, but is crushed by knowledge of his own malaise. He imagines suicide, himself on the floor like a broken bottle. He will not have to care what happens after. A doctor with a pointed beard and black bag, chemicals and a knife, arrives to perform the post-mortem.[257]

The rawness of imagery again indicates a transcription of fantasies as they cross the poet's mind. The self-slaughtering instinct marked here seems to undergo a sea-change in 'my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter' — an image of death as clean and composed as that of the eyes of a drowned man turned into pearls (an image that fascinated Eliot all his life.) In 'The Death of Saint Narcissus' (where the poet's identification with the hero is obvious), the dead saint lies 'green, dry and stained/With the shadow in his mouth.' In all these instances the poet regards his dead body with different degrees of self-pity.

During this period, Eliot was estranged from the Christian faith, but was oppressed by a spiritual need which nothing available to him could satisfy. In 'The First Debate between Body and Soul' (1910), he calls upon the Absolute to save him from the gross physicality of 'twenty leering houses in a shabby Boston square, the wheezing street piano, a blind old man who coughs and spits — and by the distractions of his own physical life — defecations, masturbations, and a useless supersubtle brain.'[258] In 'Easter : Sensations of April' (April 1910), there is a wistful look back at a simple religious faith as held by a little black girl who seemed very sure of God as she returned from the church holding a red geranium in her hand

As early as June 1910, when Eliot was graduating from Harvard College, he had a strange experience which had a lasting effect on his life. While walking one day in Boston, he recounted in a poem entitled 'Silience', that he saw 'the streets suddenly shrink and divide. His everyday preoccupations, his past, all the claims of the future fell away and he was enfolded in a great silence.'[259] Eliot never had this poem published, but the beatific moment recorded here was surely one of the most singular events in his life. It was the first of the kind celebrated at some climactic points in his poetry : the moment in the hyacinth garden ('looking into the heart of light, the silence'), the moments in the rose garden and the dry pool rearing the mystic lotus.

Here again is a parallel between Eliot and Wordsworth. Wordsworth also had a mystical experience in his early life laying bare a different view of reality which may lie at the core of the pantheistic philosophy of Nature he later developed. In a note on his 'Intimations of Immotality', Wordsworth wrote : 'I was often unable to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all that I saw as something not apart from, but inherent in, my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from this abyss of idealism to the reality.'[260] It is, therefore, significant that some extraordinary experiences of a mystical nature lay at the core of the poetic personalities of the two poets who revolutionized English poetry in two successive ages. Both poets seem to have been uncertain about the implication of their experience at first. Wordsworth did not mention the experience in his published poems including The Prelude in which he narrates many incidents contributing to the development of his poetic self. 'At first,' Gordon says, 'Eliot did not conceive of the religious implications, simply that the Silence was antithetical to the world .... The revelation in the spring of 1910 had no immediate repercussions but yet remained the defining experience of his life.'[261] The spiritual intimation was acknowledged and Eliot later on framed it in an orthodox religious creed. Wordsworth attempted to elaborate his response to Nature into a philosophy. There is something conscious and cultivated in Eliot's dogmatic Christianity and Wordsworth's philosophy of Nature (earning him the title, 'the Egotistic Sublime'). But the initial inspirations were genuine and compelling. The revolutions they effected in poetry may be traced to their effort to communicate in language a singular vision of reality derived from some extraordinary early experiences.

The faith in God shines through momentarily in 'Entretien dans un parc' (Feb. 1911) : walking along with a woman up a blind alley, the poet is 'filled with nervous embarrassment in the face of her composure. Then, suddenly, with relief, he thinks how his dusty soul might expand to meet God.'[262] But the possibility briefly glimpsed is not followed up.

In the first part of a fragment written about a month later, Eliot allows himself his most gloomy and blasphemous outburst on record. In the lines beginning 'He said : the universe is very clear ...', he presents God, as mentioned earlier, as a sexual monster, a syphilitic spider. Eliot's shattered faith coupled with his scientific pretensions and an excess of spleen produced these lines. In the second part, beginning 'He said : this crucifixion was dramatic ...', a brief dream of the crucifixion is given up for what look like two inevitable alternatives before him : the seedy life of a Parisian artist and the vapid career of a business executive.[263]

'Prufrock's Pervigilium', a fragment intended to be incorporated in 'The Love Song', but left out, according to Eliot, on the suggestion of his friend Conrad Aiken[264] was written in July-August 1911. It is about an all-night vigil, a compelling habit of Eliot in those days, that climaxed in a 'terrifying vision of the end of the world.'[265]

The spiritual stirring outside a religious frame is again recorded in the '2nd Debate between the Body and Soul' (1911), in which Eliot tells of 'a ring of silence which closes round him and seals him off, in a state of beatific security, from the floods of life that threaten to break like a wave against his skull. There, momentarily, he cherishes his chrysalis. His soul ... lies still in its cell, sensing its wings, aching to be set free and fearful it will miss its moment of birth through excessive caution.'[266] The poem concludes on the expectation of the birth of 'some unverbalized, elusive truth.'

The wistful observer in these manuscript poems manifesting traits of a student of philosophy ends up as a pretender to the role of a martyr. The martyrdom concept was pretty well-known in the Eliot family, especially from the precepts and writings of Charlotte Champe Eliot, the poet's mother. Eliot was trmendously affected by the Saints' livesand their pictorial representations in European art. Eliot's estrangement from the world and thoughts of suicide hold up before him the meaningful goal of martyrdom. But the course is far from straight and scarcely Christian. Uncertainties and doubts complicate the issue for quite some time to come.

In 'The Little Passion : From "An Agony in a Garret"' (1911; revised 1914), the poet comes across a lost soul in a bar : 'a man of religious gifts, but damned for his inability to utilize them. The drunk is aware his soul has been dead a long time, yet continues to waste his energies in futile diving into dark retreats. He knows quite well that the lines of street lights lead inevitably to a cross on which souls are pinned and bleed but, instead of following the lights, he lets them spin round him meaninglessly like a wheel.'[267] The hallucinatory quality of the street lights spinning like wheels (in 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', a street lamp beats like 'a fatalistic drum') instead of illuminating the path to the cross, implies a tortuous immediate impulse as distinguished from a deliberate course to one's destiny.

'The Burnt Dancer' (June 1914) narrates an insomniac's observation of a black moth's dancing round a flame as he gradually identifies the insect with a martyr (the light is again associated with the martyr's course) : 'He watches curiously while the moth deliberately singes its wings on the flame as though he witnesses the expiation of a martyr. The extraordinary patience of the moth's passion exhilarates him, its superhuman endurance of pain. But he finds the end forbidding. For the moth, now broken, loses its passion and desires only the fatal end of its ordeal.'[268]

As the poet is yet to be convinced of the validity of the goal, so the character of the martyr is still unfixed. He may be Love's martyr too. 'The Love Song of Saint Sebastian' (July 1914) is a strange and over-wrought fantasy of a lover in the diametrically opposed roles of martyr and murderer. In the first fantasy 'the lover flogs himself at the foot of the lady's stair until his blood flies.... His martyrdom attracts her attention and, in pity, she calls him to her bed where he dies between her breasts.'[269] In the reversed situation of the second fantasy, the lover is assertive and exerts his brute force over the beloved : 'He comes at her with a towel and bends her head beneath his knees, fingering the curve of her ear. When he strangles her — when he sins — she loves him more.'[270] It is extraordinary that Eliot's imagination could harbour these masochistic and sadistic excesses, put in black and white three years after the publication of 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' — a superb product of sophistication and refinement. If the earlier poem shows the self-consciousness of the public face ('to prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet' — 1.27), the later one discloses the abandon of a lacerated inner (and hidden) self.

Eliot's wavering thoughts about martyrdom are reflected in the plan of a poem that was never completed. It was to be a collection of pieces written over a period of time, under the title 'Descent from the Cross', as he announced to Aiken. The outline and the title seem to imply a serio-comic ambivalence about the crucial problem. Introduced by 'Oh little voices' in which the soul is tossed between two alternatives (cf. Tennyson's 'Two Voices') : the assertion of a lofty philosophic truth and the acceptance of the gross reality of the world, the poem is to include the recently composed 'Saint Sebastian' mooting the duality of the solution of a lover's problem. It was then to be followed by an 'insane section', a 'love song' of a happier kind, a 'mystical section' and finally 'a Fool-House section in the manner of 'Prufrock' in which the speaker attends not a teaparty but a masquerade. He goes in his underwear as St. John the Divine.'[271] The descent, if at all the final choice, carries its anti-climactic comment upon itself.

Eliot's odd combination of the saint motif with non-religious — sometimes markedly psychological — concepts finds expression in a poem entitled 'The Death of Saint Narcissus' (early 1915). There is a superimposition of the character of St. Narcissus, Bishop of Jerusalem, who towards the end of the second century, took to the desert shunning men's ways, on that of Narcissus, a figure from classical mythology — a youth who was raped by a river god and was later transformed into a tree gazing at its own reflection in water, as a result of his excessive self-love. The protagonist in the poem shows extreme symptoms of Narcissism while attracted to a martyrdom that turns out to be a masochistic perversion of self-love. The morbid self-consciousness of 'his limbs smoothly passing each other', eyes 'aware of the pointed corner of his eyes and his hands aware of the pointed tips of his fingers' persists in the condition of the tree :

> Twisting its branches among each other
> And tangling its roots among each other,

and erupts in the auto-erotic image of a fish

> With slippery white belly held tight in his own fingers,
> Writhing in his own clutch, his ancient beauty
> Caught fast in the pink tips of his new beauty.

The bemused self-love reaches a bi-sexual ambivalence in which the victim has a vicarious enjoyment of the violation of his/her own body :

> Then he had been a young girl
> Caught in the woods by a drunken old man
> Knowing at the end the taste of his own whiteness
> The horror of his own smoothness,
> And he felt drunken and old.

Narcissus, alias St. Narcissus, finds masochistic ecstasy in being a dancer to God :

> Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows
> He danced on the hot sand
> Until the arrows came.
> As he embraced them his white skin surrendered itself
> to the redness of blood, and satisfied him.

The 'shadow' in the mouth of the saint now lying 'green, dry and stained', 'different from either / Your shadow sprawling over the sand at daybreak, or/Your shadow leaping behind the fire against the red rock' is what the poet invites the reader to see at the beginning of the poem. The quoted verses used in 'The Burial of the Dead' with slight alternations are followed by the line 'I will show you his bloody cloth and limbs' changed to I will show you fear in a handful of dust' in the later poem.

This study of flesh-involved martyrdom with strong psychological overtones, Eliot was hesitant to make public. It was submitted by Pound to Poetry (Chicago) about the same time as 'Prufrock'. But the publication was stopped after the poem was composed. Some earlier drafts of the poem were tagged to the original manuscripts of The Waste Land (the poem's link with The Waste Land should be given due importance) presented to Pound and the 'proof' version ultimately got into print in Poems Written in Early Youth (1967). Alluding to the poem along with 'Mr. Apollinax' in a letter to Pound, Eliot wrote on 2 February 1915 : 'I understand that Priapism, Narcissism etc are not approved of ...'[272]. Surely, Eliot did not hope to impress the world by presenting an idea of martyrdom encumbered by psychological morbidity — more refined versions of martyrdom will appear in his writings till the end. On the proof-sheet of the poem in the Poetry file, HarrietMonroe marked 'Kill' against each section.[273] 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' was published in the same magazine in June 1915, drawing an indelible dividing line between poetry before and after.

CHAPTER III

THE MAKING OF A POEM

I

'The Love Song of J. Alfred Pruforck', with its captivating title, intriguing epigraph and highly polished form, coming at the beginning of Eliot's Collected Poems; and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', with its air of a confident and calculated poetic manifesto, at the beginning of his Selected Essays, may signal a false start to a reader's endless search for the meaning of Eliot's poetry. 'Prufrock', preceded by 'Portrait of a Lady' (in parts) and a host of other poems published and unpublished, contains significance and implications scarcely more visible than the tip of an iceberg, and 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' betrays rather than propounds the true poetics of Eliot. The two, however, are sufficient to jolt the reader into an awareness of a new kind of poetry that the age had brought in.

The exquisite 'Portrait of a Lady', it has been noted, is as much a 'portrait of a young man'[274] who could, with a little readjustment, assume the sonorous but inconsequential name of J. Alfred Profrock, anticipated faintly by the odd personification, 'Life', in Eliot's juvenile composition 'Spleen'. Thematically allied to 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait' are 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night', 'Morning at the Window', and 'La Figlia Che Piange' — a group that by itself could have made Eliot almost as popular, though not as great, a poet as he is.

'Prufrock', the central poem, has been interpreted variously, and will continue to be done so, with sanction from Eliot himself,[275] one may be assured. But that does not mean that any guesswork is as good as another. In fact, critical examinations should attempt, as indeed they have always done, to arrive at a dependable reading of the poem. It has been noticed that Eliot's own comments and observations from time to time have been helpful in reducing the areas of error and many dark streaks in the poem are illuminated by his other poems, some of them unpublished.

Prufrock, the protagonist of the poem, has often been thought to be a middle-aged person. With Matthiessen[276] as most prominent among them, a host of critics, such as Hugh Ross Williamson,[277] Philip Headings,[278] A.G. George,[279] J.P. Sen[280] and Louis Simpson,[281] have maintained this view. But Eliot himself once referred to Prufrock as 'a young man';[282] and on another occasion was explicit enough to say that he was in part himself (a student at Harvard at the time of writing of the poem) and in part a man of about 40, in an interview published in the Granite Review.[283] Whether Prufrock is in part Eliot or not is not so important as the idea of a young man assailed by the thoughts of age — passing frequently into middle age and beyond, in his imagination — which is essential for the understanding of the poem. Peculiarly enough, Matthiessen admitted that 'the source of some of the wittiest irony in 'Prufrock' would seem to spring from Eliot's detached ability to mock also the supercultivated fastidious young man from Harvard';[284] but still he insisted that 'the hero of the poem is not such a figure.'[285] The reason why he tried to set aside a valid point that he himself found out confronts us with a patent problem in Eliot criticism. Matthiessen, as we can see from our vantage point, was guided by Eliot himself in one of his theoretical formulations — the theory of Impersonality — put forward in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. The emphasis laid on the distance between the personality of the poet and the work of art led Matthiessen to his final assertion which is an echo of Eliot himself : 'By choosing a character apart from his immediate experience he has been able to concentrate entirely, not on his own feelings, but on the creation of his poem'.[286] The error, as we see, could be corrected, if not by a bold assertion of the critic's instinct, by attending to some relevant remark by Eliot himself, maybe less formal and guarded.

Eliot is equally illuminating on the 'you' in the first line of the poem, that has proved a minor stumbling-block to a reader. Since the poem is a 'love song', and the evening described in the first few lines still retains an ethereal quality despite the fact that it is likened to 'a patient etherised upon a table',[287] the person addressed is likely to be the beloved. But in the course of the poem, the female presence is referred to in the third person :

> If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,
> And turning toward the window, should say :
> 'That is not it at all,
> That is not what I meant, at all.'

Speculative explanations have flourished on the ambiguous situation and a common opinion is that the 'you' is the other part of Prufrock's divided self.[288] But Kristian Smidt succeeded in eliciting a statement to the point from Eliot himself in a letter :

> As for THE LOVE SONG OF J. ALFRED PRUFROCK anything I say now must be somewhat conjectural, as it was written so long ago that my memory may deceive me; but I am prepared to assert that the 'you' in THE LOVE SONG is merely some friend or companion, presumably of the male sex, whom the speaker is at that moment addressing, and that it has no emotional content whatever.[289]

Commenting on the assertion Smidt says : 'This is a timely reminder that we tend nowdays to make even the complex seem much more complicated than necessary by our search for cryptic meanings. Eliot's explanation cannot be ignored. But it does not, of course, preclude associations which would give Prufrock's companion certain recognizable features, and Eliot would be the last person to discount such associations.'[290]

The identity of the male companion may pose a minor question to a literary researcher, for no weightier reason than the one that initiated all the speculations on the 'friend' or the 'dark lady' of Shakespeare's sonnets. Since, again, conjectures may be very speculative, it will be reasonable to look for indications, if any, from Eliot himself .

The likeliest real-life figure behind the interlocutor in 'Prufrock' seems to be a Frenchman called Jean Verdenal, whom Eliot met and made friends with during his literary pilgrimage to Paris (1910-1911) when he had been working at the poem. An ardent student of poetry and philosophy, Eliot might have found in Verdenal, then a medical student, a kindred spirit. The death of Verdenal at the Dardanelles during the First World War (early May 1915) may therefore parallel the death of Hallam in the life of Tennyson. The importance attached to Jean Verdenal is indicated by the fact that Eliot dedicated his first book of verse, Prufrock and Other Observations, to his memory, with a quotation from Dante which means : 'Now can you understand the quantity of love that warms me towards you, so that I forget our vanity, and treat the shadows like the solid thing.' Eliot dedicated the first American edition of his poems and also his handwritten notebook of poems to Jean Verdenal.[291] If there is any validity in the conjecture that Jean Verdenal is behind the 'you'of the introductory line, then the medical imagery of 'a patient etherized upon a table' in the third line of the poem will appear less startling.

Eliot's assertion that the speaker's address to the interlocutor in the initial lines of 'Prufrock' 'has no emotional content whatever' (the over-emphasis not to be missed) seems to be strangely at variance with the impressions gathered by most readers of the poem. The note of pervasive gloom and weariness can be denied, to my mind, only with resolute wilfulness. On the contrary, the warmth avowed in the Dante quotation accompanying the dedication to Verdenal seems to be a more dependable indication of the speaker's mood.

The question about Eliot's attitude to 'you' is parallelled by the question about Eliot's attitude to Verdenal to whom he dedicated his first books of verses, but rarely referred to again during his long life of reminiscences and retrospections.

It should be noted that the poem which has been commonly regarded as an objective and impersonal expression of the mood or moods of a dramatically conceived character, bears an epigraph particularly confessional and confidential : 'If I thought that my reply would be to someone who would ever return to earth, this flame would remain without further movement; but as no one has ever returned alive from this gulf, if what I hear is true, I can answer you with no fear of infamy.' — a lost soul's confidence reposed in another supposedly lost. It is also noticeable that the poems which are among Eliot's most 'impersonal', i.e., the quatrain poems written between 1917-1919 ('Tradition and the Individual Talent' propounding the 'Impersonal Theory' of poetry, it may be mentioned, was published in 1919, but Eliot always dated it 1917, in his Selected Essays) were once published under the title Ara Vos Prec ('I pray you') which is also confessional in purport.

The highly guarded confidential tone of the epigraph agrees well with the drift of the poem, and the poem indeed has been taken to be in direct continuation of the epigraph.[292] The personal inflections of the poet are unmistakable in this confidential utterance. Personal factors, it may be pointed out at once, do not make or unmake poetry, they may simply be there. Poetry emerges with or without them, on its own merits. If personal elements in the Shakesperean Sonnets or Tennyson's In Memoriam did not preclude them from being poetry, there is no particular need to deny Eliot's presence in his writings. It is largely Eliot's theoretical insistence, contradicted often by his actual practice, that brought in the debate. It is better, therefore, to agree unhesitatingly with Kristian Smidt : 'As for the Prufrock figure, it can hardly be considered irrelevant to our understanding of the poem to feel that Eliot is present in this creature of his imagination.'[293]

The thematic scheme in 'Prufrock' had been developing in the mind of Eliot for a long time; and Prufrock has been rightly identified not as an individual, but as the 'generic Eliot character'.[294] The name, most probably borrowed unconsciously, as Eliot concedes, from the signboard of some furniture wholesalers of St. Louis,[295] ultimately provides a 'zone of consciousness'[296] that persists from Prufrock and Other Observations to 'Gerontion', The Waste Land and beyond.

The focal point of this zone of consciousness may be sought in the origin of the character in Eliot's self-portraiture. In an unpublished poem, 'Suite Clownesque', Eliot sketched himself as the firstborn child of the Absolute, turned out neatly in flannel suit.[297] (In his later 'Lines to Cuscuscaraway and Mirza Murad Ali Beg', Eliot underscored his 'coat of fur' and 'a wopsical hat'). In 'Spleen', published in the Harvard Advocate in January 1910, Eliot set against the vapid round of daily activities highlighted by empty Sunday rituals a character named :

> ... Life, a little bald and gray,
> Languid, fastidious, and bland,
> [who] Waits, hat and gloves in hand,
> Punctilious of tie and suit
> (Somewhat impatient of delay)
> On the doorstep of the Absolute.

Prufrock, J. Alfred, sketched not long afterwards, answers to the description of this quaint Mr. Life with his baldness, coat, tie and all.

The central traits of the basically same personality conceived by Eliot, are his compulsive metaphysical preoccupations and his mundane, somewhat funny, exterior. The situation is, in the last analysis, that of the dichotomy of the body and the soul, a theme that Eliot fondly dwelt on. It may be noted that in the month 'Spleen' was published, Eliot wrote a confessional poem (not published), 'The First Debate between Body and Soul', in which he implores the 'Absolute' to save him from the degrading physical senses,[298] and in his '2nd Debate between the Body and Soul' (written during the period he had been working on 'Prufrock'), he contemplates a spiritual rebirth threatened by his over-cautious nature.[299]

Considered from this focal point, 'Prufrock' turns out to be yet another version of the struggle between the body and the soul, worked out in 20th-century idioms and images. Prufrock, in this way, turns out to be a 20th-century Everyman. It is this quality which imparts a particular strength to the character, in spite of its apparent thinness and flippancy. His is the manner of a 20th-century man, devoid of glory and heroism precariously clinging to his spiritual pretensions.

Looked at from this angle, the introductory lines, unless misread as a communication between lovers, appear to have a metaphysical predilection leading to an 'overwhelming question' (1.10), which, in an anti-climactic transformation, is lifted up and dropped on a plate (1.30). Playing around the question are a 'hundred indecisions'(1.32), 'a hundred visions and revisions'(1.33) and the momentary desire to

'Disturb the universe'(1.46). The pivotal line, 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons'(1.51) is a serio-comic recognition of a metaphysical failure.

The philosophical bent has a religious substratum (not to be accommodated in any orthodox frame at this time), manifested mainly in a predilection for martyrdom :

> But though I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed,
> Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald)
> brought in upon a platter,
> I am no prophet — and here's no great matter;
> I have seen the moment of my greatness flicker... (11.81-5)

The saint-motif in Eliot, modulated variously in a number of his unpublished poems, surfaces here. The would be martyr, the hesitant prophet wants to shock the world into an awareness of its spiritual void by confronting it, Lazarus-like, with an apocalyptic truth.(11.94-5).[300]

The poem, judged by its central theme, can hardly be called a 'Love Song'. The title may be traced back to its origin for a proper understanding of its meaning. A number of Eliot's early poems (mostly unpublished) dealing with Eliot's ruminations and reflections on life and world around were entitled Inventions of the March Hare.[301] Some of these pieces were called 'Caprices' and 'Interludes'. The titles indicate Eliot's lack of confidence in the merit of these figments of his imagination. More artistically finished pieces of the same category were later dignified by the title 'Preludes' (an improvement upon 'Interlude' and, as I guess, a distant echo of Wordsworth's The Prelude). Another poem is entitled, 'Rhapsody', which, thematically, is of the same kind as the 'Preludes' (the musical analogy serving as a link between the two). 'Prufrock', most finished of the entire group, is directly called a 'Song', and a 'Love Song'; but, depending upon the comparative lack of artistic finish, it could be called an 'interlude' or 'caprice' — one of the Inventions of the March Hare. The title is one of Eliot's triumphs of whimsicality. Kenner pointed out a 'whimsical feline humour'[302] in seizing on the name of Prufrock and pointed out the 'surgical economy that used the marvellous name once only, in the title.... It was genius that separated the speaker of the monologue from the writer of the poem by the solitary device of affixing an unforgettable title.'[303] The device doing the trick, the achieved tone of the poem could 'draw on every emotion the young author knew without incurring the liabilities of "self-expression".'[304]

The metaphysical preoccupations of Prufrock are basically those of an academic student of philosophy — 'the supercultivated fastidious young man from Harvard', in Matthiessen's words — as Eliot was around the date. A street to him is like an 'argument', hands lift and drop a 'question' on one's plate, 'revisions' are further revised, coffee spoons evaluate a life's achievement and a person may be fixed in a 'formulated phrase'. The words 'you and me' repeated four times in the poem in different combinations may recall Omar Khayyam's 'Some little talk of you and me' before a veiled door to which no key is found — summing up man's metaphysical stance before the mystery of creation.

The martyrdom motif in Eliot, as discussed earlier,[305] has the psychological variation of a very personal nature. The martyr's zeal is mixed up with morbid thoughts of suicide and the imagined laceration of the flesh has a masochistic and auto-erotic streak in it. God's martyr may suddenly change into Love's martyr. On top of all, the protagonist is inadequately convinced of the validity of the martyr's course. Prufrock, in consequence, is no more than an arm-chair martyr (as most of us are) whose occasional journeys are along the suburban streets ending up at the sea beach. Eliot's success lies in exploring the martyrdom potentiality of a representative 20th-century middle-class man. We miss his ecstasy, but sense his pang, or, at least, his whimper.

Another submerged tendency in the poem is that it is erotic without being amorous; and, furthermore, the metaphysical is inseparable from the erotic (Eliot has consciously worked out this combination in 'Whispers of Immortality' where the 'Abstract Entities' circumambulate the compelling physical charms of Grishkin). The world, particularly the feminine world, exerts an irresistible fascination on him as it repels him at the same time. The drift of the poem has strange syncopations. Starting in a particular way, the lines run into unexpected affiliations and end up on quite a different note. Eliot himself is conscious of this process in poetic creation. Referring to one kind of writing — and 'Prufrock' surely comes under this category — as beginning under 'the pressure of some rude unknown psychic material', Eliot elaborates :

> the frame, once chosen, within which the author has elected to work, may itself evoke other psychic material; and then, lines of poetry may come into being, not from the original impulse, but from a secondary stimulation of the unconscious mind.[306]

The poem begins with the proposal of a journey which has an indeterminate goal, and a legitimate question about it is forestalled by the facile rhyme :

Oh, do not ask, 'What is it ?'
Let us go and make our visit.

The 'overwhelming question', expected to be a metaphysical one, involves arguments of 'insidious intent'. The path taken towards it is vibrant with animal and carnal sensations ('The muttering retreats of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels'). The enveloping yellow fog is feminine and feline, rubbing its back upon the window-panes. The narrator's progression is intercepted by abrupt glimpses of women talking of Michelangelo. His daring, expected to be spiritual in nature, is alternately perked up by sartorial smugness ('My morning coat, my collar mounting firmly to the chin') and dampened by a consciousness of physical deficiency. He is morbidly aware of a cold, scrutinizing gaze ('They will say : "How his hair is growing thin ! ... how his arms and legs are thin !"') that soon turns out to be unmistakably feminine, pinning him, insect-like, on a wall. The emerging feminine presence entices him by the whiteness of the arms and sways his reason by the perfume of a dress. After the 'tea and cakes and ices', he contemplates forcing the moment to a crisis, which is potentially as metaphysical as amorous (at cruder level, when 'The meal is ended', the house agent's clerk in 'The Fire Sermon' forces the issue to a carnal end). The narrator's most determined attempt to declare his apocalyptic vision is likely to be in a lady's bed chamber, where, settling a pillow, she might say :

'That is not what I meant at all,
That is not it, at all.'

The narrator's hopeless ejaculation, 'It is impossible to say just what I mean !', is due to a real ambivalence of his intentions. To boost up his sagging spirits, he contemplates wearing the bottom of his trousers rolled, or eating a peach (recognized as a traditional sexual symbol[307]). The poem ends with the erotic fantasy of the company of the sea-girls 'wreathed with seaweed red and brown' — which is however no more than a pleasurable spell to be broken any moment and shared by the narrator along with his companion — the 'you and I' of the beginning of the poem.

Eliot gathered together diverse feelings and attitudes, public and private, conscious, subconscious and unconscious, of a typical 20th-century (young) man into a zone of awareness and distilled them into a song. The poetry of this kind has, to borrow Eliot's own words, 'a network of tentacular roots reaching down to the deepest terrors and desires'.[308] 'Some rude unknown psychic material' evoking 'other psychic material' gradually evolves the poem. The poet's role during this process, according to Eliot, is to make sure that all the varied notes produced as a result are 'heard in harmony'.[309] The poetic alchemy that achieves this fusion needs to be examined in some detail.

II

In an early essay entitled 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (published in 1919, but dated 1917 in successive editions of Selected Essays), Eliot tried to explain the process of poetic creation by means of a chemical metaphor. After describing, with a display of technical knowledge, the catalytic role of a filament of platinum in producing 'sulphurous acid' out of a combination of oxygen and sulphur dioxide, he goes on to assert, by way of an analogy :

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> The mind of the poet is the shred of platinum. It may partly or exclusively operate upon the experience of the man himself; but the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates.[310]

Earlier in the essay, Eliot states that the mind of the poet undergoes a gradual process of 'depersonalization'. The poet develops a consciousness of the 'main current' and of the fact that 'the mind of Europe — the mind of his own country' is 'much more important than his own private mind'. Following up the suggestion, Eliot concludes :

> What happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality.
>
> ... It is in this depersonalization that art may be said to approach the condition of science.

The theory designated by Eliot the 'Impersonal theory of poetry', took the scene of literary criticism by surprise and altered it for

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years to come. But it is difficult to understand what Eliot really meant by this. He does, once, invite the readers to consider a verse passage 'in the light — or darkness — of these observations'[311] and a little later, warns the reader : 'Of course this is not quite the whole story.'[312] As in many other instances in Eliot, an intimate personal experience may underlie the abstract philosophical or scientific enunciation. Eliot's ruminations around the date (provided we accept 1917 as the actual date of composition of the essay) in reference to another issue, hint at the somewhat ordinary core of a seemingly 'revolutionary' theory :

> In modern society such revolutions are almost inevitable. An artist happens upon a method, perhaps quite unreflectingly, which is new in the sense that it is essentially different from that of the second-rate people about him, and different in everything but essentials from that of any of his great predecessors. The novelty meets with neglect; neglect provokes attack; and attack demands a theory.[313]

Eliot speaks of the revolutionary appearance of a method which the artist only 'happens upon'. Similar may have been the process in Eliot's theoretical presentation of the poet's surrender of himself to a tradition — to the mind of Europe.

It has been noted before that the tradition of poetry to Eliot was not exactly what others would think it to be. He rightly identified Baudelaire as belonging to the mainstream in the recent past, but preferred Laforgue, a lesser figure, as his own poetic model. In this he really 'happened upon' Laforgue and was absorbed in him. His surrender of himself to the 'mind of Europe', as we have seen before,[314] was not merely on a theoretical consideration, but from a sense of personal identification, which even included an odd belief in reincarnation.

Narrating how a dead author may possess and speak through a living one, Eliot wrote in an article published in The Egoist (July 1919):

> This relation is a feeling of profound kinship, or rather of a peculiar personal intimacy, with another, probably a dead author. It may overcome us suddenly, on first or after long acquaintance; it is certainly a crisis; and when a young writer is seized with his first passion of this sort he may be changed, metamorphosed almost, within a few weeks even, from a bundle of second-hand sentiments into a person. The imperative intimacy arouses for the first time a real, an unshakeable confidence. That you possess this secret knowledge, this intimacy, with the dead man, that after few or many years or centuries you should have appeared, with this indubitable claim to distinction; who can penetrate at once the thick and dusty circumlocutions about his reputation, can call yourself alone his friend .... It is a cause of development, like personal relations in life...
>
> We do not imitate, we are changed; and our work is the work of the changed man; we have not borrowed, we have been quickened, and we become bearers of a tradition.[315]

'Although he was not writing about himself explicitly, nor of Laforgue,' Moody comments, 'this account of how the dead may speak through the living voice must describe his own experience'.[316] The lines echo Eliot's account of his own poetic transformation around his 'nineteenth or twentieth year':

> At this period, the poem, or the poetry of a single poet, invades the youthful consciousness and assumes complete possession for a time.... The frequent result is an outburst of scribbling which we may call imitation, so long we are aware of the meaning of the word 'imitation' which we employ. It is not deliberate choice of a poet to mimic, but writing under a kind of daemonic possession by one poet.[317]

This concrete personal experience may be the basis of the generalizations regarding the 'Impersonal Theory of Poetry'. The statement in the essay that 'not only the best, but the most individual parts of (a poet's) work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously'[318] lands colour to this hypothesis. In the Egoist essay, Eliot holds that under the influence of a dead poet, the writer is transformed 'from a bundle of second-hand sentiments into a person'. So what the poet achieves is an integration of personality rather than the extinction of it, as contended by 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'.

Many critics have taken 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' at its face value. But the essay has some inherent difficulties of exposition [319] and may better be treated as a series of inspired assertions about poetry and poetic creation. It deserves credit for arousing a new awareness of the historical sense, the place of an individual work in the general order, need to focus attention on the poem rather than the poet, etc. But Eliot, as Mario Praz underscores, is no better than 'an empirical critic' whose 'real guide is not logic but intuition. In fact all his critical discoveries take the shape of a myth or an image.'[320] The metaphor of the 'catalyst' also has the same quality. Not only is it a bad analogy, but also inaccurate in scientific exposition, as pointed out by an anonymous reviewer of Selected Essays (1932 ed.) in The Criterion.[321] Speaking in 1933, Eliot admitted 'some unsatisfactory phrasing and at least one more than doubtful analogy'[322] in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent'. Later on he repeatedly expressed his embarrassment at the success of some of his early critical formulations.[323]

But the startlingly radical theory of the extinction of personality in art gaining currency and authority in spite of his different attitude underneath took a long time to be successfully squashed. Right in 1917, concurrently with writing'Tradition and the Individual Talent', as it appears,Eliot had deplored 'revolutionary theories' clinging to works of art produced by 'a mythical revolution'.[324] In an ideal society, according to Eliot, 'the good New' grows out of 'the good Old', without the need of polemic or theory. But in a sluggish society, Eliot states :

> the violent stimulus of novelty is required. This is bad for the artist and his school, who may become circumscribed by their theory and narrowed by their polemic; but the artist can always console himself for his errors in his old age by considering that if he had not fought nothing would have been accomplished.[325]

Living up to this prophecy, it is interesting to note, Eliot in his old age, had actually the same consolation. Ruminating on some of his early critical concepts in 'To Criticize the Critic'(1961), he said :

> and even if I am unable to defend them now with any forensic plausibility, I think they have been useful in their time.[326]

In this instance, Eliot's foresight and hindsight coalesce perfectly.

What scant attention Eliot could give to his 'revolutionary' theory even while it was being published in shown by his 'Hamlet and his Problems' (1919; a review of J.M. Robertson's The Problem of Hamlet, later reprinted, with some revisions, as 'Hamlet'), in which he asserts the 'personality' of the artist with a vengeance. Oblivious of what he is saying in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', he directs the attention of the reader from the work to the life and personality of the artist. Hamlet, Eliot opines, 'like the sonnets, is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art.'[327] 'The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object,' to which Eliot ascribed Hamlet's and, in the last analysis, Shakespeare's problem, 'is something which every person of sensibility has known; it is doubtless a subject of study for pathologists. It often occurs in adolescence : the ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep, or trims down his feelings to fit the business world; the artist keeps them alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions.'[328] Concentrating thus on emotions which are not just ordinary or borrowed, Eliot goes on to add :

> We must simply admit that here Shakespeare tackled a problem which proved too much for him. Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle; under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible, we cannot ever know. We need a great many facts in his biography; and we should like to know whether, and when, and after or at the same time as what personal experience, he read Montaigne, II. xii, Apologie de Raimond Sebond. We should have, finally, to know something which is by hypothesis unknowable, for we assume it to be an experience which, in the manner indicated, exceeded the facts. We should have to understand things which Shakespeare did not understand himself.[329]

The necessity to probe the personality and biography of Shakespare to understand his play is driven to an extreme, even absured, degree, because it turns out to be an invitation to know the unknowable.

The publication history of the two essays under consideration makes the self-contradiction appear all the more striking. 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' was published in two parts in September and December 1919 in the Egoist (VI.4 and 5 respectively) and 'Hamlet and his Problems' on September 26, 1919 in the Athenaeum. As if

Eliot, in a Hamlet-like division of the self, was oscillating between 'personality' and 'impersonality'. But possibly the situation was not quite the same. Though published in 1919, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' must have been written earlier. It has been mentioned that Eliot was consistent in dating the essay 1917 in the different editions of his Selected Essays. In 'To Criticize the Critic', Eliot divides his critical writing 'roughly into three periods' and places 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' in the first period extending up to 1918 and assigns the Athenaeum to the next period of his critical attachment.[330] The 'Hamlet' essay may therefore be taken as marking a stage in the development of his critical opinions, some unknown or unknowable reasons causing an unusual vehemence of expression.

The problem of self-contradiction is further reduced if we take Eliot's dark hint in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent',[331] and read between the lines for a process of poetic creation that Eliot goes on developing for many years to come.

The mind of the poet, according to Eliot, is a reservoir, a receptacle in which 'numberless feelings, phrases, images' are stored up. The ingredients lie there till the opportune moment when they 'are at liberty to enter into new combinations'; when 'impressions and experiences combine in peculiar and unexpected ways'. The combination takes place at a moment of 'concentration', otherwise referred to as 'the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak'. This concentration, however, 'does not happen consciously or of deliberation', but on the poet's 'passive attending upon the event'.

The resultant poetry is 'not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality'.

Having reconstructed the process from the bits of information scattered in the essay, one should hasten to add, with Eliot; 'Of course this is not quite the whole story.'

One important factor in the above process that would qualify it for the so-called 'Impersonal theory' is that 'It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life, that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting' and that 'it is not the "greatness", the intensity, of the emotions' that count in poetic creation. The poetry may express no 'new human emotions', but 'feelings which are not in actual emotions at all', and 'emotions which he has never experienced will serve his turn as well as those familiar to him.' So the poet's 'particular emotions may be simple, or crude, or flat.' It is the artistic process that creates poetry.

A big gap in the above account, — for which it fails to be 'the whole story' — is the lack of explanation as to why certain feelings, impressions, experiences, images and phrases blend together suddenly to produce a poem. If the poet's mind is just a shred of platinum, working its catalytic miracle on any indifferent combination of ingredients, it should go on turning out poetry automatically and endlessly. True, Eliot adds the proviso of 'concentration'; but he qualifies it as something 'which does not happen consciously or of deliberation.' However, the alternative term 'pressure' for 'concentration', and the suggestive term 'escape' to indicate the poet's state of mind following the creative act that bring us close to the real story.

The mind stores up images, impressions and experiences; a time comes when a concentration takes place; and the poem comes into being when the mind passively or, 'inertly', attends upon the event. But there happens to be an impelling force lurking behind that has not been mentioned in this account. Eliot later came to the point; and — as is expected in a sudden exposure — did not call it 'inspiration' or 'vision' in conventional terms, but a down-right 'demon'[332] goading the poet on to his work. 'Pressure' surely it exerts, as an incubus; and an 'escape' from it is found only after the poet has disburdened himself of the poem. The composition of a poem, therefore, is, in Eliot's own words, some kind of an 'exorcism of this demon'.[333]

C.K. Stead in his illuminating chapter on 'Eliot's "Dark Embryo"' in New Poetic has given a systematic exposition of Eliot's coming round to a poetic concept 'at least as dependent on spontaneous "imagination" and "inspiration" as that which any of the romantic poets might have affirmed.'[334] This view of Eliot's poetry in direct conflict with his neo-classical doctrine ('I am not responsible for Eliot's self-contradictions,' exclaims Stead at a moment of exasperation[335]) emerges, as Stead amply demonstrates, from 'those remarks which seem most honestly to proceed from Eliot's experience as an artist.'[336]

Eliot's transition from the early point of view to one making full accommodation for what is known as 'inspiration' and 'personality'[337] is a lengthy process, which can be called self-contradiction, or, in agreement with Eliot, 'not so much a change or reversal of opinions, as an expansion or development of interests,'[338] — a filling in of some significant gaps with the modification of some doctrinal bravados.

The impelling force which ultimately assumes the name of a 'demon', is introduced and developed in passages scattered widely over Eliot's writings.

The first significant passage of this kind is found in 'The Pensées of Pascal' written in 1931 :

> it is a commonplace that some forms of illness are extremely favourable, not only to religious illumination, but to artistic and literary composition. A piece of writing meditated, apparently without progress, for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; and in this state long passages may be produced which require little or no retouch. I have no good word to say for the cultivation of automatic writing as the model of literary composition; I doubt whether these moments can be cultivated by the writer; but he to whom this happens assuredly has the sensation of being a vehicle rather than a maker. No masterpiece can be produced whole by such means : but neither does even the higher form of religious inspiration suffice for the religious life; even the most exalted mystic must return to the world, and use his reason to employ the results of his experience in daily life. You may call it communion with the Divine, or you may call it a temporary crystallization of the mind. Until science can teach us to reproduce such phenomena at will science cannot claim to have explained them; and they can be judged only by their fruits.[339]

The second of these passages occurs in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1932-33) :

> some forms of ill-health, debility or anaemia, may (if other circumstances are favourable) produce an efflux of poetry in a way approaching the condition of automatic writing — though, in contrast to the claims sometimes made for the latter, the material has obviously been incubating within the poet, and cannot be suspected of being a present from a friendly or impertinent demon. What one writes in

> this way may succeed in standing the examination of a more normal state of mind; it gives me the impression, as I have just said, of having undergone a long incubation, though we do not know until the shell breaks what kind of egg we have been sitting on. To me it seems that at these moments, which are characterized by the sudden lifting of the burden of anxiety and fear which presses upon our daily life so steadily that we are unaware of it, what happens is something negative : that is to say, not 'inspiration' as we commonly think of it, but the breaking down of strong habitual barriers — which tend to re-form very quickly. Some obstruction is momentarily whisked away. The accompanying feeling is less like what we know as positive pleasure, than a sudden relief from an intolerable burden'.[340]

This disturbance of our quotidian character, according to Eliot, results in 'an incantation, an outburst of words which we hardly recognize as our own (because of the effortlessness)'.[341]

In a footnote to this passage Eliot calls the poetic process described in it 'my own experience' and adduces the following from A.E. Housman's Name and Nature of Poetry as a confirmation of what he has said, taking added satisfaction 'in the fact that I only read Mr. Housman's essay some time after my own lines were written':

> In short I think that the production of poetry, in its first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process; and if I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster. I think that my own case, though I may not deal with the matter so cleverly as the oyster does, is the latter; because I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting.[342]

One brief but significant reference to the creative process under consideration is found in a critical note contributed by Eliot to the Collected Poems of Harold Monro, edited by Alida Monro in 1933 :

> It is the poet's business to be original, in all that is comprehended by 'technique', only so far as is absolutely necessary for saying what he has to say; only so far as is dictated, not by the idea — for there is no idea — but by the nature of that dark embryo within him which gradually takes on the form and speech of a poem.[343]

Preluded by a supporting passage from the German poet Gottfried Benn in what Eliot calls 'a very interesting lecture entitled Probleme der Lyrik, Eliot's fourth and climactic account of the process appears in 'The Three Voices of Poetry':

> In a poem which is neither didactic nor narrative, and not animated by any other social purpose, the poet may be concerned solely with expressing in verse — using all his resources of words, with their history, their connotations, their music — this obscure impulse. He does not know what he has to say until he has said it; and in the effort to say it he is not concerned with making other people understand anything. He is not concerned, at this stage, with other people at all : only with finding the right words or, anyhow, the least wrong words. He is not concerned whether anybody else will ever listen to them or not, or whether anybody else will ever understand them if he does. He is oppressed by a burden which he must bring to brith in order to obtain relief. Or, to change the figure of speech, he is haunted by a demon, a demon against which he feels powerless, because in its first manifestation it has no face, no name, nothing; and the words, the poem he makes, are a kind of form of exorcism of this demon. In other words again, he is going to all that trouble, not in order to communicate with anyone, but to gain relief from acute discomfort; and when the words are finally arranged in the right way — or in what he comes

> to accept as the best arrangement he can find — he may experience a moment of exhaustion, of appeasement, of absolution, and of something very near annihilation, which is in itself indescribable. And then he can say to the poem : 'Go away I Find a place for your self in a book — and don't expect me to take any further interest in you.[344]

The first passage cited from 'The Pensées of Pascal', apparently so dissimilar, is linked with 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' by its references to the poet as 'a vehicle rather than a maker' (cf. the poet's mind conceived as a medium in the earlier essay), the 'temporary crystallization of the mind' 'the intensity of the artistic process', 'the pressure' and the 'concentration' in the poet's mind) and automatic writing (cf. 'a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation'). But it introduces 'some forms of illness' as conducive to literary composition giving it the 'shape and word'.

The second passage takes over 'some forms of illness' verbatim with the elaboration of 'debility or anaemia' and reiterates 'automatic writing'. The waiting for the moment of concentration is given the name of 'incubation' ('the material has obviously been incubating within the poet'; 'We do not know until the shell breaks what kind of egg we have been sitting on') and the word 'demon' is dropped in passing and in a negative way ('the material ... cannot be suspected of being a present from a friendly or impertinent demon'). The passage provides, as a substitute for the term 'inspiration', the 'sudden lifting of the burden of anxiety and fear which presses upon our daily life' or 'the breaking down of strong habitual barriers'. The discription of the accompanying feeling as 'less like what is known as positive pleasure, than sudden relief from an intolerable burden' reminds one of the 'escape from emotion' in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' and infuses more meaning into that potently vague phrase.

In the brief third passage the 'egg' incubated assumes the name of the 'dark embryo' which 'gradually takes on the form and shape of a poem'. But here a new factor is added — that of the 'technique', originality in which is justified only 'as far as is absolutely necessary for saying what [the poet] has to say'.

Eliot's conclusive 'Three Voices' passage treats two aspects of the act of creation — developed so long at varied length and with varied degrees of emphasis — the 'obscure impulse' and the 'technique' of composition. Instead of the 'burden of anxiety and fear' which is suddenly lifted at the time of creation, we now have the straight forward 'burden which the poet must bring to birth' (clinching the embryo metaphor). Having made this frank admission, Eliot changes the figure of speech and unveils the 'demon' who has been lurking behind and made a deceptive appearance some time earlier. The poet, he says, is 'haunted by a demon, a demon against which he feels powerless, because in its first manifestation, it has no face, no name, nothing; and the words, the poem he makes are a kind of form of exorcism of this demon.' Eliot once criticized the view of poetry as 'turning loose of emotion', but now he resorts to the more vehement and less reputable description of getting rid of a mental agony. In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', Eliot said a good deal about the images, phrases, floating feelings, structural emotions, etc., and the importance of 'tradition' for poetic expression, but nothing about the 'impulse' or the 'inner necessity' ('the man who suffers' being hermetically sealed from 'the mind which creates'). He now makes full amends for the evasion by presenting the poet under the intolerable burden, in acute birth pangs, — poetry, in that case, being the issue; or being haunted by a demon, — poetry, in this instance, being 'a kind of form of exorcism'.

It seems that Eliot was not sure about the merit and scope of the poetic process he came to confess by slow degrees. Certainly it was not the only method he followed in his poetic practice. He was also chary of the psychological implications of it.[345] 'Some finer minds', he conceded, 'indeed may operate very differently; I cannot think of Shakespeare or Dante as having been dependent upon such capricious releases.'[346] His skepticism deepened as he introspected : 'I am not even sure that the poetry which I have written in this way is the best that I have written', and 'Perhaps this throws no light on poetry at all.'[347] He also betrays a secretive tendency (characteristically Eliotic) with a provocation for a literary detective when he assures himself that 'no critic has ever identified the passages'[348] composed in this method. But in whatever way he might have looked at the process, it characterizes him basically as a romantic. His uncertainty about it may have deferred so long a categorical statement of it; and his diffidence about it may have caused his self-conscious and over-cultivated neo-classical stance.

III

Not only in what may now be admitted as 'inspiration', but also in 'technique', gradually brought to the fore in the quoted passages, Eliot turns out to be basically romantic. A poet, Eliot states in the fourth quoted passage, should wait on the moment of concentration, equipped with 'all the resources of words, with their history, their connotations, their music'; but he 'does not know what he has to say until he has said it', he asserts in the same breath. He finds great affinity with the German poet, Gottfried Benn, whom he echoes almost word for word, in this respect. According to Benn, in Eliot's translation of his 'Probleme der Lyrik' :

> There is first ... an inert embryo or 'creative germ' (ein dumpfer schopferischer Keim) and, on the other hand, the Language, the resources of the words at the poet's command. He has something germinating in him for which he must find words; but he cannot know what words he wants until he has found the words; he cannot identify this embryo until it has been transformed into an arrangement of the right words in the right order. When you have the words for it, the 'thing' for which the words had to be found has disappeared, replaced by a poem. What you start from is nothing so definite as an emotion, in any ordinary sense; it is still more certainly not an idea; it is — to adapt two lines of Beddoes to a different meaning — a
>
> bodiless childful of life in the gloom
> Crying with frog voice, 'what shall I be ?'[349]

So the poet is after a set of words which he does not consciously command, but recognizes its having been there only after it has appeared on the page. This may be a true account of a process of literary composition, but it can scarcely be called 'classical' without a monstrous distortion of the meaning of the critical term. Classical art has traditionally been connected with a lucid grasp of the subject-matter and a perfect application of an established form.[350] The 'childful of life in the gloom' of Beddoes is too vague and 'bodiless', i.e., 'formless' to be called 'classical'. The lugubrious 'frog voice' is a far cry from the assured language of a classicist.

In the employment of 'form' in his poetry, Eliot turns out to be essentially romantic. The classical mode is to have a clear idea of the form before the artist begins to work on his material. But in most of the poems on which Eliot's reputation rests, he first starts writing and the form gradually evolves itself. What, one may legitimately ask, is the 'form' in 'Prufrock' or 'Gerontion'? It is not to be identified with the 'dramatic monologue', a recognized literary form, to which it bears the closest resemblance, or any other particular form. The seemingly dramatic situation of the initial lines of the poems, written in fragments over a period of time, is presently lost in vague and shifting circumstances. Eliot's fragmentary manner of composition is well known; and even his masterpieces could not fully outgrow this initial limitation. The much-admired five-section form of The Waste Land — imitated systematically in Four Quartets — evolved itself, as we shall have occasion to see, accidentally (the rare lyrical interlude of the fourth section being the leftover of an editorial misunderstanding between Eliot and

Ezra Pound). The four-poem structure of the Quartets, again, was unpremeditated and a product of long-drawn-out and fitful evolution. None was more keenly aware of this problem of the form than Eliot himself. Asked whether Pound's excisions altered the original structure of The Waste Land, Eliot gave the startling reply in his 'Paris Review Interview': 'No. I think it was just as structureless, only in a more futile way, in the longer version.'[351] This candid denial of a satisfactory form in the poem must have upset many a scholar who applied an eleborate critical apparatus to justify its formal unity. Eliot's extreme view of the form is expressed in the continuation of the fourth passage quoted above :

> And now I should like to return for a moment to Gottfried Benn and his unknown, dark psychic material — we might say, the octopus or angel with which the poet struggles. I suggest that between the three kinds of poetry to which my three voices correspond there is a certain difference of process. In the poem in which the first voice, that of the poet talking to himself, dominates, the 'psychic material' tends to create its own form — the eventual form will be to a greater or less degree the form for that one poem and for no other.[352]

The above is par excellence the romantic concept of form.

It may be contended that Eliot is here speaking of only one of the three voices of poetry and the two others have different problems of form. But there is no doubt that Eliot is more concerned with the first voice which he is inclined to believe to be the genuine voice of poetry :

> I think that in every poem, from the private meditation to the epic or the drama, there is more then one voice to be heard. If the author never spoke to himself, the result would not be poetry, though it might be magnificent rhetoric; and part of our enjoyment of great poetry is the enjoyment of overhearing words which are not addressed to us.[353]

IV

Having recognized the romantic core of Eliot's concept of form, we must try to understand his neo-classical assertions in a different light.

The elements that align Eliot with the Romantics lie beyond his control or below the level of his consciousness. But no art can be produced unconsciously or automatically. The material assumes its form; but the artist, rather the craftsman, must assist it in evolving its final shape. The process is a long and arduous one and needs lengthy preparations and minute attention. The workmanship, to be sure, is akin to classicism.

The preoccupation, indeed, is absorbing and exhausting. Very few poets of the century have dwelt so much on the technicalities of their art or given so patient attention to the making of a poem as Eliot.

Eliot's meticulous workmanship begins with the word. He is as careful in using a word or a phrase, as he has been in equipping his mind with it over the years. In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' he speaks of the poet's mind as storing up 'numberless feelings, phrases, images'[354] and in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, of selecting automatically 'an image, a phrase, a word — which may be of some use later.'[355] These, according to Eliot, could be taken from picture papers and cheap novels as well as serious books,and 'this selection probably runs through the whole of his sensitive life.'[356] The process, in Eliot's own case, was supported by his phenomenal memory.[357] Sencourt mentions how Eliot knew by heart the masterpieces that fascinated him when he was a boy.[358] Unger examines how words and descriptive details from Heart of Darkness were lodged in his memory to find their way later into The Waste Land and other writings.[359]

Words and phrases culled with care were used by Eliot with great aptness and effect. Gardner mentions Eliot's 'natural gift for the vividly memorable phrase'.[360] Eliot's own observation on Shakespeare's use of a word or an image 'saturated while it lay in the depths of Shakespeare's memory'[361] is particularly applicable to himself. Reminiscences and echoes in him, as Gardner remarks, 'come to us as the fruit of a lifetime's reading and thinking, carrying memories of events and of persons, and of phrases that echoed and sang in Eliot's mind.'[362] Words in combinations like 'defunctive music', 'a lustreless protrusive eye' or 'a meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand' in a single poem like 'Burbank with a Baedeker' and phrases like 'an overwhelming question', 'carefully caught regrets', 'a heap of broken images', and 'the still point of the turning world' bear marks of the last degree of finish.

Often the phrase was extended to a verse, such as, 'A washed-out smallpox cracks her face', 'I have measured out my life with coffee spoons', 'The deceitful face of hope and despair' or to a couple of lines :

> The awful daring of a moment's surrender
> Which an age of prudence can never retract.
>
> The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
> The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

'What makes his poetry so memorable (literally memorable)', John Gross exaggerates to emphasize, 'is that each line seems to have been looked at for six months;'[363] in the same manner, Hugh Kenner comments : 'Every phrase seems composed as though the destiny of the author's soul depended on it.'[364]

But, as Eliot himself points out, 'A single verse is not poetry unless it is a one-verse poem; and even the finest line draws its life from its context. Organization is necessary as well as "inspiration"'.[365] In Eliot, the basic organized unit is a paragraph, some of which may be conceived and executed independently at the initial stage, such as the Prince Hamlet passage in 'Prufrock' (Ezra Pound was against its inclusion in the poem). Similar compositional units may be found in the water-dripping passage in The Waste Land (ll.331-358), the 'Death by Water' passage (appended, in its French version, to the narrative of the calf love in 'Dans le Restaurant', and later on to the narrative of the fishing expedition in the manuscript version of The Waste Land-IV) and many passages in Four Quartets and elsewhere.

Assembling the shorter passages into a complete poem was a slow and painstaking task. Eliot would sometimes take months and years to arrive at the final form. Eliot's major and truly characteristic poems like 'Prufrock', The Waste Land, Ash Wednesday, and Four Quartets are products of this long-drawn-out process. Poems like 'Preludes', 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' also were written at irregular intervals over a stretch of time. The resultant composition scarcely conforms to a conventional literary form. Unger calls 'Prufrock' an 'interior monologue',[366] Bergonzi calls 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait' 'dramatic interior monologues'[367] and Schneider calls 'Gerontion' 'nominally ...a dramatic monologue like Prufrock; scarcely more than nominally.'[368] The difficulty in determining the form of a poem by Eliot has sent critics, including Eliot himself, to musical and pictorial analogies. Eliot's own use of terms like 'song', 'prelude' 'quartet', etc. in the titles of his poems, makes this point explicit. The musical structure of Four Quartets has been emphasized to the extent of finding parellels between it and a specific Beethoven piece.[369] Gertrude Patterson discovers the Cubist method in Eliot's poetic art.[370] Bergonzi rightly finds parallels between Eliot in poetry, Stravinsky in music and Picasso in pictorial art.[371]

In giving final shape to a poem Eliot not only resorted to an almost never-ending process of revisions and correction, but also made use of the suggestions of those whom he valued for this critical judgment. Illustrating Eliot's habit of 'trying out his poems on his friends',[372] Helen Gardner gives details of the correspondence between Eliot and John Heyward, during the slow and painstaking process of the composition of Four Quertets. While putting finishing touches to 'Little Gidding', Eliot wrote to Heyward on 19 September 1942 : '...to spend much more time over this poem might be dangerous. After a time one loses the original feeling of the impulse, and then it is no longer safe to alter. It is time to close the chapter.'[373] 'But', Gardner adds, 'there were still some footnotes to the chapter he had declared "closed". The first proof, corrected by Eliot 28 September, makes yet further alterations. A note to Hayward of 22 September reports one of these to him and letters of 2 October and 10 October show that up to the last moment they were discussing minute details of wording.'[374]

Eliot's so-called 'automatic writing', therefore, has the other side of very careful and meticulous workmanship. The 'efflux of poetry' does not automatically find the right words. The two processes seem to start about the same time, as is indicated by Eliot's words on a category of poets including himself : 'such poets find it expedient to occupy their conscious mind with the craftman's problems, leaving the deeper meaning to emerge from a lower level.'[375] But elsewhere he admits of a periodicity of the moments of 'inspiration' followed by long spells of diligent workmanship. Using a scientific simile, as in the theory of Impersonality, he deseribes it as 'the gradual accumulation of experience, like a tantalus jar : it may be only once in five or ten years that experience accumulates to form a new whole and finds its appropriate expression.... The development of experience is largely unconscious, subterranean, so that we cannot gauge its progress except once in every five or ten years...'[376] Contradicting flatly his previous assertion of the unimportance of a poet's personal experience, Eliot confesses a sense of utter exhaustion following each periodic outpouring of the tantalus jar and a sense of doubt whether it would fill up again. Several times in his life he had this experience. 'I often feel', he wrote to his brother Henry in September 1916, 'that J.A [lfred] P [rufrock] is a swan-song.'[377] In On Poetry : an address (1947), he articulated his misgivings :

> I sometimes feel that ... I shall never again write anything good. Some imp always whispers to me, as I am struggling to get down to any new piece of work, that this is going to be lamentably bad, and that I won't know it. At least three times during my life, and for periods of some duration, I have been convinced that I shall never again be able to write anything worth reading.[378]

During the period of drought, Eliot would advise a poet, as himself, 'not to write something merely because it is high time you wrote something, but to wait patiently ... for the impulse which you cannot resist.'[379] But instead of waiting idly for 'these unpredictable crystallizations',

> the poet must be working; he must be experimenting and trying his technique so that it will be ready, like a well-oiled fire-engine, when the moment comes to strain it to its utmost. The poet who wishes to continue to write poetry must keep in training; and must do this, not by forcing his inspiration, but by good workmanship on a level possible for some hours' work every week of his life.'[380]

The deeper meaning of a poem-in-the-making forcing its way up — a process basically unconscious, and therefore 'romantic' — is met half way by a conscious and careful workmanship — an activity characteristically 'classicist'. The interaction between the two is the secret of Eliot's poetic art.

The yet to be verbalized poem may first appear to the poet only as a rhythmic pattern. 'A poem', Eliot says, 'or a passage of a poem, may tend to realize itself first as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words; ... and I do not believe that this is an experience peculiar to myself.'[381] Elsewhere he says, 'For other poets — at least for some other poets — the poem may begin to shape itself in fragments of musical rhythm.'[382]

The fusion at this stage, of rhythm and word takes place under a faculty of the mind called by Eliot 'auditory imagination' :

> the feeling for syllable and rhythm, penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word ;

> sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end. It works through meanings, certainly, or not without meanings in the ordinary sense, and fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilized mentality.[383]

The same process, as Gardner points out, is described in poetic terms in 'Burut Norton' :

> Words move, music moves ...
>   Words strain,
> Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
> Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
> Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
> Will not stay still. Shrieking voices
> Scolding, mocking, or merely chattering,
> Always assail them. The Word in the desert
> Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
> The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
> The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

A matter of intrinsic value in considering poetic art, which Eliot found playing little role in Arnold's criticism of poetry,[384] has been adopted as the central concept by which to judge Eliot's poetry in Gardner's famous study, The Art of T.S. Eliot.

Through a continuous interplay of rhythm and word, there follows the absorbing, exacting, partly conscious and partly unconscious process of the shaping out of the 'creative germ' into the right arrangement of words. A modicum of mystery clings to the process as Eliot's apology to the reader makes clear : 'I should not like you to think that I am trying to make the writing of a poem more of a mystery than it is.'[385]

The baffling fact that the poet does not know what he is going to say until he has said it, is further complicated by the problem that he is not sure whether what has been said is exactly what he wanted to say. In the poet's effort to say what is not known until he has said it, he is not concerned, Eliot states, 'with making other people understand anything. He is not concerned, at this stage, with other people at all : only with finding the right words or, anyhow, the least wrong words.'[386] So the words both precede and follow what may conveniently be called 'the sense' — the words determine what is there to be said; at the same time, what is there to be said determines their being 'right' or 'least wrong'. 'He is not concerned', Eliot continues, 'whether anybody else will listen to them or not, or whether anybody else will ever understand them if he does.'[387] It is surely at the farthest reaches of human perception that this mutual chase between words and meaning takes place. The poet, even after straining his verbal abilities to the limit, may give up the hope of attaining anything comprehensible to others or even to himself. He stretches himself to the point beyond which 'words fail, though meanings still exist.'[388] Referring to his so-called 'intention' in The Waste Land, Eliot said in his 'Paris Review Interview': 'One wants to get something off one's chest. One does not know quite what it is that one wants to get off the chest until one's got it off. But I couldn't apply the word 'intention' positively to any of my poems. Or to any poem.'[389] Later in the interview he admitted : 'I think that in the early poems it was a question of not being able to — of having more to say than one knew how to say, and having something one wanted to put into words and rhythm which one didn't have the command of words and rhythm to put in a way immediately apprehensible.'[390] He even came to the point of confessing : 'In The Waste Land, I wasn't even bothering whether I understood what I was saying.'[391] There is a note of resignation of Eliot's statement on his own experience, in the last analysis, about obscurity in poetry : 'while this may be regrettable, we should be glad, I think, that the man has been able to express himself at all.'[392]

It is a corollary to the above that the enjoyment of poetry should not be expected to depend on a full understanding of the meaning of the poem. 'I know that some of the poetry', Eliot says, 'to which I am most devoted is poetry which I did not understand at first reading; some is poetry which I am not sure I understand yet.'[393] From this he goes on to the conclusive statement :

> and we have the assurance of Coleridge, with the approval of Mr. Housman, that 'poetry gives most pleasure when only generally and not perfectly understood.[394]

So starting from the proposition that in poetry 'what is there to be communicated was not in existence before the poem was completed',[395] we arrive at the summing-up that 'that which is to be communicated is the poem itself.'[396]

But there is an inherent problem in the theory of poetry, or rather the theory of the meaning of poetry, propounded above. If we do not want to make'the writing of a poem more of a mystery than it is', at one with Eliot, it must be admitted that there is a danger in making a virtue of the obscurity in poetry. There seems to be no sufficient guarantee against enjoying poetry which does not really have a meaning.

There is a risk involved in the poet's not bothering about the meaning of what he said, as Eliot himself concedes the possibility of a poet 'trying to persuade himself that he has something to say when he hasn't.'[397] An extreme, almost preternatural, situation is created when the poet feels like doing away with the 'meaning' altogether :

> But the minds of all poets do not work that way; some of them, assuming that there are other minds like their own, become impatient of this 'meaning' which seems superfluous, and perceive possibilities of intensity through its elimination.[398]

Eliot at once admits that this situation is not ideal; and the parenthetical 'assuming that there are other minds like their own' implies not doing without meaning altogether, but an urge to communicate it almost through sympathetic vibrations.

What Eliot normally does is, however, to find the right words for what is forcing its way up and gripping him like a demon. At first it has 'no face, no name, nothing' and it is his business to find 'the right words or, anyhow, the least wrong words'. All the mastery and skill that the poet has acquired through patient exercise is employed to get the desired result. Though Eliot says that the poet does not know what he is going to say till has said it, he strongly believes that the words he uses should bring out the object as clearly as possible :

> Language in a healthy state presents the object, is so close to the object that the two are identified.[399]

Language divorced from the object, when 'the meaning is merely the hallucination of meaning, because language, uprooted, has adapted itself to an independent life of atmospheric nourishment' is adhorrent to Eliot.'[400] Elsewhere he recommends the writing of poetry :

> which should be essentially poetry, with nothing poetic about it, poetry standing naked in its bare bones, or poetry so transparent that we should not see the poetry, but that which we are meant to see through the poetry, poetry so transparent that in reading it we are intent on what the poem points at, and not on the poetry....[401]

And finally, according to Eliot, 'the language which is more important to us is that which is struggling to digest and express new objects, new groups of objects, new feelings, new aspects...'[402]

So minimizing the 'mystery' of the poetic craft, we can assume that in writing poetry, or the kind of poetry Eliot most values, there is some 'object, or at least 'feeling' or 'aspect' which the poet strives to give verbal rendering. The more unfamiliar, rare or subtle the 'object' is, the harder the effort of the poet is to find the right words. The identification of the object having begun after a sudden combination of words below the level of the poet's conscious will or understanding, the poet tries to find apter words for the object getting clearer. The two-way traffic of words dragging up and giving shape to the object, and the gradually emerging shape calling for more exact rendering engages the poet in the meticulous, exacting and exhausting process of revision and refinement. At the initial stage, however, the momentum of the creative act carries the poet some way without an awareness of what he has been doing. As the 'creative germ' or the haunting 'demon' or the 'dark psychic material' assumes a recognizable contour, the poet passes on from words and phrases to the more formal organization of the poem. In this again, the material does not automatically assume a form; 'what happens', Eliot says,

> is a simultaneous development of form and material; for the form affects the material at every stage; and perhaps all the material does is to repeat 'not that ! not that !' in the face of each unsuccessful attempt at formal organization; and finally the material is identified with its form.[403]

The eventual form, as we have already noted, is 'to a greater or less degree the form for that one poem and for no other.'

The inception as well as the final form of a poem conforming to Eliot's first and most important 'voice' of poetry is 'romantic' in character; the accompanying workmanship is 'classical' in temper. It is true that the romantic part of the performance is mostly unconscious and compulsive, whereas the classical part occupies most of the artist's conscious efforts. The former the poet cannot help, the latter offers him the scope for work and improvement and attainment of perfection. So the active role of the poet, from Eliot's point of view, is mainly confined to the latter. But can this fact outweigh the other, more intrinsic and fundamental, consideration ?

During the act of creation, which he describes as extremely absorbing and agitating, Eliot has little time to ponder whether he is being a classicist or a romantic. The critical labelling is entirely an afterthought, based on considerations examined above, and, what is probably more important, caused by some prejudices Eliot came to share from his early days. 'Classicism' to him is actually a manifesto term, a war-cry against the still powerful onrush of 19th-century romanticism in its latter-day degenerate form. The partisan point of view, fostered considerably by the teachings of his Harvard mentor, Irving Babbitt, never allowed him to look at romanticism with sufficient academic detachment. Bornstein analyses this aspect in his Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot and Stevens :

> Had Babbitt distinguished genuine from sham romanticism and then blasted the latter, he would have done useful work. Instead, he mischievously conflated Rousseau and the great romantics with their feebler derivatives in a sweeping condemnation of the modern mind as a product of emotional naturalism hostile to civilization. From the resultant farrago of insight, distortion, and apparent inability to construe simple texts, romanticism (in the variety Babbitt indicates he is analyzing) emerges as an emotional naturalism, tainted with egocentricity and hostile to reason .... Romantics value delirium and intoxication for their own sake, flee from centre to circumference, and always seek extremes. Against these fulminations, it is futile to recall Wordsworth's definition of imagination as reason in her most exalted mood, Coleridge on balance of faculties in the poet, Blake on need for both Prolific and Devourer, Keats on egotism, or Shelley on poetry as expression of indestructible order and at once centre and circumference. Babbitt does not really offer us a critique of romanticism; instead, he propounds his own doctrines of authority, discipline, and the inner check and uses romanticism as foil to justify his own tenets. That is the same use that Eliot made of romanticism and perhaps the deepest lesson learnt by the disciple from his master.[404]

Bornstein points out that both Babbitt and Eliot cite Wordsworth's phrase about 'emotion recollected in tranquility', as his definition of poetry, 'despite Wordsworth's clear identification of it simply as the "origin" of poetry, or as the mood in which successful composition usually begin.[405]

Matching this error in definition, there is Eliot's shocking simplification : 'With Mr. Murry's formulation of Classicism and Romanticism I cannot agree; the difference seems to me rather the difference between the complete and the fragmentary, the adult and the immature, the orderly and the chaotic.'[406]

Another reason for Eliot's adverse attitude to romanticism, as made clear by Bornstein's analysis, is linking his adolescent phase of romanticism with the onset of sexuality :

> Two experiences — onset of sexual drives and breakdown of the ego's walls of self-possession by poetry — converged in his adolescence .... For the rest of his life he would condemn romanticism as immature or adolescent, link it to loss of rational control, and chafe particularly at celebrations of illicit sexuality outside the constraints of marriage.[407]

What lends support to Bornstein's supposition is Eliot's dating the romantic phase 'at or about puberty'[408] and seeing the poetry of this period 'as something (not) with an existence outside ourselves; much as in our youthful experiences of love....'[409]

Eliot's tone is unnecessarily strident in declaring his point of view as 'classicist in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion'.[410] Later on he repented this excess which he admitted to have been in reaction to a personal taunt.[411] The too neat summing-up, echoing distinctly the formulation of classique, catholique, monarchique in an editorial note to an article by Eliot's French mentor Charles Maurras [412] was referred to by Eliot as 'a statement which has continued to dog its author long after it has ceased, in his opinion, to be a satisfactory statement of his beliefs.'[413] His sense of harassment is brought out by his quotation of the Shelleyan verses :

> And his own thoughts, along that rugged way,
> Pursued, like raging hounds, their father and their prey.

The revised position in 1961 is stated thus :

> my religious beliefs are unchanged, and I am strongly in favour of the maintenance of the monarchy in all countries which have a monarchy; as for Classicism and Romanticism, I find that the terms have no longer the importance to me that they once had. But even if my statement of belief needed no qualification at all after the passage of the years, I should not be inclined to express it quite this way.[414]

The revision, indeed, had been taking place for quite some years, or, to speak the truth, as he himself admits, he was never very sure within. Way back in 1928, i.e. the same year he made the controversial statement, he jokingly said (in justification of his inability to appreciate 'epigrams') : 'my taste is possibly too romantic.'[415] In republishing For Lancelot Andrews under the title Essays Ancient and Modern, he omitted the Preface that contained the embarrassing statement. In After Strange Gods (1934), he introspects (talking of himself as if he were another person) :

> I would wish ... to make the point that romanticism and classicism are not matters with which creative writers can afford to bother over much, or with which they do, as a rule, in practice greatly concern themselves. It is true that from time to time writers have labelled themselves 'romanticists, or 'classicists', just as they have from time to time banded themselves together under other names. These names which groups of writers and artists give themselves are the delight of professors and historians of literature, but should

> not be taken very seriously; their chief value is temporary and political — that, simply, of helping to make the authors known to a contemporary public; and I doubt whether any poet has ever done himself anything but harm by attempting to write as a 'romantic' or as a 'classicist'. No sensible author, in the midst of something that he is trying to write, can stop to consider whether it is going to be romantic or the opposite. At the moment when one writes, one is what one is, and the damage of a lifetime, and of having been born into an unsettled society, cannot be repaired at the moment of composition.[416]

The candidly confessional last sentence exposing the 'damage of a lifetime' and the misfortune of being 'born in an unsettled society' points to the inevitable romantic course left to Eliot. Edward Lobb, in his examination of Eliot's unpublished Clark Lectures (1926) places him mainly in the romantic critical tradition of English literary criticism.[417] 'Some critics, catching at his techniques of style, have called him a classicist;' states Grover Smith at the beginning of his famous study of the sources and meaning of Eliot's works :

> they have been less precise than Eliot himself, for, as he has acutely said, 'a poet in a romantic age, cannot be a "classical" poet except in tendency.'[418]

V

'Prufrock' is the first major outpouring of Eliot's early youth. The squalid society he was born in and the damage his life had suffered brought forth words, images and motifs that coaleseed in potent and evocative verses. The poem is written in the best Eliotic vein. It can be divided into several sections. Words and phrases make up paragraphs of extraordinary internal harmony and finish. The yellow-fog passage, the Lazarus passage, the Prince Hamlet passage, etc. are luminous gems by themselves. Eliot's workmanship could interact with his momentary inspiration to produce verses of a certain length. In fact, all his most characteristic poetic compositions, Eliot appears to have written

in sections. Joining and unifying them caused him various degrees of problem. The measure of his success can be best deduced from Eliot's own account of a similar performance. Replying to a question about the composition of Ash Wednesday in an interview, Eliot said :

> Yes, like 'The Hallow Men', it originated out of separate poems. As I recall, one or two early drafts of parts of 'Ash Wednesday' appeared in Commerce and elsewhere. Then gradually I came to see it as a sequence. That's one way in which my mind does seem to have worked throughout the years poetically — doing things separately and then seeing the possibility of fusing them together, altering them, and making a kind of whole of them.[419]

Keeping the above passage in mind, Helen Gardner comments on the 'bent of his natural genius' :

> Essentially he was an explorer, not an expounder, discovering truth of feeling, and the truths that feelings point to, in the process of exploration; and discovering also connexions and new meanings in poems or passages of poems written without thought of their coherence with each other.[420]

In finding out the meaning of the poem one would be best advised to follow Eliot's observations on the meaning in poetry discussed above. Efforts to find out a thorough coherence are destined to come up against serious odds. Even a more general explication, commonly known as 'interpretation', has a limited scope in an Eliotic poem. Specific notes, tracking down allusions and quotations, following up verbal echoes, elucidation of the symbolism of particular images, etc., are all right. But a systematic beginning-to-end commentary is better avoided. Eliot himself was not in favour of this approach to a poem. He does not conceal his dissatisfaction at the interpretation of 'The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock' by Joseph Margolis in Interpretations, edited by John Wain.[421] Good-humouredly calling the school of criticism to which this interpretation belongs the 'lemon-squeezer school', he finds the result 'interesting and a little confusing', and the reader's job of following the analysis 'a very tiring way of passing the time.'[422] According to him :

> The first danger is that of assuming that there must be just one interpretation of the poem as a whole, that must be right. There will be details of explanation, especially with poems written in another age than our own, matters of fact, historical allusions, the meaning of a certain word at a certain date, which can be established, and the teacher can see that his pupils get these right. But as for the meaning of the poem as a whole, it is not exhausted by any explanation, for the meaning is what the poem means to different sensitive readers. The second danger ... is that of assuming that the interpretation of a poem, if valid, is necessarily an account of what the author consciously or unconsciously was trying to do.... The analysis of 'Prufrock'...interested me because it helped me to see the poem through the eyes of an intelligent, sensitive and diligent reader. That is not at all to say that he saw the poem through my eyes, or that his account has anything to do with the experiences that led up to my writing it, or with anything I experienced in the process of writing it.... nearly all the poems in the volume were poems that I had known and

> loved for many years; and after reading the analyses, I found I was slow to recover my previous feeling about the poems.... I suspect, in fact, that a good deal of the value of an interpretation is — that it should be my own interpretation.... a valid interpretation, I believe, must be at the same time an interpretation of my own feelings when I read it.[423]

In 'Rudyard Kipling' (1941), Eliot spoke approvingly of a kind of poetry capable of 'exciting, within a limited range, a considerable variety of responses from different readers' as distinguished from the kind 'intended to elicit the same response from all readers.'[424] 'Prufrock' is expected to elicit from different readers different responses within certain limits. Barring factual errors and wild surmises, the reader will be allowed to form his own interpretation of the poem. An interpretation for him, again, will not remain the same for all time to come. An interpretation, from Eliot's point of view, is the interpretation of the feelings of an intelligent and perceptive reader at the time he reads the poem.

CHAPTER IV

DEGREES OF DROUGHT

I

STARTED SOME TIME earlier, 'Portrait of a Lady' was written concurrently with 'Prufrock' and there is a considerable thematic overlap between the two companion pieces. 'Portrait of a Lady', it has been noted, is as much the portrait of a young man;[425] and the title of 'Love Song' could better apply to it, as the female presence in the poem is more defined with a shade more pronounced amorous inclinations. The young man suffers, as does Prufrock, from diffidence and inability to force a decision, though he is consistently young in this poem and it is the woman who is aging. The vaguely sinister female in both poems pins the young man on the wall like an insect, or makes him dance like a bear or chatter like an ape. She partakes of Circe, whose charms reduce men to animals — the female stereotype established early in Eliot's poetry. In similar settings of teas and ices, there is the same breakdown of communication and talking at crosspurposes (the monologue-like presentation making only one side audible to the reader). The young man often takes to the streets to relieve himself of the tedium as well as the ignominy of self-abasement; and the yellow fog touches both situations with a morbid gloom.

'Portrait of a Lady' has a typical Eliotic situation and the protagonist comes close to the 'generic Eliot character'. Eliot's identification with the young man (confessed, almost to a degree of fault, in respect of 'Prufrock')[426] is made evident by the remarks of Conrad Aiken, Eliot's intimate Harvard friend and literary ally, who went about peddling these poems to literary editors.[427] His words show the young man and the lady in a real-life setting with indications of how it was transformed into a poem. In his contribution to T.S. Eliot, a symposium on the poet's 60th birth anniversary, Aiken recalled the lady as 'our dear deplorable friend, Miss X, the précieuse ridicule to end all preciosity, serving tea so exquisitely among her bric-a-brac, ... to be pinned like a butterfly to a page in Portrait of a Lady.'[428] Later, in his autobiographical writing, Ushant (1952), Aiken referred to her as 'the oh so precious the oh so exquisite, Madeleine, the Jamesian lady of ladies, the enchantress of the Beacon Hill drawingroom — who, like another Circe, had made strange shapes of Wild Michael and the Tsetse (T.S. Eliot)'.[429] Eliot acknowledged the relationship in a letter (2 February 1915) to Pound in which he mentioned having received a Christmas card from her, adding nostalgically, 'It seemed like old times.'[430] The real-life situation can be traced up to the young man's leaving for abroad towards the end of the poem, duplicating Eliot's first journey to Paris in 1910.[431]

In spite of the parallels between 'Portrait' and 'Prufrock', the former turns out to be a different kind of composition, mainly because of its place in a particular trend of the day, i.e., the prevailing Harvard practice of satire on Boston society. 'The undergraduate journals', Howarth mentions, 'teem with skits on the mother-city and its Brahmins, against powerful mothers and subdued fathers and against their unfortunate daughters....'[432] The spirit of the skit animates both of Aiken's references to the lady.

Sharing the clannish enthusiasm, Eliot turns out a series of poems. When 'The Boston Evening Transcript' and 'Aunt Helen' were published in 1917, Howarth further notes, 'these two poems were at once recognized by the Harvard men of that year — so one of them, Dr. Kenneth Robinson, tells me — as perfecting the art of local iconoclasm at which class after class had aimed.'[433] Most high-spirited among these writings seems to have been 'King Bolo and His Great Black Queen', recalled by Aiken as :

> the series of hilariously naughty parerga which was devoted spasmodically to that singular and sterling character known as King Bolo, not to mention King Bolo's Queen, 'that airy fairy hairy-'un, who led the dance on Golder's Green with Cardinal Bessarion.' These admirable stanzas, notable at times for their penetrating social criticisms were to continue for years as a sort of cynical counterpoint to the study of Sanskrit and the treatise on epistemology.[434]

The stanzas were not published, and, like Eliot's atheistic quatrains, seem to have been lost. Some of these were sent to Wyndham Lewis for the second issue of his Blast, but ultimately replaced by some other verses.[435] As late as 1935, Pound referred to Eliot's 'King Bolo' 'which I am afraid his religion won't now let him print.'[436] Bergonzi, like many others, has noted this flair for light verse in Eliot, hidden or suppressed, finding 'more universally acceptable channels with Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats'.[437]

In 'Portrait of a Lady', Eliot refined his satirical spirit and blended it with some of his more serious interests. Along with the lady, a potential target of local iconoclasm, there is the young man, sharing the poet's own situation and character,[438] and the essential banality of the lady is matched by the shattered self-sufficiency of the young man. The implied artificiality of the smoke and fog of the scene that arranges itself — 'as it will seem to do —/ With "I have saved this afternoon for you"', deepens into a sombre mood of the poet 'sitting pen in hand/ With the smoke coming down above the housetops'. The cliches and commonplaces of the lady's interminable speeches have the unexpected effect of making the friend feel utterly humiliated and small. The 'right to smile' is forfeited in a doubt as to 'what to feel'. The subject of the poem, in short, is not the two individuals, however odd and idiosyncratic, but the psychological twilight zone of their relationship. All this, to sum up, reflects the maze, psychological and spiritual, in which Eliot moved in those irksome Harvard days. Aiken is again helpful in understanding the drift of the poem when he comments on 'Portrait' along with 'Prufrock' :

> Both poems are psychological character studies, subtle to the verge of insoluble idiosyncrasy, introspective and self-gnawing. Those who are constitutionally afraid to analyse themselves, who do not think, who are not psychologically imaginative, will distrust and perhaps dislike them.[439]

'Portrait of a Lady' and 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' are two poetic efforts and the difference points to an important aspect of Eliot's poetic achievement. The almost unlimited and amorphous thematic scope of 'Prufrock' impairs the formal perfection of the poem. Eliot achieves greater formal success in 'Portrait' by delimiting his area in quite clear terms. The young man in 'Portrait' is denied Prufrock's spiritual-metaphysical concerns, martyrdom pretensions and the rest of it. The result is greater coherence and unity. The smoky afternoon in the closing verses referring back to that in the first line neatly rounds off the poem. The musical terms are strewn across the poem at almost regular intervals and the seasonal changes from December one year to October next are schematically arranged. Leavis, indeed, pronounced 'Portrait' a more 'perfect' poem than 'Prufrock'.[440] But 'Prufrock' remains a far greater piece of literature. It is, therefore, in thematic scope rather than in technical perfection that the true greatness of Eliot's poetry is to be sought.

'Preludes' and 'The Rhapsody on a Windy Night' (written in sections during 1909-10) portray essentially the same world as delineated in 'Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady' minus the protagonist. Corresponding to the periods of the day, indicated by half hours at times, the sections give vivid glimpses of the enervate life around. The images are marked as much by avoidance of direct comments as by the extreme carefulness in selecting the details. Out of a myriad possible ones, Eliot collected and juxtaposed just a few striking snapshots :

> The grimy scraps
> Of withered leaves about your feet ...
>
> A broken spring in a factory yard,
> Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left
> Hard and curled and ready to snap.

The scene comes to consciousness, so to say, with these details without the need of any generalization. In this kind of treatment, Eliot practises a virtue he noticed in Bubu of Montparnasse by Charles-Louis Philippe, a book that attracted him considerably (the first two 'Preludes', however, had already been written before he read this book in Paris in 1910) :

> His great quality is not imagination : it is a sincerity which makes him a faithful recorder of things as they are, and of events as they happened, without irrelevant and disturbing comment. He had a gift which is rare enough : the ability not to think, not to generalize. To be able to select, out of personal experience, which is really significant, to be able not to corrupt it by afterthoughts, is as rare as imaginative invention.[441]

The pictorial quality in the two poems is so strong and achieved through such economical strokes that the poem could even be taken as 'Imagist'. But the Imagistic movement was yet to appear on the scene —[442] Pound invented the term 'Imagiste' in 1912,[443] and T.E. Hulme's critical discussions which played an important role in this movement did not get into print till a much later date.[444] Here again we find how Eliot's natural bent and a theoretical formulation coincide strikingly. But Eliot's individual tendency does not fully conform to any theory. A little scrutiny shows that the images may be the images 'Of which your soul was constituted' and you have 'such a vision of the street/ As the street hardly understands'. The picture of the lonely cab-horse that 'steams and stamps' or that of the woman 'Who hesitates toward you in the light of the door' with 'the border of her dress ... torn and stained with sand' is extraordinarily vivid and objective. But the sequence of images of the cat slipping out its tongue to devour a morsel of rancid butter, of the child automatically slipping out its hand and pocketing a toy that was running along the quay, and of the eyes 'Trying to peer through lighted shutters' with the montage of 'An old crab with barnacles on his back, (Gripping) the end of a stick which I held him' follows a surrealistic association of ideas. Nor is commenting totally eschewed. Pure objectivity is surpassed in the lines :

His soul stretched tight across the skies
That fade behind a city block
....
The conscience of a blackened street
Impatient to assume the world.

and the very tender

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling :
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

A-sentimentalism need not be confused with pure objectivity. 'To the perceiver the objective becomes intensely subjective, an image reflecting a mind,' comments Williamson.[445] The natural object, held to be self-sufficient by the Imagists, is employed to other effects in these poems. 'It implies an ache,' Kenner states, 'a yearning after significance, like Wallace Stevens' unpeopled landscapes.'[446] The true implication of an image — especially an image of city life — in Eliot's poetry is brought out by Eliot's words on his great predecessor, Baudelaire, which apply to himself almost as well :

> he gave new possibilities to poetry in a new stock of imagery of contemporary life.... This introduces something new, and something universal in modern life.... It is not merely in the use of imagery of common life, not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery to the first intensity — presenting it as it is, and yet making it re-

> present something much more than itself — that Baudelaire has created a mode of release and expression for other men.[447]

The following is Eliot's retrospection, about a quarter of a century later, on the Imagist movement which he partly anticipated :

> The accomplishment of the Imagist movement in verse seems to me, in retrospect, to have been critical rather than creative; and as criticism, very important. I am not thinking only of such work as Mr. Flint's studies of contemporary French poetry, of the importance of the views of Rémy de Gourmont, or even of the more philosophical theories of T.E. Hulme as expressed in his conversation (for his influence in print belongs to a later period); but also of the Imagist poetry itself, of which a small residue is now readable. The only poet and critic who survived Imagism to develop in a larger way was Mr. Pound, who, as literary critic alone, has been probably the greatest literary influence of this century up to the present time.[448]

The title 'La figlia che piange' is connected with a personal experience of Eliot's life. 'As Eliot has told me,' writes Kristian Smidt, 'the phrase "La figlia che piange" was the name given to an old relief preserved in a museum in Northern Italy. Eliot, travelling in Italy, was advised by a friend to go and see this piece of sculpture, but failed to find it. However, the name stuck in his mind, and he used it as a suggestive title for one of his poems.'[449] Smidt, who collected the anecdote personally from Eliot, continues :

> The fact that he only heard the phrase by accident does not make it less expressive, for we feel that he was struck by it precisely because it represented something personal to him whilst being generally evocative at the same time. A chance thing like the figlia phrase may be found, instead of being expressed from within, but it still expresses some inner experience, because it is found to correspond to that experience.[450]

Some 'inner experience' which may be the wellspring of a lot of Eliot's poetry is rendered in cautious, wry even willfully smug terms. But the undeniable romantic core (allowing the subdued romantic touch : 'But weave, weave the sunlight in your hair' and the lines : 'Sometimes these cogitations still amaze/The troubled midnight and the noon's repose' — a wry reworking of the concluding verses of Wordsworth's 'Daffodils') has its effect upon the reader and supported Pound's remark in his review of Prufrock and Other Observations in Poetry: 'It is complained that Eliot is lacking in emotion. La Figlia Che Piange is sufficient confutation of that rubbish.'[451] But the emotion is anything but simple and the expression is tortuous involving at least one paradoxical situation.

The Virgilian epigraph : 'O quam to memorem virgo ...' (Aeneid I, 327), as Williamson elucidates, 'recalls the encounter of Venus and Aeneas. Venus, disguised as a maiden asking "have you seen a sister of mine?" is addressed by Aeneas : "O maiden, how may I name thee?" This epitomizes the poem's problem of emotional recollection.'[452] 'In the first section,' Williamson elaborates :

> we have the recreation of a vision involving beauty and pain.... His later, cynical, mood emerges clearly in the second section.... As he remembers it now, it resembles the separation of body and soul in a figure which reserves grief for her and release for him, which translates pain into callousness. Then disillusion finds the 'way incomparably light and deft,' which unites them both in cynical understanding. [453]

Though the poet places the girl on a high pedestal and would contemplate, like an artist or a sculptor, the parting of the lovers as a statury or a tableau, from a point of artistic detachment, there is a paradoxical identification between the spectator and one of the lovers, by, in Kenner's words, 'a Prufrockian doubling of consciousness.'[454] The image of a girl holding flowers in her arms has a complex significance in Eliot. Smidt mentions the scene of a girl with flowers 'glimpsed in a great number of poems and plays, in La Figlia Che Piange, Dans le Restaurant, The Waste Land, Ash-Wednesday, The Family Reunion, to mention the most conspicuous cases.'[455] Matthiessen makes a similar identification.[456] Unger gives an exhaustive account of the image with the comment that 'Each garden passage, whether early or late, gains in clarity and scope of meaning when in relation to others.'[457] The parallel passages commonly evoke 'a moment of beauty and its loss by a glimpse of a girl',[458] attended by a sense of remorse on the part of a lover.[459] The experience is linked with adolescent (or even juvenile) love which has the nature of an experience related by Dante in the Vita Nuova. As Matthiessen noted :

> Eliot's penetrating remarks on the 'mixture of biography and allegory' incorporated into the Vita Nuova reveal that he recognizes a vision of idealized loveliness attendant upon the first adolescent awakening of sex to be a fundamental human experience. It is the loss of such loveliness in the failure of actual sexual experience to measure up to it that constitutes the emotional undercurrent of his flower-imagery, and creates its peculiar tone of mingled frustration and longing.[460]

The undeniable personal experience at the core of the recurrent image has a compelling power matched by Eliot's unwillingness to expose it to the reader's understanding. The episode of the girl, flowers, parting and the attendant sense of remorese in 'Dans le Restaurant' followed by a passage which, translated into English, forms the 'Death by Water' section of The Waste Land, contains a secret which, unravelled, could possibly illuminate a large area of Eliot's poetry. The persisting difficulty, however, can be looked at from different angles. Though Williamson claims that the mixture of moods in 'La Figlia Che Piange' 'is subtly and effectively integrated',[461] Smidt observes :

> the technical detachment of one character or attitude from the other, the observer from the agent-sufferer, is incomplete. And there is little attempt at disguise, unless it is disguise to suggest that the observer may be a painter rather than a poet. The general effect, therefore, is of something intermediate between objective description and personal confession. Certainly we have the effect of something far more significant to the poet than 'a gesture and a pose', the understatement by which he sums up the experience.[462]

Headings comments from a slightly different point of view :

> The protagonist tries to use artistic significance as justification for the desertion, but he has not wholly succeeded in convincing himself, let alone the reader.[463]

II

'In writing La Figlia Eliot got off his chest the one remaining unwritten poem',[464] writes Kenner about Eliot in 1912 back at Harvard from his first European tour. For the ensuing three years Eliot wrote no poems and devoted himself entirely to graduate studies in metaphysics, logic, psychology, Sanskrit and Pali. He might have sincerely felt during this dry spell that 'Prufrock' was his 'swan song'.[465] The tantalus jar would take some time to fill in for another outpouring — 'it may be only once in five or ten years that experience accumulates to form a new whole and finds its appropriate expression'[466] — in Eliot's own words. The new whole, by common consent, came in around a decade's time in The Waste Land (1922), with its preluding in 'Gerontion' (1920), the preparations having started around 1916.[467] But before the next creative moment arrived, he must have occupied himself, as made explicit by his own statement, in 'experimenting and trying his technique so that it will be ready, like a well-oiled fire-engine', with 'some hours' work every week of his life.'[468]

Eliot had a few more suggestions to make on this point. In 1912 he was 24. 'Any poet, if he is to survive as a writer beyond his twenty-fifth year,' wrote he in 1917, 'must alter; he must seek new literary influences; he will have different emotions to express.'[469] In 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' (dated 1917 in Selected Essays) he wrote in emphasizing the importance of tradition : 'It involves ... the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year.'[470]

Piecing together Eliot's observations on the intermediate period, we may say that he had been diligently 'experimenting and trying his techniques' for some 'different emotions to express' and also looking for 'new literary influences'.

Before the next daemonic possession forced out of him lines that were finally shaped into The Waste Land, Eliot passed through three distinct phases of experimentation : the Oxford poems ('Morning at the Window', 'The Boston Evening Transcript', 'Aunt Helen', 'Cousin Nancy', 'Mr. Apollinax' along with 'Hysteria'), the four French poems and the quatrain poems.

A major influence that came to work on Eliot during this period was that of Ezra pound. Eliot first met Pound in September, 1914. But though Eliot at one point acknowledged Pound as the better craftsman ('il miglior fabbro'), he was by all means the greater poet and had, according to Pound, modernized himself entirely on his own.[471] Eliot, in fact, was not very impressed by Pound's verses initially.[472] In his 'Paris Review Interview', Eliot admits that he did not really like the kind of poetry in Pound's Exultations and Personae when these books first appeared.[473] But he gradually felt the impact of Pound on his poetry and once exclaimed in mock exasperation :

> I have in recent years cursed Mr. Pound often enough; for I am never sure that I can call my verse my own; just when I am most pleased with myself, I find that I have caught up some echo from a verse of Pound's.[474]

'Morning at the Window'is a carry-over of the Prufrockian period with traces of influence of Pound's 'Les Millwin'.[475] It is a mixture as before of the time of the day, street scene and depressed mood. But the spiritual pressure is low. Most scholars have found fault with the 'damp' souls of housemaids sprouting at area gates.[476] The Prufrockian consciousness is all but hidden behind the window sill — just taking note of the 'Cheshire-Cat' smile of an aimless passer-by.

Critics tend to attribute the inferiority of the poem to technical incompetence,[477] but Eliot was expected to be preoccupied with technique during this period. The fact is that the images in the 'Preludes' and 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' (to which the poem bears closest resemblance)[478] were gathered by a restless street-walker and night-walker in a spiritual turmoit[479] and those in 'Morning at the Window' seem to have been collected by the poet sojourning at Russell Square in 1914 before he moved expectantly to Oxford. From there, as Grover Smith notes,

> he wrote his borther, Henry Ware Eliot, on September 8, 1914, a letter referring to the street before the house, to an old woman who had sung 'The Rosary' for pennies, and to a housemaid engaged in conversation at the area gate. The poem may date from the following year.[480]

It is again proved that 'the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak. under which the fusion takes place'[481] cannot possibly be insulated from the emotional life of the poet, whatever impression 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' may produce on the mind of the reader.

In the other Oxford poems (excluding 'Hysteria'), Eliot's revived undergraduate flair for satire on Boston society finds a parallel in Pound's ironic commentary on the contemporary scene in Lustra and the poems may, indeed, have been influenced by them.[482] The ironic sallies were aimed at particular people (even 'The Boston Evening Transcript' was earlier entitled 'Cousin Harriet'[483] and 'one would not have to look far for the possible origins of names like "Ellicot" and "Slingsby".'[484] The caricatures capture and ridicule the authoritarian ethos of the city ('The Boston Evening Transcript' and 'Aunt Helen'[485] and the 'futile modernity' of the day ('Cousin Nancy').[486] But these too fail to rise to any impressive heights. Between the lines, however, one could read some dark implications, such as the 'stair' imagery in 'The Boston Evening Transcript', which hints at an uneasy relationship between the speaker in the poem and his cousin (the image commonly plays this role in Eliot's poetry). 'Between the man and the women', states Unger, 'there are no appetites of life but only the Boston Evening Transcript,'[487] and the newspaper plays the same role of emphasizing the dichotomy between desire and the drab reading material as in 'Portrait of Lady' :

> You will see me any morning in the park
> Reading the comics and the sporting page.[488]

The poems were written when Eliot was making up his mind to leave America and find a permanent home in England. As Headings points out, the poems show the lack of appetite in Cousin Harriet swayed by newspaper columns like a field of ripe corn, or in Aunt Helen contrasted by the crude dalliance of her servants, and the 'new generation' tendencies in Cousin Nancy evoking uncertain responses from her aunts.[489] Eliot was casting a cold eye on the enervate society he had rejected.

In 'Mr. Apollinax', as Headings notes, 'a British lion is favourably contrasted with the New England milieu.'[490] The poem is also an ironic commentary on an aspect of Boston life — the 'impossibly pompous and laborious'[491] society of Harvard professors — which serves as a foil to the ebullient character of Bertrand Russell, Eliot's one-time Harvard teacher, presented as Mr. Apollinax. 'Do you know T.S.

Eliot's little poem about me called "Mr. Apollinax"?' wrote Bertrand Russell in a letter,[492] and in another mentioned a tea-party much too like the one dealt with in Eliot's poem, where, Russell stated, 'My pupil Eliot was there...'[493]

The interpretation of the poem has come up against oddities of allusions to as diverse figures as Fragilion, Priapus ('I understand that Priapism, Narcissism etc are not approved of ...', wrote Eliot to Pound soon after he had finished the poem),[494] the old man of the sea, John the Baptist (the grinning head may have been taken from Laforgue's 'Salome'[495]) and the galloping Centaur — all bearing on the passionate character of Mr. Apollinax ('What an ingenious fellow!' — the epigraph says). A week-end party conjuring up images of 'coral islands/Where worried bodies of drowned men drift down in the green silence', (an image taken from Rimbaud's 'Bateau ivre'[496]), of a head 'rolling under a chair/Or grinning over a screen/With seaweed in its hair' and of 'the beat of centaur's hoofs over hard turf' seems so fantastic that perhaps, as Smith puts it, 'the poet has been caught off balance, ... his defensive poetic laughter is ... somewhat hallucinated.'[497] It may not exactly be hallucination, but a kind of free association of ideas (Eliot developed interest in the psychological concepts popularized in his days) exploited by a bold innovator in poetry. The bemused listener at the table given to wool-gathering as any indifferent stimulus set off trains of thought in his brain, may be detected in the picture of Eliot given by Russell in the letter already quoted from :

> My pupil Eliot was there — the only one who is civilized, and he is ultra-civilized, knows his classics very well, is familiar with

> all French literature from Villon to Vildrach, and is altogether impeccable in his taste but has no vigour or life — or enthusiasm.[498]

But the free association of ideas and images in a super-cultivated and super-sensitive mind seems to have ranged too far to allow the poem an artistic coherence and depth of meaning redeeming the general inferiority of this group of poems. Schneider's comment that it is 'funny at a depth of funniness'[499] is about all the praise one can bestow upon it.

III

The nagging urge to write something when the dry spell seemed interminable led Eliot to pen a few French poems (1916–17), four of which got into print. Recalling the occasion Eliot said in his 'Paris Review Interview' :

> That was a very curious thing which I can't altogether explain. At that period I thought I'd dried up completely. I hadn't written anything for some time and was rather desperate. I started writing a few things in French and found I could.... I did these things as a sort of tour de force to see what I could do.[500]

The poems, as Eliot admits, were seen by Ezra Pound and Edmond Dulac, a Frenchman living in London. The less successful ones were allowed to disappear completely.[501] 'Then I suddenly began writing in English again', Eliot added, 'and lost all desire to go on with French. I think it was just something that helped me get started again.'[502]

The phenomenon, however, was a recrudescence and only fruitful manifestation of an old desire of Eliot to be a 'French symbolist poet' like two fellow Americans, Stuart Merrill and Viélé-Griffin, during the year he spent in Paris after Harvard :

> I had at that time the idea of giving up English and trying to settle down and scrape along in Paris and gradually write French. But it would have been a foolish idea even if I'd been much more bilingual than I ever was.... I think one language must be the one you express yourself in in poetry.... And I think that the English language really has more resources in some respects than the French.[503]

The poems show, as Bergonzi puts it, 'Eliot's immersion in French poetry at its greatest'[504] and his faithful adherence to Pound's precepts of conscious labour and poetic training, which Eliot considered to be his 'great contribution to the work of other poets'.[505] Eliot had also extended his search for new influences by resorting to Tristan Corbière 'who had somewhat replaced Laforgue in his interest in French poets'.[506]

Applying terms like 'flippant'[507] or 'slight'[508] to these poems becomes redundant if we keep in mind Eliot's own words on them. They, however, throw light on some significant aspects of Eliot's poetic development.

'Le Directeur', the first of the printed poems, rejects 'not only the staid periodical The Spectator but also its director, smug in his reactionary coservatism'.[509] The poem may be noted for the 'touchingly radical, or perhaps only humanitarian view of the social gulf between the reactionary director of the Spectator and a tattered girl who is standing in a gutter'[510] — a point overshadowed by Eliot's preponderate latter-day conservatism.

The second poem, 'Melange Adultere de Tout', based on Corbière's 'Epitaphe pour Tristan-Joachim-Edouard Corbière, Philosophre : Epave, Mort-Né', the opening line of which supplied the title, is some kind of a comic portraiture like the one beginning 'How unpleasant to meet Mr. Eliot!'[511] The poems show how little is revealed when a person writes self-cousiously about himself, besides, perhaps, highlighting some oddities and peccadillos.

The story of two bug-bitten honeymooners at Ravenna in 'Lune de Miel' may have been the result of a fusion of two incidents that 'Eliot had visited northern Italy in 1911, and been married in 1915.'[512] The couple, identified as Americans, follow Baedeker's tourist guide[513] (cf. 'Burbank with a Baedeker') and in thinking of tips and in drawing up the balance-sheet, the last detail reminding one of Wyndham Lewis's description of Eliot's own practice :

> I remarked that my companion entered most scrupulously in a small notebook the day's expenses. This he would do in the evening at a cafe table when we had our night-cap.[514]

More important from the critical point of view is Eliot's use in this poem of the 'historical sense' emphasized by himself for a poet writing beyond his twenty fifth year. But as yet it is a superficial one of only cheap contrasts : 'a caricatured present set against an idealized past.'[515] A more complex and significant use of the 'historical sense' is yet to enrich his poetry.

'Dans le Restaurant', the last of the printed French poems, however, is a different kind of performance altogether. Instead of superficial contrasts, we are introduced, in Moody's words, to 'profound correspondences'.[516] The term 'confessional'[517] comes naturally in the discussion of the poem which is recognized as 'a new development of the "La Figlia" theme and a dramatic extension of the Prufrock mode.'[518] Touched by the 'scoffing realism of Corbière'[519] as it may be, the poem goes on to reveal an early memory of juvenile love that not only establishes a rapport between the narrator (partaking a lot of the poet himself) and an outwardly repulsive old waiter, but also suggests an identity between the poet and Dante of the Vita Nuova. The story is an odd one of a 7-year old boy meeting a still younger girl under the willows where they took shelter from rains. The boy proffered her primroses and tickled her to make her laugh : 'I experienced a moment of power and ecstasy.'[520] But at that moment a big dog appeared on the scene and made at them. 'I was frightened, I left her halfway up the path. What a pity.' This little story has repercussions in many dark and remote corners of Eliot's poetry.

The brief episode is related by a slobbering dirty waiter standing over the punctilious narrator (the latter suspects he might dribble in his soup), and the seemingly disgusted narrator pays him ten sous for the Public Baths. But the crucial utterance is made when he chides the regretful waiter : 'By what right do you have experiences like mine?' It is an unexpected confession of a secret and a private remorse, that cuts across the barriers of age and social rank. The narrative is then abruptly followed by the passage ('Phlébas, le

Phénicien') which, translated into English, ultimately formed the fourth section of the published version of The Waste Land.

The narrative in the poem has to be read side by side with a passage in Eliot's Dante essay (1929) that shows a curious psychological interest in the description of Dante's first meeting with Beatrice in the Vita Nuova :

> the type of sexual experience which Dante describes as occurring to him at the age of nine years is by no means impossible or unique. My only doubt (in which I found myself confirmed by a distinguished psychologist) is whether it could have taken place so late in life as the age of nine years. The psychologist agreed with me that it is more likely to occur at about five or six years of age .... to me it appears obvious that the Vita Nuova could only have been written around a personal experience.... I cannot find it incredible that what has happened to others should have happened to Dante with much greater intensity.[521]

Without waiting for conclusive forensic proofs, it may be safely asserted that 'Dans le Restaurant' was inspired by the emotionally charged memory of a personal experience about which Eliot sought psychological explanation from specialists. Little children in the rose garden, in the foliage, is a haunting image in Eliot's writings. The girl—flowers—rain-retreat-regret combination appears in various forms in Eliot's poetry and may be seen lurking behind the acutely regretful passage in Burnt Norton :

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

Tracing the literary relationships of 'Dans le Restaurant' with Gide's Le Prométhée mal enchaîné, Philippe's Marie Donadieu, Rimbaud's 'Les Poètes de sept ans', etc., Grover Smith comments that 'Only in Eliot are failure and shame paramount.'[522] The narrator and the waiter are both gnawed by vultures ('Mais alors, tu as ton vautour!'). Eliot believed that a poet should live with his eagle : 'As André Gide's Prometheus said, in the lecture which he gave before a large audience in Paris : Il faut avoir un aigle. Coleridge remained in contact with his eagle.'[523] The eagle or the vulture, as Moody shows, is later represented in The Family Reunion as 'his Eumenides, Furies and Kindly Ones'.[524]

The concluding 'Phlebas the Phoenician' passage plunges headlong into the depths ever probed by Eliot's poetry. Converted ultimately into the lyric interlude of the fourth section of The Waste Land, the description of the tender beauty of death and dissolution is comparable to the Shakespearean line : 'Those are pearls that were his eyes', a verse that Eliot dwelt on all his life. The transition from the character of the waiter (and, for that matter, the narrator) to that of the Phoenician sailor cannot be easily explained. In fact, one cannot be sure that the passage was not written independently at another time and then tagged on to the narrative in the characteristic Eliotic manner. It was, indeed, tagged on to the narrative of the fishing expedition in the draft version of The Waste Land, from which it was detached, almost forcibly, by Pound (he had failed to perform a similar operation on the 'Prince Hamlet'-passage in 'Prufrock').

The two narrative preludes to this passage could, however, be expected to help us in following its drift, though no exercise in critical ingenuity can remove the obvious dissimilarity between the two.

Far apart from the narrative in the French poem, the draft fourth section of The Waste Land begins with the description of a sailor's life, adventurous and dignified, in spite of the seamy sides drunkennes and gonorrhea (which have a faint resemblance to the dribbling repulsiveness of the old waiter. Presently a fishing expedition is taken up in 'kingfisher weather, with a light fair breeze' from the Dry Salvages to the eastern banks. A lot of nautical details are used in the narrative leading up to a particularly unpropitious afternoon finally yielding a big catch. The sailors go hilarious thinking of home, dollars, the pleasant violin, girls and gin. But 'I laughed not.' Soon the ship is overtaken by a storm which, gaining in velocity, drives it past the farthest northern islands and drowns the world around in an 'illimitable scream'. The young sailor in the narrator's role sees one night :

> Three women leaning forward, with white hair
> Streaming behind, who sang above the wind
> A song that charmed my senses, while I was
> Frightened beyond fear, horrified past horror, calm.
> (Nothing was real) for, I thought, now, when
> I like, I can wake up and end the dream.

In no time the ship runs against a barrier of ice with bears on it. After a bathetically discordant 'Wheres a cocktail shaker, Ben, heres plenty of cracked ice' and the portentous :

And if Another knows, I know I know not,
Who only know that there is no more noise now,

there is the 'Phlebas the Phoenician' passage.

The autobiographical connections of the above narrative are clear. Eliot knew the Dry Salvages, celebrated in Four Quartets, from his early days. From his childhood, again, he came to admire fishermen as daring sea-rovers living an arduous and honest life. Because of some physical disability, he took to yachting rather than any other male sports and 'learned to know the waters around Cape Ann, the paths across the headland, the language of the boatmen and the fishermen.'[525] In his lonely yachting expeditions, it is not unlikely that at times he imagined himself in the role of the above narrator.

The significance of the image of death and dissolution in the lyric conclusion is a matter of surmise. An explanation of the transition from the narrative to the lyric could be saught, following Gordon's suggestion, in Eliot's view of death 'as a stage of purification and metamorphosis', — in the belief that 'the death of the flawed natural self is preliminary to a new purified life.'[526] Moody holds a similar view : 'the death of what lives and dies by water is not the end but a catharsis — a purging away of untransmuted mortal life, and of the disturbing negative feelings connected with it.'[527] But there are problems in the way of this interpretation. There is the frivolous 'Wheres a cocktail shaker, Ben, heres plenty of cracked ice' between the supreme moments of the sailor's waking up from his dream of the siren women and his drowning. The idea of the dead sailor's entering the 'whirlpool' after he is sucked up by the current is another stumbling block. As Grover Smith explicates :

> He is not resurrected.... Instead he is sucked into the whirlpool, and, in a manner of speaking, he has been on the whirling wheel all the time.... He is still, as Buddhists say,'bound to the wheel'.[528]

What, furthermore, is meant by passing the 'stages of his age and youth' implying a retrogression to childhood which eventually is trapped in the 'whirlpool'?

The dissolution motif, however, exerted a strange fascination on the mind of Eliot in diverse ways. In Ash Wednesday,the bones of the dead man are picked clean by the leopards, as, in the poems discussed above, they are washed clean by the waves. This cleansing is comparable to the magnificent sea-change visualized in Ariel's song in The Tempest :

> Full fathom five thy father lies
> Of his bones are coral made
> Those are pearls that were his eyes ...

Eliot brooded over these Shakespearean lines and was surely influenced by them in the 'Phlebas' passage. But in another mood, he reversed the vision and contemplated it in a savage parody. Entitled 'Dirge' and included in the Waste Land drafts, the lines read :

> Full fathom five your Bleistein lies
> Under the flatfish and the squids.
> Graves' Disease in a dead jew's eyes!
> Where the crabs have eat the lids
> ....
> That is lace that was his nose
> See upon his back he lies ...

The fascinated dwelling on the subject is morbid to the extreme; but to what purpose it is not easy to say.

It is noticeable that Eliot adds no notes to the fourth section of The Waste Land. 'Here the poet is his own source, his own explanation', Williamson remarks.[529]

'Dans le Restaurant', as the analysis shows, is a highly significant poem in the works of Eliot — so significant that Williamson goes to the extent of considering it an anticipation and earlier exploration of the Waste Land theme.[530] One can possibly follow the general drift of the poem. But the drowning sailor carries with him a secret, deeply linked with the personality of the poet, which, unravelled, could have illuminated an important area of Eliot's poetry.

IV

In his next phase of poetic composition, Eliot passes on to new themes and technique in conscious collaboration with Ezra Pound. The new group of poems written in quatrains issues from a clear-cut formulation. In his 'Paris Review Interview', Eliot admits that the suggestion of writing quatrains came from Pound who put him on to Théophile Gautier's Emaux et Camées.[531] As Pound recalls the occasion :

> That is to say, at a particular date in a particular room, two authors, neither engaged in picking the other's pocket, decided that the dilution of vers libre, Amygism, Lee Masterism, general floppiness had gone too far and that some counter-current must be

> set going. Parallel situation centuries ago in China. Remedy prescribed 'Emaux et Camées' (or the Bay State Hymn Book). Rhyme and regular strophes.
>
> Results : Poems in Mr. Eliot's second volume not contained in his first (Prufrock, Egoist, 1917), also 'H.S. Mauberley'.[532]

Eliot had specific statements on the vers libre and the regular quatrain which came as a reaction to the previous practice :

> My early vers libre, of course, was started under the endeavour to practise the same form as Laforgue. This meant merely rhyming lines of irregular length, with the rhymes coming in irregular places. It wasn't quite so libre as much vers, especially the sort which Ezra called 'Amygism'. Then, of course, there were things in the next phase which were freer, like 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night'. I don't know whether I had any sort of model or practice in mind when I did that. It just came that way.[533]

In setting up the new model,

> We studied Gautier's poems and then we thought, 'Have I anything to say in which this form will be useful?' And we experimented. The form gave the impetus to the content.[534]

The results deserve to be carefully watched. It is not the brimming tantalus jar, but the formal training in a particular mode that primarily accounted for the poetic expression. It is also important to note that Eliot's most celebrated theoretical formulation, 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', was written and published during this period. ('The Hippopotamus', the first of the quatrain poems, was published in 1917 and 'Sweeney Erect', etc., in 1919). Some of the points mooted in the essay seem to have a direct bearing on the poetic craft of this period. As Kristian Smidt contends, the new poems are especially concerned with Eliot's 'Impersonal theory of poetry' and 'may have been written in pursuance of a deliberate policy of depersonalization.'[535] In Schneider's judgment, the relation of the essay to these poems is plain :

> the importance of tradition, recognition of the past as constituting all but the whole of the present, finds objective proof in the poems, each a small package of pieces from the past yet each more contemporary than last week's news.[536]

This is what may be called 'perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.'[537] In these poems Eliot underscores 'the mind of Europe' : 'a mind which changes, and ... this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsman.'[538] In 'Burbank with a Baedeker : Bleistein with a Cigar', one may note, he taps sources from 'St. Augustine to Spenser, Shakespeare ... Gautier, Ruskin, ... along with The Aspern Papers ... paintings by Montegna and Canaletto, frescoes of Tiepolo, and more.'[539]

A significant assertion in the essay is that the mind of the mature poet differs from that of the immature 'not precisely in any valuation of "personality", ... or having "more to say", but rather by being a more finely perfected medium in which special, or very varied feelings are at liberty to enter into new combinations.'[540] Eliot in this phase, as is evident, does not propose to have 'more to say', but to serve as a perfected medium in which special and varied feelings are allowed to enter into new combinations.

Finally, as if to forestall the charge of baffling erudition in the poetry of the new kind ('wit-writing' — Smidt;[541] 'puzzles without epiphanies' — Kermode[542]; 'cerebral, ... elliptical' and 'not everyone's idea of a good game' — Moody[543]), Eliot wrote in the essay :

> I am alive to a usual objection to what is clearly part of my programme for the métier of poetry. The objection is that the doctrine requires a ridiculous amount of erudition (pedantry), a claim which can be rejected by appeal to the lives of poets in any pantheon.[544]

In effect, the theoretical exposition in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent' should best apply to the group of quatrain poems and need not be invoked indiscriminately in judging Eliot's poems of other periods.

The first of the group of poems, 'The Hippopotamus' (published in July 1917) shows the 'medium' referred to above, at a high functional efficiency. Eliot's professed indebtedness to Gautier is shown in the title of the poem (after Gautier's 'L'Hippopotame') and the close approximation to Gautier's quatrains with two rhymes (later on Eliot gave up rhyme in the first and third lines).[545] Eliot had at one time followed Laforgue. But, as Kenner puts it, 'what interests him about a newly interesting "model" is not what it feels like but how it works.... Gautier was a maker of clocks, the insides of which merited examining.[546] In the early quatrains the rhetorical units, pause and rhyme are 'mathematically exact'.[547] Eliot was working under the guidance of Pound who was at the height of his abilities at that time. But so competent was his apprenticeship that he not only outstripped his mentor,[548] but also set new standards in English quatrains.[549]

Pound's influence is noticed in another important aspect of these poems. Eliot curbs his inner spiritual unrest and resorts to a sort of cynicism and sophistication. He can afford to be blasphemous too at times. Later a staunch critic of humanism, Eliot comes closest to the innocent materialism of the secular world in contrast to the hypocritical materialism of the 'True Church' in 'The Hippopotamus'[550] and in the characterization of Sweeney.

Eliot's interest in natural history combined with a sense of the bizarre, gives the figure of the hippopotamus.

Whether Eliot ever identified his own weaknesses of the flesh with those of the hippo as opposed to the paraded strength of the 'True Church' cannot be ascertained, but the idea might have come from the image of a bank clerk (himself a bank clerk at that time) suddenly transformed into a hippopotamus in a quatrain by Lewis Carroll :

> He thought he saw a Banker's Clerk
>   Descending from the bus:
> He looked again, and found it was
>   A Hippopotamus...[551]

The subject once chosen, Eliot's patient and competent workmanship would not stop short of perfection. Stanza after stanza, the contrasting features of the hippo and the church are catalogued with acrobatic agility and skill. Brevity is truly the soul of wit in these procrustian beds of quatrains. Eliot perfects the octosyllabic quatrain as a verse unit as Pope did the heroic couplet: and reaches a sublimity comparable to Dryden's in MacFlecknoe or Pope's in The Dunciad :

> I saw the 'potamus take wing
> Ascending from the damp savannas,
> And quiring angels round him sing
> The praise of God, in loud hosannas.

The ultimate canonization of the hippo ('Among the saints he shall be seen ... By all the martyr'd virgins kist'), is a bizarre variation on the theme of sainthood that fascinated Eliot for a long time.

Eliot's scoffing treatment of the 'True Church' met immediately with some orthodox criticism which could very well be answered in the words of Genesius Jones : 'the limited point which this poem makes has always been true of the Christian Church.'[552] But Eliot, in his latter-day orthodoxy, came round to the point of view of the critics. Being once asked by Paul Elmer More as to what the hippopotamus really meant, he put him off 'by intimating that possibly the writer could not — he meant would not — expound my riddle.'[553] In reply to a suggestion made by William Turner Levy, a churchman himself, while visiting a hippopotamus's cage in a zoo in 1952, that 'the Church should be attacked for its worldliness' as in 'The Hippopotamus', Eliot was set on a train of rumination :

> That poem shocked many persons when it appeared — and not particularly religious persons. Today it could not possibly shock. And I suppose tomorrow it will appear in children's anthologies!... I first read 'The Hippopotamus' at a Red Cross affair. Sir Edmond Gosse was in the chair — and he was shocked!...
>
> Since that was written I have come to serve as a church warden and know the struggle to get money in when needed. If one lives long enough, one learns![554]

Eliot made amends, knowingly or unknowingly, for his mockery at the idea of the Church being 'based upon a rock' (1.8) by collaborating in 1934 in the composition of The Rock, a play to be put up as part of a fund-raising campaign for the construction of a church!

The fleshiness and stout animalism of the hippo is duplicated in the figure of Sweeney, first appearing in 'Sweeney among the Nightingales' (published in September 1918). This human hippo with gratuitous animal affiliations (successively likened to the 'ape' ['Apeneck'], zebra and giraffe) is found wallowing in the water of a bath-tub (as the hippo in a river) in total disregard of the church (the antagonism between the hippo and the church being established before) in 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service'.

The origin of the figure of Sweeney has been sought in life and literature. Eliot himself said that he thought of Sweeney 'as a man who in younger days was perhaps a pugilist, mildly successful; who then grew older and retired to keep a pub.'[555] Supplementing the information, Aiken, Eliot's Harvard friend, hinted that Steve O'Donnell who, at a gymnasium in Boston's south end, gave Eliot boxing lessons and once a 'magnificent black eye' might have been the prototype[556] and the contemporary Boston Directories listed one 'Stephen O'Donnell, pugilist'.[557] But here again Eliot may have been applying his technique of superimposing one image upon another to achieve a desired artistic effect. Eliot elsewhere called Sweeney a composite of several characters, one of whom may have been the fictional Sweeney Todd,[558] a barber who slashed the throats of his customers and converted them into cannibalistic pies (Sweeney weilds his razor in 'Sweeney Erect' and shows cannibalistic propensities in Sweeney Agonistes).

'Sweeney Erect', the last published Sweeney poem (Summer 1919), was composed about the same time as 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' (1917). The splendid Jacobean opening of the poem is an outcome of Eliot's abiding interest in the Jacobean dramatists eloquently confessed in his critical writings. The epigraph from Beaumont and Fletcher (The Maid's Tragedy, II,ii) is followed in the first two stanzas of the poem in almost unbroken continuity. The theme of love's desertion, steeped in classical allusions, is a prelude to the vignettes of Sweeney in the shaving posture with a hysteric woman in the bed beside and some other inmates of the 'hotel' in a flurry over the disreputable situation. In the typically Eliotic manner the connection between the prelude and the narrative is only darkly hinted.

The figure of Sweeney, a blatant assertion of the flesh and blood ('pink from nape to base'), is a switchover from Prufrock, the focal point of Eliot's earlier poetry. In sharp contrast to Prufrock's meticulous sartorial concern, he is all but naked (showing his bare trunk, and legs on which he tests his razor). Prufrock scuttles across the ocean floor in the stooping crab-like posture, but Sweeney is 'erect', 'addressed full length'. Overcompensating for Prufrock's diffidence in the presence of women, Sweeney 'knows the female temperament' as he 'wipes the suds around his face' (Eliot, by the way, never shaved in the presence of even his wife).[559] The sexual assertiveness of Sweeney is indicated by the term 'erect' which is simultaneously a comment on Sweeney as a human animal — in scientific terminology, 'erectus', i.e., a creature walking upright.[560]

Eliot's attitude to Sweeney is partly indicated by his parenthetic contemplation of his silhouette in the light of what he calls Emerson's view of history as the 'lengthened shadow of a man'. The ascribed aphorism is actually a telescoping of two statements by Emerson that 'an institution is the lengthened shadow of one man' and that 'all history resolves itself very easily into the biography of a few stout and earnest persons.'[561] Eliot with his preoccupation with history might have found Sweeney a preposterous candidate for its authorship. Sweeney from that point of view would appear ridiculous. But Eliot is critical of Emerson too. In his 'Cousin Nancy', he had mocked at Waldo (Emerson) along with Matthew (Arnold) keeping watch upon the glazed shelves as 'guardians of the faith'. 'Sweeney Erect' with its title and theme may be an ironic comment on Emerson's view expressed elsewhere in 'Self-reliance', the essay supplying the two statements already cited :

> He who knows that power is inborn ... and, so perceiving, throws himself unhesitatingly on his thought, instantly rights himself, stands in the erect position, commands his limbs, works miracles....[562]

Anybody acquainted with Eliot's outlook will recognize how abhorrent these words could be to him. The ironic implications of the stanza are, therefore, double-edged : Sweeney is a rebuff to Emerson.

The link between the Jacobean prelude and the Sweeney stanzas has been much speculated on, and is commonly thought to be the theme of the desertion of the woman by the lover. The desertion on Sweeney's part, however, is not very clear, if just the leaving of the bed is not magnified into a kind of 'desertion'. What really strikes one is the masculine indifference to the female temperament. The table is turned on the cruelty of the female insensitiveness to the male point of view in a poem like 'Conversation Galante' or more particularly 'Complainte sur certains Ennais' by Laforgue, under whose influence Eliot wrote that poem.

Sweeney as a foil to Emerson's egoistic man of history in 'Sweeney Erect' serves as a foil to the scholastic man of the church in 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service'. The castgation of the Church establishment in 'The Hippopotamus' gathers more pith in this poem. But for the absence of humour, the attack may be compared to that of Chaucer in The Prologue to the Canterbury Tales : the red and pimply face of the Summoner is transferred to the young penitent 'red and pastular' — both possibly agreeing in lechery — and the penny— clutching business of the church receives the same wry look. 'Mr. Eliot' in this poem happens to be Eliot's cousin, Fred Eliot, who became a Unitarian minister,[563] and the Sunday service in question belongs to an early phase of Eliot's life. Disillutioned about his family's Unitarian faith, Eliot, at Harvard, devoted himself to intensive studies of Oriental philosophy and religion. 'But every time he went back during these undergraduate years to join in his family's Sunday worship,' writes Sencourt, 'he found it an increasingly stifling ritual.'[564] If the poem is an inside view of the ritual — a series (not necessarily a sequence) of impressions playing upon the sensibility of a bored congregant[565] — the outside view had been given by Eliot about a decade back in 'Spleen'. Set against the hollow rituals in that poem, as we have seen, is Eliot's 'Life' : a Prufrockian figure who represents a part of Eliot himself. In 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service', the figure is Sweeney, the gross lump of flesh, who, for the time being, engrosses Eliot and symbolizes, in an odd way, another aspect of his self, may be an imagined self. The fleshly swing contains an element of defiance, even blasphemy. Instead of a soaring spiritual alternative to the hollow religious routine, he now proposes a physically fecund substitute. The spurning of celibacy represented by the 'enervate Origen' (who castrated himself) and the neuter bees[566] seems to be a running thread in the three quatrain poems : the church is contrasted with the hippopotamus betraying engaging weaknesses at the mating time ('The Hippopotamus'), and the nightingales singing their cruel song near the house of the celibate nuns ('Sweeney Among the Nightingales').

The criticism of the hypocritical clergy had a tradition in Eliot's family. Eliot's eighteenth-century forefather, the Rev. Andrew Eliot, had written : 'The greatest prodigies of wickedness have been those who have put on the guise of religion'[567] (cf. Eliot's epigraph from Marlowe's *The Jew of Malta* : 'Look, look, master, here comes two religious caterpillars.'). Eliot's mother, who anticipated many of Eliot's themes in rudiments, wrote :

> The church of old
> Had chalices of wood, while all of gold
> Her prelates were. Now are her prelates wood,
> Her chalices of gold, and it is good
> For this to rob the poor.[568]

In his later life Eliot repented the irreverence he showed to religion and tried to make amends in various ways. Sometimes he even tampered with the text to blur the blasphemous effects. When first published in the *Little Review*, 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' had a comma after the first line of the second stanza, which made the Word 'Superfetation of τὸ ἔν' 'apparently in reference to a blasphemous canard', Grover Smith explicates, 'that the Son, being coeternal with the Father, was superimposed upon His own prior existence in being also begotten.'[569] The later substitution of the full stop for the common, at the cost of intelligibility, seems to have been intended to obscure the blatant blasphemy.

'Sweeney Among the Nightingales', the last Sweeney poem, was the first to get into print. The popularity of the poem (difficulty of meaning and a grain of obscurity notwithstanding) is matched by the value attached to it by the poet who placed it to round off his 1920 volume of Poems.

The obscurity of the poem pertains to the role of the central character. The night-town setting in the early stanzas of the poem seems to develop into a narrative of sorts. But the suggestive details add up to a build-up of atmosphere rather than to a coherent story. Ambiguity confronts us when we take Sweeney to be the fated victim, since it is already said that he 'guards the horned gate', which should mean that he had the right presentiments of the catastrophe ('the gate of horn', according to Greek mythology, allows true dreams, as opposed to 'the gate of ivory' letting out false dreams, from the realm of Morpheus). Williamson's interpretation that the horned gate is the gate of death[570] does not help much, when we find that Sweeney himself falls a victim to death. Any other ingenious interpretation would imply Eliot's resort to minor or esoteric implications to the disregard of the traditionally accepted one.

'The wood I had in mind', Eliot comments on the grove in which the nightingales sing, 'was the grove of the Furies at Colonus; I called it "bloody" because of the blood of Agamemnon in Argos.'[571] This hints at an element of retribution. The connection is further attested by the fact that Eliot uses as his epigraph to Sweeney Agonistes a speech by Orestes

(Choephoroi) that has a clear reference to the Eumenides : 'You don't see them, you don't — but I see them : they are hunting me down, I must move on .' The nightingale — meaning a 'prostitute' in low slang and used in that sense in this poem — signifies adultery, as indicated by a second epigraph to the poem in Ara Vos Prec : 'Why should I speak of the nightingale? The nightingale sings of adulterous wrong.' A combination of the two elements appears in the speech of Harry in The Family Reunion :

> In Italy, from behind the nightingales' thicket,
> The eyes stared at me, and corrupted that song.[572]

The significance Eliot attached to the 'convent of the Sacred Heart' is not easy to guess on account of Eliot's changing religious attitudes during those years. Breaking with the New England Puritan tradition (traces of which he bore all his life) and yet to embrace the Anglo-Catholic faith, Eliot may still be looking at celibacy from the extreme Protestant point of view, as recaptulated by himself in his Notes towards the Definition of Culture :

> This assumption and its consequences remind us of the Puritan antipathy to monasticism and the ascetic life : for just as a culture which is only accessible to the few is now deprecated, so was the enclosed and contemplative life condemned by extreme Protestantism, and celibacy regarded with almost as much abhorrence as perversion.[573]

Eliot's historical sense which he employs in this poem in a major way serves dual functions in his poetry depending on the context : to set the squalor and meanness of modern life against the glory of the past or to show the unchanging nature and universality of human experience.

'The second use, involving 'a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence' is more pronounced in Eliot's likening the murder in the road-house seeting to that of Agamemnon in Argos, the latter catastrophe sharing the ignominy of the former in spite of its epic dimensions, as the nightingales let fall their 'droppings' (Pound modified it to the more polite 'siftings'[574] on the murdered man's shroud with their usual indifference.

In these multi-dimensional images and symbols Eliot followed a thematic development which seems to be involved in a secluded, private angle of vision. Outwardly a symbol of vulgarity, Sweeney may be representing a part of Eliot's own personality. Though repulsed, Eliot might have been fascinated by this incarnation of flesh and may have found in him, in a way, what was lacking in himself. Matthiessen pointed out 'the double feeling of his repulsion from vulgarity, and yet his shy attraction to the coarse earthiness of common life' in the figure of Sweeney.[575] Headings says, 'In Sweeney Among the Nightingales the reader is ... allowed an ambivalent sympathy with Sweeney.'[576] According to Cattaui again :

> Eliot recognizes an element of his own personality in the repulsive stranger, and has therefore got inside him and endowed him with his own feelings and opinions. Eliot has thus created living characters from his interpretation and analysis of his own emotions and experience. One such figure is J. Alfred Prufrock.[577]

As Prufrock in his early poetry, so Sweeney in a later phase, occupies a centrally significant place. With the passage of time, however, he might have considered his physical bulk a disadvantage. So shifting the focus from his body to his inner self, he turned him into the pretty respectable (with considerable heartache too!) protagonist of Sweeney Agonistes (1932). 'Flesh and blood is weak and frail,/ Susceptible to nervous shock' ('The Hippopotamus', ll. 5-6) to a degree not hitherto suspected !

The poem, as the analysis shows, difies a systematic interpretation, though it remains intensely suggestive. Moody notices in it feelings 'mainly suppressed, or merely hinted at'.[578] Schneider thinks that the conflicting tones in the poem 'cancel instead of reinforcing each other.'[579] To Grover Smith, 'In plot, setting, and characters this poem is opacity itself', and the whole thing may be Sweeney's nightmare in sleep.[580]

To Eliot himself, however, the poem must have been a satisfactory piece of writing. A few days after the publication of Ara Vos Prec, he wrote to his brother :

> Some of the new poems, the Sweeney ones, especially Among the Nightingales and Burbank, are intensely serious, and I think these two are among the best that I have ever done. But even here I am considered by the ordinary newspaper critic as a wit or satirist, and in America I suppose I shall be thought merely disgusting.[581]

Eliot wrote the poem in all seriousness and hardly considered it satirical. But his meaning must have gone amiss in the complexilty, or ambiguity of expression. As usual, Eliot never came forward with an explanation of his obscure purpose. He preferred retreat to a defence of his position which could involve making public his private thoughts. His assertion of the superior value of the poem later trails off into the disclaimer — calculated surely to disarm the scrutinizing critic — that 'all he consciously set out to create in "Sweeney among the Nightingales" was a sense of foreboding.'[582]

Eliot's patently ambivalent attitude to the body occupies itself with the ample figure of Grishkin, a feminine counterpart of Sweeney (warm and fleshy, with strong animal affiliations too, evoking the image of a crouched Brazilian jaguar) in 'Whispers of Immortality'. The Grishkin passage follows a discourse on sense-thought continuum propounded in Jacobean-Metaphysical images and metaphors.

The poem is Eliot's tribute to Webster and Donne, representatives of the Jacobean and Metaphysical schools, whose influence on his poetry he recognized unequivocally. The close affinity between his verse and critical prose cannot be better illustrated than by this poem (1918) and his influential essay, 'The Metaphysical Poets' (1920). It is difficult to say whether the essay justified the kind of poetry that Donne — for that matter, Eliot in his Metaphysical manner — wrote, or the poem anticipated the critical points made in the essay. 'Thought clings round dead limbs./ Tightening its lusts and luxuries' comes close to what is meant by 'a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling'.[583] Eliot is occupied with the pre-dissociation state of feeling one's thought 'as immediately as the odour of a rose'. Later in the poem, as Kenner points out, Grishkin's charms 'abound, tightening lusts and luxuries into a concreteness ... "one might almost say her body thought", if any thought is indeed to be predicated.'[584] In fact, the whole poem may be read as a criticism of the 'Dissolution of Sensibility'[585] which, according to Eliot, had set in during the seventeenth century and 'from which we have never recovered.'[586] Grishkin's compelling animal attractions hold 'the Abstract Entities' in her magnetic field; but 'our lot' (Eliot glosses that the 'lot' here means 'kind' and not 'fate'[587]) —

'a legation of Prufrocks'[588]— nourish our metaphysics between ribs without flesh and vitality. In effect, as Matthiessen says, 'Perhaps the most trenchant evaluation of the nature of metaphysical poetry that he has made is in his poem, "Whispers of Immortality".'[589]

Few poems outside the Metaphysical school come close to 'Whispers of Immortality' in employing the metaphysical manner including the metaphysical conceit. 'Breastless creatures under ground/ Leaned backward with a lipless grin' emulates Marvell's 'The Grave's a fine and private place,/ But none I think do there embrace' by evoking the same scene with a contrary implication (leaning backward is recognized as a 'posture of compliant sexuality'[590]). 'Daffodil bulbs instead of balls' staring from the sockets of the eyes gives a metaphysical shock and 'thought clings round dead limbs' bears comparison with Donne's 'A bracelet of bright hair about the bone'.

At a deeper level runs the affinity with the tone and temper of Jacobean and Metaphysical poetry. 'The poem', according to Bergonzi, 'which specifically names Webster and Donne, recalls the tension beneath sex and death that we find in Tournour or Middleton....'[591] Grover Smith considers the poem 'a statement about sex as a means of attaining this knowledge of death — a means only possible ... to such a lusty age as the Jacobean.'[592] Moody analyses the punning superimpositions of physical love and death :

> Webster knew that thought has its own lusts and luxuries, and that knowledge of death may sharpen sensual desire.... Each line in the two stanzas about Donne is a new move in the argument : he had only sense; and put nothing in the place of sense; when experience failed he became expert in the sensations of mortality, and knew the bone's fever to be freed of flesh. All this is to turn the sexual pun upon

itself : to find a death-wish at the end of love and lust. The last stanza of the poem affirms in paradox that this is a metaphysical perception to be arrived at only by physical experience. The Abstract Entities, the bloodless categories of pure metaphysics, remain drawn to Grishkin's full fleshed charms.[593]

To the perceptions derived from the Jacobean and Metaphysical masters may be added the observation of Bradley, Eliot's metaphysical mentor, contained in a passage Eliot quoted in a review a year before the composition of the poem (Kenner proposes the passage to be the unofficial epigraph to 'Whispers of Immortality'[594]):

> That the glory of this world is appearance leaves the world more glorious if we feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat — if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories.

Eliot's 'Whispers of Immortality' seems to be an echo of Wordsworth's 'Intimations of Immortality' (Wordsworth used 'immortality' to mean 'infinity' in his famous 'Ode'[595]), but the 'Intimations' are carefully (and smugly) modulated to 'Whispers' to fit Eliot's neo-classical curb on the romantic longing.

The epigraph in combination with the title points to a personal occasion for 'A Cooking Egg' (1919). Borrowed from Francois Villon's 'Le Grand Testament' and meaning 'In the thirtieth year of my life,/ When I drank up all my shame',[596] the epigraph leads the poem that was published when Eliot himself was thirty. Villon, in his poem, contemplated his misspent years and was preparing himself for the after life. Eliot seems to be taking stock of the profit and loss he has come in for.

The title 'Cooking Egg', meaning eggs 'which are too old to be eaten on their own, when their staleness might be detected',[597] suits Eliot's preoccupation with aging, rather, the state of life caught between youth and age — the Prufrockian situation.

The poem includes reflections on past, present and future, as the occasion warranted. The middle section, largest and dotted off from the rest, bears, as pointed out by Matthiessen, close resemblance to a passage in a letter of Ruskin to Susan Beever on the death of Rose La Touche, a little girl with whom he fell in love in his middle age :

> But, Susie, you expect to see your Margaret again, and you will be happy with her in heaven. I wanted my Rosie here. In heaven I mean to go and talk to Pythagoras and Socrates and Valerius Publicola. I shan't care a bit for Rosie there, she needn't think it.[598]

The sincere and insistent tone of Ruskin is replaced by Eliot's typical serio-comic manner. Some of his abiding interests play around the ironic treatment of 'Honour', 'Wealth' ('Capital') and 'Love' ('Society') : the enigmatic character of the Roman hero, Coriolanus (cf. his 'Coriolan'), the occultism of Madame Blavatsky (cf. Madame Sosostris in The Waste Land), Piccarda de Donati who guides Dante in the first heaven of space, in Paradiso III — 'a favourite canto of Eliot's',[599] etc.

Beneath all the play of wit and ingenuity may, however, be detected a deep sense of loss and pain of renunciation — the central theme of the Ruskin passage. The loss, to be sure, is concerning 'Pipit', whatever the name may signify.

Who this 'Pipit' exactly is has remained a minor mystery in Eliot's poetry. A lot has been said about the identity of this character without arriving at a consensus. She has been variously identified as 'an old nurse to whom the speaker had sent Views of the Oxford Colleges as a gift when he attended the University' (Richards), a 'very mild, dull spinster' (Edmund Wilson), perhaps a little girl (Matthiessen), 'once a little girl with the name of a little bird, and whom the speaker remembers, no doubt, as a childhood playmate, ... now, like himself, grown up' (Grover Smith), etc.[600] In fact, a hearty debate took place in the pages of the quarterly Essays in Criticism (July 1953— January 1954) on the identity of Pipit, participated in by literary stalwarts like Richards and Bateson. The stature of these scholars rules out the possibility that the debate was pointless. The fact remains that the reader must determine Pipit's relationship to the narrator to make head or tail of the poem. The debate was held right under the nose of Eliot who, in his highest reticent manner, kept completely mum. Later, in a letter to Helen Gardner, he condescended to say that the debate touched 'the nadir of critical futility ... so far as my own work is concerned.'[601]

Bypassing Eliot's unkind, and also unfair, remark (Eliot could have settled the issue for good by saying who this Pipit was from the narrator's point of view), it may be asserted that whoever she might be, there is the same distance between her and the speaker and the similar failure of communication as in many other poems of Eliot. The image of a little boy and a girl behind the screen threatened by 'red-eyed scavengers' in the final section reduplicates that of the boy and the girl in the bower threatened by a dog in 'Dans le Restaurant' — an image with unending repercussions in Eliot's poetry. Whatever relevance the poem may have to Eliot's private life — the occasion and some other elements in the poem suggest it surely has some — it must be anything but simple. Eliot's childhood experience in America and his situation in London at the time may have contributed to a composite theme matched by a complexity of tonality. The tone, so far mocking, facetious, even fatuous (Davie calls attention to the 'fatuous rhyme of "Sidney" and "kidney"'),[602] suddenly undergoes a change with the verse : 'But where is the penny world I bought ...'. Davie, who notes that Richards noted it, points out that 'the verse-movement changes, the tone becomes, for the first and last time, serious and engaged. A real loss is being really lamented.'[603]

The depth of feeling detected by Davie's linguistic analysis[604] is what the 'Dans le Restaurant' situation lurking behind the lines should confirm. The persona of the 'cooking egg' (emphasizing aging attended by a sense of futility) links the narrator with Prufrock of the past and Gerontion of the future. The poem therefore is more serious than commonly taken to be. But something left unsaid, which no prodding could get out of Eliot, continues to baffle the reader. Moody expresses the discomfiture when he says : 'there is some reason to feel that there may be more personal experience behind the poem than the wit would allow'.[605]

Eliot's apprehension that 'Burbank with a Baedeker : Bleistein with a Cigar' might be considered a piece of wit or satire and its author just 'disgusting',[606] proved too correct when even a noted critic like Williamson noticed something of the 'cartoon' in the poem[607] and Grover Smith found the poet 'in execrable taste'.[608] But Eliot called the poem 'intensely serious'.[609] This view of the poem may have affected Eliot's arrangements of the individual pieces in Poems — 1920. Though written later in the phase, it is placed at the beginning of the collection, to be preceded by an even later piece, 'Gerontion' which Eliot once proposed to be the prelude to The Waste Land.[610] What is suggested is that after the tentative and experimental Oxford poems, the French poems and the quatrains preoccupied with the theme of the flesh, Eliot has again been gravitating towards the Prufrockian zone of consciousness in 'The Cooking Egg', 'Burbank' and 'Gerontion'. The tourist with his Baedeker resembling the one in 'Lune de Miel' taking after Eliot himself, his failure with Princess Volupine (implied by the ambiguous word 'fell' which may mean either or both 'falling in love' and 'proving a failure'[611] and his serio-comic contemplation on Time's ruins revive the Prufrockian circumstances. But Eliot's intentions seem to have gone largely amiss in communication, because of the highly elliptical and cryptic technique employed by him. Eliot's practice of telescoping and making pastiches of borrowed passages goes to the extreme in the epigraph which sets the pace for the poem. Following a couple of telescoped lines referring to a Venetian gondola journey in Henry Jame's The Aspern Papers, there is a lonely phrase, 'goats and monkeys' from Shakespeare's Othello : the Moor of Venice, qualified by 'with such hairs too!', taken from Browning's 'A Toccata of Galuppi's : 'Dear dead women, with such hair, too....' All three quotations bear on Venice, but the 'goats and monkeys' from one passage rob the precious hairs of 'dear dead women' from another with hilarious poetic licence. 'Immature poets imitate, mature poets steal', asserted Eliot around this time (1920).[612] In the epigraph of 'Burbank' he simply plundered other authors with as much indifference to the source as to the audience.

The method demonstrated in the epigraph was followed up in the poem itself. The poet darts from one item to another with bewildering swiftness, the meaning of the verses left behind to take care of itself. Thirty allusions in the brief compass of the poem[613] touch a high water-mark of Eliot's eclecticism.

Eliot once said that Henry James's method, in The Aspern Papers, of making 'a place (Venice) real not descriptively but by something happening there' stimulated him in writing 'Burbank with a Baedeker'.[614] But the happenings in the poem are very abrupt and, in contrast to the Jamesian practice,[615] the narrative thread snaps as soon as it is taken up : Burbank with his Baedeker (a connoisseur of art, in the last analysis, an Eliot surrogate?) meets Princess Volupine and he 'falls'; sub-marine currents move on slowly (as in 'Dans le Restaurant' following the episode of the failure of the boy-girl meeting); Bleistein stares at a Canaletto painting and, finally, Sir Ferdinand Klein is entertained by Princess Volupine. What Eliot actually does in the poem does not go beyond a juxtaposition of some fleeting and significant moments from the present beside the past preserved in literary and artistic specimens. The poem, in effect, remains, as Moody puts it, 'an intellectual matrix'.[616] But amidst the disconcerting play of wit, there remains the potentially Prufrockian (and Eliotic) figure of Burbank with his zeal for a continental tour, apparent misadventure with Princess Volupine and profound reflections on time and history — vague manifestations of an 'intensely serious' artistic purpose.

V

Through the greater part of a decade of experimentation and perfectionism, Eliot was veering to the old Prufrockian zone of consciousness. In spite of his neo-classical commitment, the personal-confessional vein ran imperceptibly through the verses and infused them with whatever genuine poetic interest they have. The old persona is again taken up with changes time and experience worked on it. The major events of Eliot's life during the intervening years are his settlement in England, marriage to an English girl, estrangement from his family and renunciation of a secure academic profession for an uncertain and penurious poetic career. The agonizing and remorseful experience of an injudicious marriage contributed most to the filling up of the tantalus jar of his poetic inspiration.

'Gerontion', the next major outpowering of the jar, encompasses the duality of youth and age epitomized by the title that means a 'little old man'. In 'Prufrock' the young man passes, in his imagination, into the state of age; in 'Gerontion', the protagonist is in extreme dotage, 'read to by a boy' who supplements his atrophied faculties. The epigraph to the poem also harps on the note of 'nor youth nor age', but a dream of both.

Eliot's identification of himself with the persona in 'Gerontion', even more than in 'Prufrock', has been recognized by many critics.[617] He derived the name and character of the persona from two different sources :

both pointing to the drift of the poem. He seems to have varied the name of 'Gerontius' in Newman's The Dream of Gerontius, a man who looks forward with full faith and serene joy to the moment of dissolution and the acceptance of purgation.[618] Eliot poses Gerontion a similar situation of death not very far, but it is the antitheses of faith and joy that fill his mind. In delineating Gerontion, Eliot draws also on the life of Edward FitzGerald, the atheistic and epicurean drift of whose translation of Omar Khayyam once fired his imaginative life. The depressing last days of FitzGerald seem to arouse in Eliot thoughts of his own impaired faith. The opening lines of 'Gerontion' reproduce almost word for word a sentence from A.C. Benson's biography, Edward FitzGerald, which, in its turn, summarizes a letter from FitzGerald himself : 'Here he sits, in a dry month, old and blind, being read to by a country boy, longing for rain.'[619] The world in The Rubaiyat, Eliot once said, was painted with 'bright, delicious and painful colours'. But now those colours, observes Schneider :

> are doubly faded, for Eliot and the aged FitzGerald. There was a Prufrockian side to FitzGerald himself, ... as we see him in Benson's book; though gentler and more evidently affectionate, he was another of those who dwell on the fringes of life and so has his submerged place in the generic persona of Gerontion. [620]

Eliot makes use of quite a few other passages from different soruces and it is of interest that many of these are discussed in Eliot's critical writings also. In his essay on 'Lancelot Andrewes', he wrote :

> Andrewes is one of the most resourceful of authors in his devices for seizing the attention and impressing the memory. Phrases such as 'Christ is no wild-cat. What talk ye of twelve days?' or 'the word within a word, unable to speak a word', do not desert us.[621]

Another passage from Andrewes bears on 'Gerontion' :

> Signs are taken for wonders. 'Master, we would fain see a sign,' that is a miracle. And in this sense it is a sign to wonder at. Indeed, every word here is a wonder.... Verbum infans, the Word without a word; the eternal Word not able to speak a word; a wonder sure. And ... swaddled, a wonder too. He that takes the sea 'and rolls it about with the swaddling bands of darkness'; — He to come thus into clouts, Himself![622]

The quoted passages went into the melting pot of Eliot's poetic imagination to come out as :

> Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'
> The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
> Swaddled with darkness.

The line 'In depraved May, dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas' is a distillation of a passage from The Education of Henry Adams (1918), which Eliot reviewed in the Athenaeum not long ago :

> Here and there a Negro log cabin alone disturbed the dogwood and the judas tree.... The brooding heat of the profligate vegetation; the cool charm of the running water; the terrific splendour of the June thundergust in the deep and solitary woods, were all sensual, animal, elemental. No European spring had shown him the same intermixture of delicate grace and passionate depravity that marked the Maryland May. He loved it too much as if it were Greek and half human.[623]

What personal or esoteric significance the description had for Eliot is difficult to say. But it should be noted that the Adams of Eliot's review, as Kenner points out, 'is a wealthy Prufrock, driven — Eliot uses this verb — by the Erinnys'[624] He is portrayed as one impelled by a desire to do something great, but haunted by a doubt of his own abilities.

'In no overwhelming question could Adams believe; he wrote an article demolishing the myths that surround Pocahontas, "and the pleasure of demolition turned to ashes in his mouth.... Wherever this man stepped, the ground did not simply give way, it flew into particles"...'[625] The review according to Gordon, 'is clearly a bit of self-analysis and suggests links between Eliot, Gerontion, and Adams (to whom Eliot was distantly related)' :

> This refined type of American, Eliot said, had a strong Puritan conscience which laid upon him 'the heavy burden of self-improvement' and an obligation to experience more than liberal Unitarianism, an imperfect education at Harvard, and a narrow Boston horizon might have provided. His native curiosity was balanced by a scepticism which Eliot called 'the Boston doubt'. The Boston variety was not a solid scepticism but quirky, dissolvent rather than destructive, a kind of vulnerability 'to all suggestions which dampen enthusiasm or dispel conviction'.... Wherever the well-bred American steps, said Eliot, the moral ground does not simply give way, it fragments. Gerontion's ground, too, flies into 'fractured atoms'. Gerontion's last thought is of a traveller blown about by winds like the white feathers of birds in a snowstorm.[626]

In a letter to John Quinn, Eliot considered this review one of his best essays;[627] and his meditations (May, 1919) on the character of Henry Adams, according to Kenner, 'Eliot's Hugh Selwyn Mauberly, almost but not quite a persona', entered obscurely into the composition of 'Gerontion' (first printed in December, 1919).[628]

Another passage from The Education of Henry Adams has bearing on a paragraph in 'Gerontion'. Eliot's reflections on history beginning 'Think now/History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors' resemble

Adams's view of the Twentieth-century historian's universe :

> where all the old roads ran about in every direction, overrunning, dividing, subdividing, stopping abruptly, vanishing slowly, with side-paths that led nowhere.[629]

Eliot's sustained critical interest in Elizabethan-Jacobean drama has its creative counterpart in 'Gerontion' marked by what Mankowitz calls 'the juxtaposition insisted upon by Elizabethan reminiscence throughout the poem'.[630] The lines 'I that was near your heart was removed therefrom', etc., are based on a passage in Thomas Middleton's tragedy The Changeling, which Eliot dwelt on in his essay on the dramatist, with the comment :

> The man who wrote these lines remains inscrutable, solitary, unadmired....yet he wrote one tragedy which more than any play except those of Shakespeare has a profound and permanent moral value and horror....[631]

The words 'inscrutable' and 'solitary' suggest Eliot's deep personal identification with the Jacobean dramatist and the word 'horror' strikes the keynote of the poem.

The striking image in the lines

> These with a thousand small deliberations...
> Excite the membrane, when the sense has cooled,
> With pungent sauces, multiply variety
> In a wilderness of mirrors.

seems to have come from Eliot's memory of some lines in The Alchemist, which he quoted in his essay on Ben Jonson published during the year 'Gerontion' was composed :

> mine oval room
> Fill'd with such pictures as Tiberius took
> From Elephantis, and dull Aretine
> But coldly imitated. Then, my glasses
> Cut in more subtle angles, to disperse
> And multiply the figures, as I walk....[632]

Artificial stimulation of impaired senses is the common theme. Eliot quoted the passage as one to which the honour of great poetry cannot be denied.[633]

Eliot's image of being 'whirled Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear' derives from a passage in Bussy D'Ambois by George Chapman, which Eliot quotes and elaborately comments on in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism in discussing the mysterious way images lie in the depths of a poet's memory and 'rise like Anadyomene from the sea' :

> Fly where the evening from the Iberian vales
> Takes on her swarthy shoulders Hecate
> Crowned with a grove of oaks : fly where men feel
> The burning axletree, and those that suffer
> Beneath the chariot of the snowy Bear....[634]

Eliot quotes two passages from Seneca's Hercules Œteus and Hercules Furens from which Chapman, in his turn, may have borrowed the image, and adds :

> There is first the probability that this imagery had some personal saturation value, so to speak, for Seneca; another for Chapman, and another for myself, who have borrowed it twice from Chapman. I suggest that what gives it such intensity as it has in each case is its saturation — I will not say with 'associations', for I do not want to revert to Hartley — but with feelings too obscure for the authors even to know quite what they were.[635]

This is followed by Eliot's most remarkable discussion of how certain images, out of the experiences of a lifetime, recur, charged with emotion, and the final observation : 'such memories may have symbolic value, but of what we cannot tell, for they come to represent the depths of feeling into which we cannot peer.'[636]

The remark is yet another warning against a too neat interpretation of Eliot's verses.

The image considered, however, may have links with another passage, as pointed out by Genesius Jones, found in the Ulysses episode in Dante's Inferno, XXVI, which again Eliot dwells on fondly in his 'Dante' essay.[637] 'In this episode', Jones recapitulates, 'Ulysses' ship, on his last journey (perhaps pilgrimage?) to find the West and the uninhabited world behind the sun, passed way below the equator and, as Dante expressly indicates, went beyond the circuit of the two Bears to go down finally in fractured atoms.'[638]

'Gerontion' has been commonly taken as a personal statement of Eliot;[639] and the extensive use of borrowed images and metaphors illustrates Eliot's characteristic way of using other authors to his own end.

A poem, Eliot once said, began as a rhythmic pattern in the mind of the poet; and the initial rhythmic pattern in 'Gerontion', it has been found, is latent in the striking Benson passage.[640] The cadenced prose came out as vers libre giving shape to what had been forming within and Eliot is back to a 'musical rather than stanzaic mode of composition'.[641] It is significant that with the reappearance of the Prufrockian consciousness, vers libre turns up automatically. Similarly, the Elizabethan-Jacobean blank verse which Eliot cherished long comes into operation in 'Gerontion' alongside vers libre. The relevant passages in the poem reveal, in Matthiessen's words, 'the fullest impression of Eliot's mastery of the Jacobean dramatists'.[642]

Since in spite of the emphasis on craftsmanship, so much depends on the poet's inspiration (Bornstein classifies the poem as a 'Greater Romantic Lyric'),[643] the form of the poem remains a pretty elusive entity. Like 'Prufrock', it can be called a 'dramatic monologue', but the speaker is no more than a speaking voice (though, according to Davie, the poet seems to identify himself with this 'persona' more than he had done with Prufrock[644])and the interlocutor, a vague 'you', is more indeterminate than in Prufrock (Schneider proposes half a dozen candidates for this role : FitzGerald, Vivienne, God, some anonymous fictitious presence, Eliot's mother and also Eliot's father who had died earlier in the year[645]). Headings, going by the fact that the Benson passage was based on a letter, considers the poem to be in the form of a letter.[646] But the most dependable indication may possibly be derived from Eliot himself. The epigraph ('an after dinner sleep/Dreaming of both'), and the concluding verses ('Tenants of the house,/Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season') point to the ruminations of a mind drained of its vitality. _The Inventions of the March Hare_, the workings of a whimsical imagination, have now over matured into a kind of senility. Thus, Unger says,

> at the opening and close of the poem there are justifications, and hence admissions, of the nature of the poem — of its lack of conventional continuity and coherence. It is the critics who have described 'Prufrock' as an 'interior monologue', but it was Eliot himself who indicated the peculiarly private relevance of 'Gerontion' : 'Thoughts of a dry brain'.[647]

Leavis finds in the epigraph and the concluding verses Eliot's 'instructions how to read the poem'.[648]

The most explicit commentary on the theme of 'Gerontion' by Eliot is perhaps his proposal to use it as prologue to The Waste Land as a substitute for the Conrad passage which Pound was reluctant to put up as the poem's epigraph :

> Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision, — he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath —
> 'The horror! the horror!'[649]

Gerontion, like Kurtz, at the end of his life of desire and temptation, may have arrived at the 'supreme moment of complete knowledge' ('After such knowledge what forgiveness'); and the poem is his 'image' or 'vision' at which he cries out in a voice 'that is no more than a breath'. The old age and sterility of Gerontion, furthermore, reflect the ill-health and sterility of the Fisher King in The Waste Land and the world of 'Rocks moss, stonecrop, iron, merds' is really a Waste Land, both waiting for rain. 'Both poems', as Bergonzi says, 'superimpose the remote past and the present.... in both poems we have the fleeting apparition of vague cosmopolitan figures.'[650] Both, according to Matthiessen, deal with the inadequancy of life without faith and recognize the relationship between sex and religion.[651] It can be inferred that when Eliot failed in his effort to set up 'Gerontion' as foreword to The Waste Land, he tried to elevate Tiresias (sharing Gerontion's decrepitude, knowledge and disillusion) to the position of the central consciousness of the poem.[652]

The nature of 'horror' which is the keynote of 'Gerontion' has proved difficult to pin down, not simply because the poet tried to keep it vague, but perhaps because it was not very clear even to him. Some remarks of Eliot on Shakespear's Hamlet in his review article 'Hamlet and his Problems' (reprinted as 'Hamlet') which appeared about the time 'Gerontion' was completed, may be relevant to the issue. The proximity of the dates support the hypothsis that the same mental preoccupations might have affected the poem and the essay. Eliot's excited and agitated remarks on Hamlet's author seem to have greater relevance to himself than to the Supreme dramatic artist. An extended quotation will highlight the point :

> Hamlet, like the sonnets, is full of some stuff that the writer could not drag to light, contemplate, or manipulate into art....
>
> Hamlet (the man) is dominated by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear. And the supposed identity of Hamlet with his author is genuine to this point : that Hamlet's bafflement at the absence of objective equivalent to his feelings is a prolongation of the bafflement of his creator in the face of his artistic problem....
>
> The intense feeling, ecstatic or terrible, without an object or exceeding its object, is something which every person of sensibility has known; it is doubtless a subject of study for pathologists. It often occurs in adolescence : the ordinary person puts these feelings to sleep, or trims down his feelings to fit the business world; the artist keeps them alive by his ability to intensify the world to his emotions.... We must simply admit that here Shakespeare tackled a problem which proved too much for him. Why he attempted it at all is an insoluble puzzle; under compulsion of what experience he attempted to express the inexpressibly horrible, we cannot even know.... We should have to understand things which Shakespeare did not understand himself.[653]

Critics have missed the 'objective correlative' behind the excessive horror and disgust in 'Gerontion';[654] but Eliot may not have felt it imperative to provide one, as the same may have eluded his understanding, as, in his estimate, Shakespeare's in Hamlet.

The same inscrutability of the origin of desire and horror is hinted in Eliot's comment on the works of Shakespeare, Donne, Webster, Tournour and Middleton made immediately after the composition of 'Gerontion' : 'Their words have often a network of tentacular roots reaching down to the deepest terrors and desires.'[655]

Regarding the images of drifting cosmopolitans, such as Mr. Silvero, Hakagawa and Madame de Tronquist, Eliot once said in a conversation that they were 'consciously concrete' and corresponded as closely as possible to something he had actually seen and remembered.[656] He also believed that if they were clearly rendered, they would not depend for their apprehension upon any private reference, but would become 'unconsciously general'.[657] This belief of Eliot, affecting this poem as well as his poetry in general, involves a risk. The private reference may be omitted by the poet on grounds of redundancy; but the resultant obscurity may render the lines incomprehensible to the reader. Some of the vividly realized images of private implications in 'Gerontion' have really failed to become 'unconsciously general' and comprehensible to the reader.

As in most other important poems of Eliot, the potently vague meaning subsumes multiple layers of implications. At least three levels seem to interact on and reinforce each other: sexual, religious and historical. A striking example of this is the celebrated passage on history. 'The phrase "Such knowledge"', Grover Smith says, 'seems to connote more than intellectual accomplishment. The "supple confusions", moreover, are surely not limited to history, and "She" is not history alone.... The ambiguity (refers) as much to belief as to potency or love...'[658] Kenner draws attention to the 'sexual and Biblical as well as epistemological contexts' of the term 'knowledge' in this passage.[659] Gerontion's reflections on history are occasioned by a stocktaking of his own past. 'The old man vainly trying to find meaning in past experience', states Bergonzi, 'is tormented by some elusive memory of erotic failure.'[660] According to Stead, 'Clio and Erato seem to merge into a single Muse' in the lines in question.[661]

The letter of FitzGerald, Eliot's adolescent idol, now in his dotage and despondency might have set the train of thought in Eliot's mind regarding his own past and future. The recent death of Eliot's father to whom he had been trying desperately to give an account of what he had achieved so far in his unorthodox way of life[662] may have been the immediate occasion of the poem. Headings' suggestion makes sense if we look at 'Gerontion', ruminative and disjointed as it is, as a sort of imaginary letter addressed to his deceased father. But the message to the dead is a cryptic one in suggestions and symbols of considerable 'personal saturation value', which are yet to be sufficiently deciphered.

The title of the English edition of Eliot's Poems of 1920, in which 'Gerontion' was the first, and the only poem not previously printed, was Ara Vos Prec, part of a verse from Dante's Purgatorio (Eliot brooded over it for years) which ran on to mean

> Now I pray you ... be mindful in due time of my pain.
> (Canto 26).[663]

The blithe neo-classical quatrains and the tour de force of the French verses are all put under the gloomily confessional title. But the foreign lingo, tried under Pound's influence, partially hid the implications, and Eliot dropped the title from subsequent prints of the poems to draw no further attention to it. Eliot, however, had come full circle to his 'first voice of poetry' to strike the authentic Eliotic note.

CHAPTER V

DRIZZLE OVER THE WASTE LAND

THE HISTORY of annotations, explications and interpretations of The Waste Land — an area that has flourished voluminously to the chagrin of both poet and readers — shows how vitally the poet's own observations at various stages helped establish the right approach to the poem. Not only Eliot's occasional comments, asides, outbursts, and afterthoughts, as we have seen,[664] corrected many gross misjudgments, but his withholding of further information ultimately set the limit to the reader's understanding.

The drift of the poem is indicated by the way it was forming in the mind of the poet, and Eliot's notes to different people at that time provide almost a running commentary on how the tantalus jar was filling in.

The first reference to the nascent poem, as recorded by Valerie Eliot in her introduction to The Waste Land : A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts Including the Annotations of Ezra Pound, is in a letter written in early January, 1916 :

> I hope to write when I have more detachment. But I am having a wonderful time nevertheless. I have lived through material for a score of long poems in the last six months.[665]

In looking back, we find that 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' had been published a little over six months back (June 1915) and Eliot married his first wife, Vivienne Haigh-Wood during the same month. Eliot's intimate Paris friend, Jean Verdenal, had died the month before. Eliot's disastrous marriage involved him in two nagging problems : his wife's prolonged illness and extreme financial straits. He could not therefore write anything for some time, he confided to his friend, Conrad Aiken. But the lived experience went into the making of The Waste Land after years of incubation.

In September, 1916, Eliot was dwelling on the same theme in a letter to his brother, Henry :

> I often feel that J. A(lfred) P(rufrock) is a swan-song, but I never mention the fact because Vivien is so exceedingly anxious that I shall equal it, and would be bitterly disappointed if I do not.... The present year has been, in some respects, the most awful nightmare of anxiety that the mind of man could conceive, but at least it is not dull, and it has its compensations.[666]

The encompassing gloom with its silver lining of poetic possibility is harped on again by Eliot at the end of the next year. Just before Christmas, 1917, he wrote to his father :

> every one's individual lives are so swallowed up in the one great tragedy that one almost ceases to have personal experiences and emotions... It's only very dull people who feel they have more in their lives now — other people have too much. I have a lot of things to write about if the time ever comes when people will attend to them.[667]

In Eliot's note to John Quinn written on 5 November 1919, (by the time he might have been completing 'Gerontion') came the first intimation that the poet was about to get down to the actual composition of The Waste Land (i.e., of the early drafts) :

> I am now at work on an article ordered by The Times, and when that is off I hope to get started on a poem I have in mind.[668]

His New Year's Resolution, as communicated to his mother before Christmas, was 'to write a long poem I have had on my mind for a long time.'[669]

Putting pen to paper was, however, still some way off. In writing to his mother nine months later (September 1920), he longed for 'a period of tranquillity to do a poem that I have in mind.'[670] His manifold problems, especially his futile search for a suitable place to live in, caused the delay. As late as 1921 he was complaining to John Quinn of lack of continuous time 'required for turning out a poem of any length.[671]

On 9 May 1921, at long last, comes the announcement that the poem was 'partly on paper'.[672]

The poem finally got written out in a most unusual way. The depressing circumstances must have seen the poet's fitful attempts to turn out passages of different lengths and qualities. The culminating point was reached around 1921. Apart from the circumstances mentioned above, early in 1919 Eliot's father died amidst profound differences between father and son. Eliot must have had a sense of remorse not having much to justify his recalcitrant literary career and an unorthodox marriage, to a staunchly conservative-minded father. Similar failure to convince his mother, a redoubtable lady at 77, who visited him and his wife in England in 1921, proved too much for his nerves, and presently he had to seek psychiatric aid. He was advised by the best specialist in London, he intimated to Richard Aldington, to 'go away at once for three months quite alone, and away from anyone, nor exert my mind at all.'[673] In October 1921, he was at Margate ('On Margate Sands./ I can connect/ Nothing with nothing.') during the first phase of **his rest cure.** But Eliot soon realized that what he needed was not 'a nerve man ... rather a specialist in psychological troubles'.[674] 'I am satisfied,' he wrote to Aldington in a frank confession, '... that my "nerves" are a very mild affair, due not to overwork but to an aboulie and emotional derangement which has been a lifelong affliction. Nothing wrong with my mind—.'[675] On Lady Ottoline Morrell's suggestion and Julian Huxley's recommendation he left for Switzerland on 18 November 1921 to consult Dr. Roger Vittoz. He spent about six weeks convalescing in Lausanne near Lake Leman ('By the waters of Leman I sat down and wept ...').[676] On 13 December he wrote to his brother Henry :

> The great thing I am trying to learn is how to use all my energy without waste, to be calm when there is nothing to be gained by worry, and to concentrate without effort.... I am very much better, and not miserable here.... I am certainly well enough to be working on a poem ![677]

Among the portions of The Waste Land that Eliot certainly wrote in Lausanne is the final section, 'What the Thunder Said'. He wrote it almost at a stretch, requiring, as he said, 'little or no retouch'. The other parts involved, to a large extent, reassembling fragments of different lengths written at different times during the preceding years, with a miscellany of poems and sketches tagged uncertainly on to them.

Early in January 1922, left the manuscript (or manuscripts) with Pound in Paris on his way back to London after his convalescence. 'I have written, mostly when I was at Lausanne for treatment last winter, a long poem.... I think it is the best I have ever done, and Pound thinks so too', said Eliot to John Quinn.[678] Calling it 'a damn good poem', Pound had already informed Quinn : 'About enough ... to make the rest of us shut up shop.'[679]

A sheaf of 19 pages, mostly typewritten, that Eliot handed to Pound in Paris, could be called 'a poem', entitled The Waste Land, only after the whole lot had gone through a drastic, almost ruthless, and competent editing by Pound. Eliot made adequate acknowledgment of this by dedicating the poem to Pound 'il miglior fabbro' (the better craftsman). Later Eliot wrote to Quinn whom he presented the original manuscripts of the poem that they deserved preserving solely as an evidence of 'the difference which (Pound's) criticism has made to this poem....'[680]

The great editorial collaboration between Eliot and Pound in shaping The Waste Land out of a welter of poetic materials needs careful examination to understand what the poem finally turned out to be.

Apart from the tribute paid in the dedication, Eliot was good enough to say of Pound as editor :

> He was a marvellous critic because he didn't try to turn you into an imitation of himself. He tried to see what you were trying to do.[681]

Still, as we find, the editing altered the poem considerably, further obscuring the so-called 'intention'[682] of the poem already obscured by Eliot's peculiar poetic mode. Some of the major changes effected by Pound are the alteration of the titles (of the whole poem as well as of an individual section), substitution of a new epigraph for the old and lopping off lengthy introductory passages of Parts III and IV. Eliot's concession that Pound 'tried to see what you were trying to do' cannot hide the fact that Pound sometimes overruled Eliot and their interactions at times make one feel that the two artists were really working at cross purposes.

Eliot's title in the typescript, He Do the Police in Different Voices, was changed to The Waste Land apparently without a murmur from the author. But the original epigraph, a quotation from Conrad's Heart of Darkness, caused the following exchanges between the two :

> Pound : 'I doubt if Conrad is weighty enough to stand the citation.'
>
> Eliot : 'Do you mean not use the Conrad quote or simply not put Conrad's name to it? It is much the most appropriate I can find, and somewhat elucidative.'
>
> Pound : 'Do as you like about Conrad; who am I to grudge him his laurel crown?'[683]

The quote in question was

> "Did he live his life again in every detail of desire, temptation, and surrender during that supreme moment of complete knowledge ? He cried in a whisper at some image, at some vision, — he cried out twice, a cry that was no more than a breath —
>
> 'The horror! the horror!'"
>
> CONRAD.

The passage was quietly dropped. But the question remains whether doing so was wise when the poet believed it to be 'much the most appropriate' and 'somewhat elucidative', whereas the editor was only concerned with its supposed literary 'weight'. Its particular relevance to the central theme of the poem seems to have eluded Pound.

The first 54 lines of the first part of the poem, 'The Burial of the Dead', describing a young man's night out with a wayward group was sacrificed apparently by Eliot himself. The title of the second part was changed from 'In the Cage' to 'A Game of Chess' by Pound. The first 72 lines (in imitation of Pope) of the third part along with quite a few other lines including some on the typist-house agent's clerk episode, were deleted by Pound.

The longest continuous passage of 82 lines was deleted from the fourth part, 'Death by Water', allowing a meagre ten lyric lines to survive. The loss staggered Eliot into the feeble protestation : 'Perhaps better omit Phlebas also???' which elicited Pound's emphatic refusal :

> I DO advise keeping Phlebas. In fact I more'n advise. Phlebas is an integral part of the poem; the card pack introduces him, the drowned phoen. sailor. And he is needed ABSOlootly where he is. Must stay in. [684]

So here was Eliot learning from another person what his symbols had been doing in his poem! Long afterwards he reminisced vaguely :

> There was a long section about a shipwreck. I don't know what that had to do with anything else, but it was rather inspired by the Ulysses Canto in The Inferno.[685]

With all deference to the 'better craftsman', whose editing really transformed the 'drafts' into a 'poem', it must be asserted that his editorship effected a fundamental change in the nature of the poem. Vastly improved in shapeliness and finish, the poem certainly lost its original sense of direction. The basic divergence, as it appears, is between Eliot's private and spiritual preoccupations and Pound's cultural and temporal. In method, Pound's imagistic predilection shows a distaste for continuous narratives chequering Eliot's drafts.

The alternative general titles, to begin with, would lead the poem to two different destinations. The oddity and lack of dignity of 'He Do the Police in Different Voices' notwithstanding, Eliot's title is significant as it begins with 'He', a person, a personality, may be a split one, given to assumed and multiple roles. The title 'The Waste Land', on the contrary, is impersonal and concerns a state of civilization. The 'He' in the title is related, however remotely, to the protagonist of the poem, who (like Prufrock or Gerontion) may be a zone of consciousness, and, in the last analysis, identifiable with the poet himself. 'Different voices' in the first instance may stand for the different styles and borrowings from different writers of different languages. But they may be linked more meaningfully with Eliot's different 'Voices of Poetry'. Recounting the three poetic voices, Bergonzi adds,

> Much of The Waste Land, I believe, consists of fragmentary dramatic monologues by a series of shifting, dissolving 'voices', in a direct development from the manner of 'Prufrock'.... And at the same time, through these voices can be heard Eliot himself speaking in the first voice, which utters lyric or meditative poetry arising directly from an obscure creative impulse.[686]

The original title, from this point of view, was more apt and, like the original epigraph, 'elucidative'. But the comical line from Dickens's Our Mutual Friend would ill become a poem of tragic depths, and its oddity, one must admit, would have half doomed the poem.

The 'horror' passage from Conrad set up as the epigraph, again, had a justification of its own. Eliot's general preoccupation with the 'boredom, horror and glory' of life seems to have intensified around the date, occasioning his essay on 'Hamlet' (1919) and the poem 'Gerontion' (1919-20) — both dwelling on the theme of the 'inexpressively horrible'. Discouraged in his attempt by Pound, he brought in the Greek-Latin passage from the Satyricon by Petronius. Expressing again the intolerable boredom and resultant horror of physical existence, the passage introduces the 'cage' motif connecting it with Part II of the poem, originally entitled 'In the Cage'. The elucidatory role of the epigraph is thus partly sacrificed.

Eliot's intention to set up some kind of a protagonist and to establish a focal point for a long and complex poem suffered a setback in the alteration of both title and epigraph. His compensatory effort to use 'Gerontion' as a prelude to the poem, drew down Pound's emphatic :

> I do not advise printing Gerontion as preface. One don't miss it at all as the thing now stands. To be more lucid still, let me say that I advise you NOT to print Gerontion as prelude.[687]

Eliot made yet another attempt to achieve the same results by formally proposing Tiresias to be the protagonist of the poem. While adding the 'Notes' to the meagre few pages of The Waste Land at the time of its publication as a book, Eliot glossed :

> Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.

But this attempt also, as we shall have time to examine, failed, because the only thing that Tiresias sees in the poem is the typist-house agent's clerk episode in Part III, and this by no means can be the substance of the poem.

One more important casualty of Pound's editing was the title 'In the Cage' for Part II in the original drafts. This title also had a personal relevance and was more elucidative. The theme of the misallied couple locked in mutual aversion is taken up in this part at two different levels — upper and lower. The situation portrayed not only reminds one of Eliot's own circumstances of marital incompatibility, but some of the details are found to have been taken directly from his life.

The title, as Schneider points out, may have been taken from Henry James's story 'In the Cage' — a story of 'sorry sexual frustrations'.[688] The story juxtaposes high life and low life, as does Eliot's poem, with a 'merciless clairvoyance', to quote Eliot's own words on James.[689]

Three extended passages dropped entirely are the narrative introductions to Parts I, III and IV. Of these the first and the last have evident personal and autobiographical connections. The young man indulging in nocturnal escapades with his friends at the beginning of Part I is in the image of Eliot in his Harvard days. On the lines (10-15) describing the visit to a show followed by a drink at the Opera Exchange, Valerie Eliot notes :

> When Eliot was an undergraduate at Harvard, he attended melodrama at the Grand Opera House in Washington Street, Boston, and after a performance he would visit the Opera Exchange (as he recalled it in later life, although that name cannot be traced in records of the period) for a drink. The bartender, incidentally, was one of the prototypes of Sweeney.[690]

The discarded 70 lines at the beginning of Part III were a satire, in imitation of Pope, on Fresca, a parody of Belinda. Pound's criticism of this mockery of the mock-heroic ('... if you mean this as a burlesque, you had better suppress it, for you cannot parody Pope unless you can write better verse than Pope — and you can't.'[691] persuaded Eliot to give it up without really convincing him. His later reference to the lines as 'an excellent set of couplets'[692] and the consecration of the name Fresca in 'Gerontion' :

> ... De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
> Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear

show that the character was not simply a passing idea (the recurrence of the name in 'Gerontion' and The Waste Land again point to the affinity between the two poems).

But whatever may be Eliot's point in the portraiture, it was definitely overdone. It exposes Eliot the misogynist at his heartiest Eliot's critical judgment failed (to the extent Pound's showed its correctness) in upholding the lines :

> (The same eternal and consumung itch
> Can make a martyr, or plain simple bitch);
> Or prudent sly domestic puss puss cat,
> Or autumn's favourite in a furnished flat,
> Or strolling slattern in a tawdry gown,
> A doorstep dunged by every dog in town...
>
> Women grown intellectual grow dull,
> And lose the mother wit of natural trull.

Some verses dealing with the seduction episode in Part III were similarly marred by an excess of gall and were unerringly blue-pencilled by Pound. The following lines describing the house agent's clerk's final posture would have doomed 'What Tiresias sees' which Eliot later tried to play up as 'the substance of the poem':

> And at the corner where the stable is,
> Delays only to urinate, and spit.

The shipwreck passage discarded from Part IV has again an autobiographical link. 'In placing his voyage and shipwreck off the New England coast where he had sailed in his youth, Eliot makes the first mention of the Dry Salvages', notes Mrs. Eliot.[693] Eliot long admired the daring life of fishermen whom he saw in his boyhood days braving the seas for an honest living.[694] The identification between the poet and the protagonist is reinforced by the fact that the Phlebas passage follows the account of the sea-roving fishermen (in Part IV) as that of the slovenly waiter (in 'Dans le Restaurant') who is the poet's double.

Among the smaller, but not less important, changes (not suggested by Pound, incidentally) are the deletion of the words 'The hyacinth garden' in between 'I remember' and 'Those are pearls that were his eyes' (Part II), 'The ivory men make company between us' following 'And we shall play a game of chess' (Part II), and some lines immediately following the injunctions of the thunder (Part V). These modifications, to be discussed later, seem to have been calculated by Eliot to strike out some links in the narratives and blur the issues.

Though the rejected passages and lines lend colour to Eliot's claim that the poem is of a personal character, no consideration of them can dispel the pervasive ambiguity and obscurity of the poem. Part I may be autobiographically linked with Eliot's Harvard days (the deleted nocturnal escapade passage), his second European tour (Starnbergersee and the Hofgarten) and his present dreary life in London (London bridge and King William Street), and Part II with his unhappy conjugal life; but the rest of the poem will not fit in with any biographical schema. Neither do the parts show a thematic coherence, unless we highlight certain elements to the disregard of others. The supposed coherent interpretations clash with each other and reveal more of the scholars' obsessions than of the poet's concerns. Certain themes (not certainly one theme) seem to float around, interact, and reinforce each other, but always defy predictability and comprehension. The edited text and the original drafts along with what Eliot said on the subject directly and indirectly do not unfold an understandable thematic design. Eliot's explicit comments, on the contrary, undermine any such expectation.

The thematic motifs again show quite a degree of complexity and ambiguity in themselves. They are far from defined and organized. Let us first take up the celebrated 'barrenness' motif in The Waste Land.

In spite of Pound's focus on 'barrenness' in the title The Waste Land and Eliot's referring the reader to Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance in the 'Notes', the poem begins not with inferlility, but fecundity of a rather exuberant, even ruthless, kind. April breeds lilacs out of the dead land. 'Breeding' is a strong term for reproduction, applied less to vegetation than to animals; and the unusual placing of the word at the end of the line — enjoying a strong accent between two semi-pauses — gives it an extra forcefulness. Harding points out that in this so-called Waste Land, roots clutch and branches grow out of the stony rubbish and 'Lil has been more than fertile enough'.[695] After all the doleful incantation on the 'rock and no water', the thunderclaps and the long-awaited drizzle (suggested by the onomatopoeic 'Shantih shantih shantih' rather than anything literal), one could recall that the poem had begun with spring rain that surprised the speaker at Starnbergersee. In this strange barren land, one is invaded by a shower of rain before one keeps on waiting vainly for a drop !

The poem is preoccupied with the idea of 'sex'. 'The poem is obsessed with sexual behaviour', says Ian Hamilton, '"A Game of Chess" and "The Fire Sermon" are concerned with little else.'[696] But Eliot's attitude to it suffers from ambiguity. There seems to be a romantic glorification of love in the exquisite phrasing of 'The awful daring of moment's surrender' and the ecstatic experience of the hyacinth garden. But a little probing brings out the notes of discordance. The lover's feelings in the 'hyacinth' passage turn out, on analysis, to be ambiguous.[697] A touchy aspect of Eliot's treatment of sex is his repeated references to bisexual and homosexual situations. Not only that 'Marie' is both a male and female name on the Continent,[698] or that Tiresias, the 'Old man with wrinkled female breasts', had shared the ecstasies of both sexes, or that 'hyacinth' is recognized as a male symbol,[699] Eliot showed an obsessive preoccupation with Canto XXVI of the Purgatorio dealing with the Sodomites and the Lustful. On Richards' emphasis on the importance of studying the Canto for the understanding of the whole of The Waste Land ('It illuminates [Eliot's] persistent concern with sex, the problem of our generation, as religion was the problem of the last',[700] Eliot admitted, 'it was shrewd of Mr. richards to notice it.'[701]

There is the recurrent motif of a dead person; but its drift in the poem cannot be easily followed. The title of Part I of the poem is, strikingly, 'The Burial of the Dead' derived from 'The Order for the Burial of the Dead' — formal title of the burial service of the Church of England.[702] There is Madame Sosostris's prediction : 'Here ... is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor.... Fear death by water.' There is also a corpse planted underground : 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?' Whose corpse or whose burial could this possibly be?

The dead person is connected with the hyacinth garden in Part II of the poem. In answer to the distracted lady's 'Do/You know nothing? Do you see nothing?' the self-absorbed answer, in the original drafts, is :

> I remember
> The hyacinth garden. Those are pearls that were his eyes, yes!

Eliot later dropped 'The hyacinth garden.' On the evidence of the cancelled line, G. Wilson Knight arrived at the logical conclusion that the hyacinth girl is male.[703]

The poem shows an obsessive concern with the Shakespearean line 'Those are pearls that were his eyes'. Thematically related to the verse is the passage in Part III :

> While I was fishing in the dull canal ...
> Musing upon the king my brother's wreck
> And on the king my father's death before him.

Half-way through the poem there is the fleeting Shakespearean line from the same context :

> 'This music crept by me upon the waters'

An autobiographical connection may be traced to Eliot's very dejected state of mind following the death of his father (1919) and that of Jean Verdenal before that (1915). The link with Verdenal has the support of the line following immediately that narrates in pretty exact terms the circumstances of Verdinal's death as visualized by Eliot ('mixed with the mud of Gallipoli', Eliot stated elsewhere[704]) :

> White bodies naked on the low damp ground.

Part IV is entirely devoted to the drowned Phoenician sailor, here named Phlebas. The section is worked out in cryptic terms and happens to be the only one on which Eliot provides no 'Notes'. The significance of 'Death by Water' is not easy to determine. We may connect it with the drowned effigy of the god (of ancient religions) retrieved later as god reborn and find in 'water' a baptismal significance.[705] But, as Harding points out, it is difficult to identify the drowned sailor with the fertility gods as the ending of Eliot's poem does not hold out the optimism of the fertility cults.[706] For Phlebas, as Grover Smith says, 'the baptism is a descent followed by no emergence.... it certainly offers no hope of immortality.'[707]

The religious motif in the poem is also enmeshed in complications. The titles of two parts of the poem ('The Fire Sermon' and 'What the Thunder Said') are connected with two eastern religions and one ('The Burial of the Dead') with the Christian Church. But the assumptions of the Christian character of some images (such as Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane, his journey to Emmaus and the quest of the Holy Grail), as the analysis of Part V will show, are ill-founded and the thunder's message (based on Hindu scriptures) is manifestly non-religious. Temperamentally deeply religious, Eliot at this stage, seems to have little religious commitment in the formal sense and it is not possible to determine whether certain issues are considered on the level of religion, ethics or that of personal relationship.

The multiplicity of themes in their potent vagueness and ambiguous interrelationship could possibly be best represented by Eliot's original title, however awkward and undignified otherwise, He Do the Police in Different Voices. Pound's neat substitute gives a false impression of the unity of the poem.

This view of Eliot's title is consistent with Eliot's opinion on the structure of the poem expressed quite consistently at different times. Writing on Ezra Pound in New English Weekly in 1946, he stated :

> It was in 1922 that I placed before him in Paris the manuscript of a sprawling chaotic poem called The Waste Land which left his hands, reduced to about half its size, in the form in which it appears in print.[708]

Though always paying tribute to Pound's editing, Eliot had more or less the same opinion about the form of the poem edited or unedited. 'I think it was just as structureless, only in a more futile way, in the longer version', Eliot remarked in his 'Paris Review Interview'.[709] About the excision of the shipwreck passage in Part IV, Eliot said in the same interview : 'I don't know what that had to do with anything else.'[710] To him the original composition was, in effect, a series of 'long passages in different metres, with short lyrics sandwiched in between,[711] and the finished one 'a calculated piece of poetic mosaic, deliberately (but in a sense accidentally) designed to produce a certain series of poetic effects.'[712] When told about the difficulties The Waste Land posed to his student, Eliot once replied, reports G. Wilson Knight : '"they are looking for something which isn't there"; that is, for a unity which did not exist.'[713] Only two years after the publication of the poem, Eliot would not mind being told by Arnold Bennett that the latter could not see the point of his poem, as, he said, 'he had definitely given up that form of writing.'[714] Eliot had, indeed, written to Richard Aldington, as early as 15 November 1922 : 'As for The Waste Land, that is a thing of the past so far as I am concerned and I am now feeling toward a new form and style.'[715]

One may detect an internal evidence of Eliot's awareness of the problem of form in the line towards the end of the poem :

> These fragments I have shored against my ruins

as in the lines at the end of 'Gerontion' a comment on the form of that poem :

> Tenants of the house,
> Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.

In Eliot's attempt to use 'Gerontion' as a prelude to The Waste Land Kenner finds an intention of the poet to 'explain' the later poem too as 'thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season.'[716] 'Why then Ile fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.' following, without a punctuation mark, the line just quoted from The Waste Land, is according to Kenner, 'a final image of all that [Eliot] has done.'[717] Eliot employs, Kenner is shrewd to note, all the languages (except Greek) as done by Hieronymo in his 'macaronic' tragedy.[718]

In getting at the meaning of the poem, one has the inescapable but dubious assistance of Eliot's 'Notes', which were appended to the poem when it was published in the form of a book. These provide an instance of how Eliot's formal gloss on his own work could create a misleading impression, which his own incidental remarks could help dispel. The genesis of these 'Notes' is best described in Eliot's own words :

> Here I must admit that I am, on one conspicuous occasion, not guiltless of having led critics into temptation. The notes to The Waste Land! I had at first intended only to put down all the

> references for my quotations, with a view to spiking the guns of critics of my earlier poems who had accused me of plagiarism. Then, when it came to print The Waste Land as a little book — for the poem on its first appearance in The Dial and in The Criterion had no notes whatever — it was discovered that the poem was inconveniently short, so I set to work to expand the notes, in order to provide a few more pages of printed matter, with the result that they became the remarkable exposition of bogus scholarship that is still on view to-day. I have sometimes thought of getting rid of these notes; but now they can never be unstuck. They have had almost greater popularity than the poem itself — anyone who bought my book of poems, and found that the notes to The Waste Land were not in it, would demand his money back. But I don't think that these notes did any harm to other poets : certainly I cannot think of any good contemporary poet who has abused this same practice.... No, it is not because of my bad example to other poets that I am penitent : it is because my notes stimulated the wrong kind of interest among the seekers of sources. It was just, no doubt, that I should pay my tribute to the work of Miss Jessie Weston; but I regret having sent so many enquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail.[719]

That Eliot's inducement led the 'seekers of sources' up to some uncut leaves in his personal copy of Jessie Weston's book,[720] is not the only confirmation of the misleading nature of his notes. The first lines of Eliot's prefatory note read :

> NOT only the title, but the plan and a good deal of the incidental symbolism of the poem were suggested by Miss Jessie L. Weston's book on the Grail legend : From Ritual to Romance (Cambridge).

But the fact remains that Miss Weston's book was published in 1920 by which time the composition of the poem was quite well advanced.[721] More serious than this factual inaccuracy is the altogether false impression that these 'Notes' give about Eliot's feelings about the poem. An air of confidence and finality ('Miss Weston's book will elucidate the difficulties of the poem'; 'Anyone who is acquainted with these works will immediately recognize in the poem certain references ...') marking these 'Notes' gives a lie to the patent diffidence with which Eliot speaks about the poem on less formal and intimate occasions. The notes encouraged a lot of interpretations that held everything in the poem explainable provided one grasped the point. Eliot's own subsequent admissions alone could successfully dispel this misunderstanding.

Some proof of the 'bogus scholarship' (if we make room for this too disarming admission of Eliot) can be found in a note like the following :

> In the first part of Part V three themes are employed : the journey to Emmaus, the approach to Chapel Perilous (see Miss Weston's book) and the present decay of eastern Europe.

Seeming to be confidently elucidative, the note, among other things, leaves unsaid what link 'the present decay of eastern Europe' could possibly have with the two earlier themes. If the answer to the difficult question is still left to the reader's or critic's surmise, the explanation is as good as no explanation. The note does not touch the crux of the problem.

The note on 1.46, Part I, reads :

> I am not familiar with the exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards from which I have obviously departed to suit my own convenience.... The Man with Three Staves ... I associate, quite arbitrarily, with the Fisher King himself.

The casualness with which Eliot confesses his lack of information and the arbitrariness of purpose hide the fact that the note says little about the real use of the Tarot cards in the poem.

A highly misleading note is the one on Tirasias in Part III ending with 'What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.' There is little to add to Ian Hamilton's castigation of Grover Smith who took the note too seriously and based his interpretation of the poem entirely upon it.[722] Smith was led to the preposterous mistake that Tiresias is the speaker of the words : 'April is the cruellest month ...' and, blind and spiritually embittered, 'wrestles with buried emotions unwittingly revived.'[723] One visible gap in the note is that it does not mention the Fisher King among the male figures who are said to merge into the archetype. The emphasis laid on Tiresias seems to negate the emphasis on the Fisher King and the Grail legend elsewhere in the notes.

The Tiresias hypothesis, in fact, seems to have come, as already noted, as an afterthought to Eliot who had been trying to find out a unifying principle for the poem. Joyce's Ulysses published the same year as The Waste Land must have suggested to Eliot the value of the mythical method in ordering experience in a work of art, as evidenced by his review of the novel, '"Ulysses", Order, and Myth' published the following year.[724] He hailed the method, which, according to him, consisted in 'manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity', to give 'a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history'. Considering the method an important discovery, he invited others to pursue it. That Eliot wrote the essay with The Waste Land in his mind has been recognized by scholars.[725] His ascribing the discovery of the method to Joyce implies that he had not used it in The Waste Land, and the Fisher King may be considered to have a greater claim to the role of the protagonist than Tiresias, had the method been employed at all.

There is one note — that on the last verse of the poem — which Eliot later tampered with. The word 'Shantih' was originally glossed as 'a formal ending to an Upanishad. "The Peace which passeth understanding" is a feeble translation of the content of this word.'[726] Eliot later substituted '"The Peace which passeth understanding" is our equivalent to this word' for the last sentence of the note. The alteration reflects Eliot's changing attitude to religion and indicates that his conversion to Christianity was yet some way off.

What should be brought to the reading of The Waste Land, it may be asserted now, is a right approach, and not an exact explication or a final interpretation. The conventional critical apparatus is often irrelevant to the study of the poem which, because of the unique manner of its composition and editing, neither belongs to a tradition, nor has initiated one. It has inspired interpretations in superabundance to prove that none of them is quite satisfactory. In the light of Eliot's own observations on the poem, attempts at interpretations had better confine themselves to broad outlines. The hints and clues dropped by the poet and his remarks and observations, as compiled below, can provide a dependable basis for this enterprise.

I THE BURIAL OF THE DEAD

Ll.1-4. The mention of lilacs bred by the month of April that revives memory and desire may be related to a passage appearing in a 'A Commentary' by Eliot in The Criterion (April 1934) which gives Eliot's memory of what he later described as the 'romantic year'[727] (1910-11) in Paris :

> I am willing to admit that my own retrospect is touched by a

> sentimental sunset, the memory of a friend coming across the Luxembourg Gardens in the late afternoon, waving a branch of lilac, a friend who was later (so far as I could find out) to be mixed with the mud of Gallipoli.

The friend mentioned is presumably Jean Verdenal. If there is any connection between the two passages, then the lines may be taken as recalling the Paris phase of Eliot's life. In 1968, Southam conjectured on the image of the lilac in The Criterion note :

> Can this image have been far from Eliot's mind when he wrote the opening lines of The Waste Land, and placed them beneath the title 'The Burial of the Dead'?' This, of course, is pure speculation. But The Waste Land, for all its constructedness and intellectual design, reads as the creation of a poet who has suffered his own 'waste land'. It is a poem 'reticent, yet confessional' (Harriet Monroe's phrase for Eliot's poetry in general); and before its publication he wrote to his mother that the poem contained much of his life. This should not set us off on a futile and destructive search for personal clues.[728]

Southam's identification is well recognized. But no injunction against investigation or inquiry was likely to succeed for long. In 1952, John Peter had speculated on the memory of a dead male friend with whom the speaker (Peter did not identify him with Eliot and treated the poem as dramatic) in the poem 'has fallen completely — perhaps the right word is "irretrievably" — in love', inspiring the poem and giving it a thematic unity, in an article printed in Essays in Criticism.[729] The article, as its publication history shows, was expunged from the copies of the journal at Eliot's furious objection and threat of legal action. In 1969, four years after Eliot's death, the article was reprinted in the same journal with a 'Postscript' which reiterated the contributor's original contention, asserting, this time, an identification between the speaker and the poet himself (the poem was now interpreted as personal, as opposed to dramatic, in agreement with Eliot's consistent view of it) and between the dead friend and Jean Verdenal.[730] In 1976, George Watson wrote an article, 'Quest for a Frenchman', in The Sewanee Review, summing up his investigation into the identity of Jean Verdenal and his possible relationship with Eliot.[731] Peter's cue was taken up and worked out by James E. Miller, Jr., in a full-length dissertation, T.S. Eliot's Personal Waste Land, a title that echoes, whether knowingly or not, Southam's statement of the poet's 'own "waste land"'. The book thus pays tribute to Southam at the same time as it violates, as Watson's essay, Southam's warning against further 'search for personal clues' which he apprehended to be 'futile and destructive'! Neihter the author's indignation nor the critic's admonition could stop literary inquiry, even if only a grain of truth could be gained from a pound of chaff in the last analysis.

Ll.8-12. The Starnbergersee, the Hofgarten and the line in German have an autobiographical relevance as noted by Sencourt. In 1914 Eliot undertook a European tour on a Sheldon Travelling Fellowship as a part of his Ph.D. programme :

> He left Harvard ..., renewed his links with Paris ..., and then went on to the Bavarian town [Marburg].... Seven years afterwards the memories of its Hofgarten, of the Starnbergersee near Munich and of a Lithuanian girl whom he met there were still with him : despite her nationality (originally Russian, later Lithuanian) she claimed, to his amused surprise, that she was a real German, 'echt deutsch'....[732]

If there is any validity in this identification, the autobiographical continuity of the poem is followed up to Eliot's second European tour.

Ll.13-18. Mrs. Valerie Eliot, presumably on Eliot's authority, informs that 'Marie' of the passage was Countess Marie Larisch, author of My Past (London, 1913) :

> (Eliot) had met the author (when and where is not known), and his description of the sledding, for example, was taken verbatim from a conversation he had with this niece and confidante of the Austrian Empress Elizabeth.[733]

George L.K. Morris in his illuminating brief article, 'Marie, Marie, Hold on Tight' detected parallels in the Countess's book, which are rather too many and too specific to be fortuitous :

> the Countess' name was Marie.... her home was on the Starnberger-See .... Marie had several archduke cousins.... Marie went 'south in winter' ... — Menton, to be specific ... she frequently observed that only in the mountain she felt free....
>
> The opening lines of Part II echo an account of the Empress' dressing room, with its notable combination of magnificence and ennui. And the 'Chapel Perilous' of Part V curiously resembles the tumbledown chapter-house at Heiligenkreuz, to which the uncles of Maria Vetsera carried her mangled remains,through the windy night with a pale moon....
>
> there was considerable superstition and fortune-telling in the Hapsburgh wasteland.... 'death-by-drowning' episode concerns the suicide of the Bavarian king in the Starnberger-See. ... A striking chapter gives Elizabeth's account of his reappearance several nights after his death ... She was awakened by the drip-drip of water in her room, and saw Ludwig standing by her bed, his hair and clothes

> drenched and hung with sea-weed.... The Empress was assassinated the following year, while boarding a steamer on Lac Leman ('by the waters of Leman I sat down and wept').[734]

While Mrs. Eliot's emphasis on conversation rather than the book signifies the importance of the borrowing as a personal reminiscence, the textual parallels introduce further complications in determining the nature of the images used in the poem. It may be that Eliot was simply intrigued by particular names and entities ('the mind of any poet would be magnetised in its own way, to select automatically, in his reading (from picture papers and cheap novels, indeed, as well as serious books ...) the material — an image, a phrase, a word — which may be of use to him later')[735] or there may be a design too subtle to be detected so far.

Ll.19-30. The description of desolation and dissolution is a reworking of the first few lines of a poem (written early 1915) which Eliot was hesitant to publish at first. Entitled 'The Death of Saint Narcissus', the poem was suppressed at the proof-reading stage and lay in Poetry's files for years before finally printed in Poems Written in Early Youth (1967). As examined earlier,[736] the poem combines auto-erotic obsessions (Narcissus) with sainthood aspirations (St. Narcissus) too frankly to be considered suitable for public perusal. Gordon conjectures that Eliot considered the poem 'too confessional'.[737] Alluding to the poem along with 'Mr. Apollinax', Eliot wrote to Pound (February 1915) : 'I understand that Priapism, Narcissism etc are not approved of ...'[738] The death of the flamboyant martyr contemplated in the lines

> Come under the shadow of this gray rock —
> Come in under the shadow of this gray rock,

> And I will show you something different from either
> Your shadow sprawling over the sand at daybreak, or
> Your shadow leaping behind the fire against the red rock:
> I will show you his bloody cloth and limbs
> And the gray shadow on his lips.

becomes distant and impersonal and the theme of death which gives title to the section is almost blotted out, leaving only the 'fear in a handful of dust' in place of 'his bloody cloth and limbs/And the gray shadow on his lips'. The motif of death is not as clear in the verses as in the title of this part.

Ll.31-42. Bounded by quotations, one celebrating naive love and the other love's desolation, from Tristan and Isolde, an opera by Richard Wagner, the lines constitute the famous but controversial 'hyocinth girl' passage (Wagner, incidentially, had a humorous rendezvous with Marie Larisch when she was a girl — a fact providing some pretext for speculation about the link between this passage and the 'Marie' passage earlier)[739]. The bisexual implications of the figure of the hyacinth girl have been pointed out earlier;[740] and she/he may be identified with the dead person lamented in 'The Burial of the Dead' and 'Death by Water', as implied by the following passages :

> I remember
> The hyacinth garden. Those are pearls that were his eyes, yes!
> (II: 49-50 of W.L. Drafts)

> Here, said she,
> Is your card, the drowned Phoenician Sailor,
> (Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!)
> (I : 46-49)

need not be equated at once with ecstasy. The 'heart of light' echoes Heart of Darkness, the title of the novel from which Eliot chose a passage for the poem's epigraph which emphasizes 'horror'. The Wagnerian line following 'the heart of light, the silence' signifies emptiness and desolation. Kenner again finds 'Oed' und leer das Meer' ('empty and wide the sea') to be analogous to what Harry, Lord Monchensey experienced gazing over the rail of the liner after he had, as he imagined, pushed his wife into the sea,[742] i.e., did a girl in.

Ll. 43-59. Eliot admitted that it was 'almost certain' that he borrowed the name 'Madame Sosostris' from 'Madame Sesostris', a fake fortune-teller in Aldous Huxley's Chrome Yellow, published in November 1921, although he was 'unconscious of the borrowing'.[743] Grover Smith notes that Mr. Scogan who impersonates Sesostris in the story is modelled on Bertrand Russell,[744] and Gordon comments that Eliot's friends would have recognized Russell behind Mme Sosostris[745] — the fortune-telling passage, therefore, could approximate to the 'sage advice of a bogus clairvoyant.'[746] Eliot's interest in Bertrand Russell, whose philosophy he could not accept, is elsewhere demonstrated in 'Mr. Apollinax'. The ironic implications of 'nevertheless ... the wisest woman in Europe' will be better understood in this context.

The fortune-teller is also linked with the sybil of Cumae in the changed epigraph to the final version of The Waste Land. Her cards may be compared, as Kenner suggests, to the riddling leaves of the Sybil in the sixth book of the Aeneid, enjoining Aeneas, during his underworld journey, to perform for a drowned companion the rite of the burial of the dead.[747]

The fortune-teller's parenthetical 'Those are pearls that were his eyes. Look!' regarding the drowned Phoenician sailor was marked by Pound for deletion.[748] But Eliot retained it, attaching to it an importance perhaps not known to Pound. Later on in his note on 1.126 ('Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?') which is preceded by the line 'The hyacinth garden. Those are pearls that were his eyes' in the original drafts, Eliot refers the reader to 'Part 1, 1.37,48' (the note still stands), i.e., the 'hyacinth garden' scene and the image of the drowned person. This is a clinching proof of the intimate link between the drowned Phoenician sailor and the hyacinth garden.

In the first of the extended 'Notes', Eliot admits his unfamiliarity with the 'exact constitution of the Tarot pack of cards' and his departure from it 'to suit my own convenience'. This admission of a personal manipulation of what was a traditional structure of symbols, should be borne in mind in considering Eliot's characteristic approach of The Waste Land. 'The Hanged Man ... fits [his] purpose in two ways' and 'the Man with Three Staves' he associates with the Fisher King 'quite arbitrarily'. Without any dependable clues from the rules of the game and with the special purpose of the author but half spelled out, the reader has the benefit of an 'enlightened mystification' which easily gives way to speculation. It is likely that with the striking Tarot symbols such as the drowned Phoenician sailor, the man with three staves and the Lady of the Rocks, Eliot was introducing a dramatis personae to play out significant roles in the poem. The drowned sailor, indeed, pops up several times in the poem. Belladonna, the Lady of the Rocks, may be taken as the female stereotype such as the figure at the beginning of 'A Game of

Chess'. 'The Hanged Man', invisible to the fortune-teller, is associated by Eliot with 'the hooded figure in the passage of the disciples to Emmaus in Part V'. By a flight of imagination he may be connected with Jean Verdenal,[749] a figure lurking somewhere in the poem. But the directions are so vague and the development of the thread so tenuous, that any assertion has to lean heavily on speculation.

Ll.60-5. In these lines coalesce two major influences on Eliot : Baudeliare and Dante. Striving for a 'poetry of the city', Eliot admits, he found a model in Baudelaire. But decidedly a greater poet than Laforgue, Baudelaire seems to have influenced Eliot in a limited way. Unwilling to be affected by Baudelaire's total personality, as he was by Laforgue's, Eliot absorbed mainly his urban images, or, more appropriately, was inspired to make poetic use of his own impressions of urban life collected from his early life. The lines evoking the 'Unreal City' turn out to be the finest product of Eliot's interest in Baudelaire, which is best summed up in Eliot's own words :

> I think that from Baudelaire I learnt first, a precedent for the poetical possibilities, never developed by any poet writing in my own language, of the more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of the juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic.... It may be that I am indebted to Baudelaire chiefly for half a dozen lines out of the whole of _Fleurs du Mal_; and that his significance for me is summed up in the lines :
>
> > _Fourmillante Cité, cité pleine de rêves,_
> > _Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant_ ...

> I knew what that meant, because I had lived it before I knew that I wanted to turn it into verse on my own account.[750]

'The swarming city' mirrors the crowd flowing over London Bridge, the 'city full of dreams' becomes the 'Unreal City' and a ghost accosting a passer-by in broad daylight is duplicated by Stetson, a figure conjured out of ancient Roman history. The ghost sound on the final stroke of nine of the clock of Saint Mary Woolnoth (Eliot retained the reference in spite of Pound's deletion of it in the original drafts, finally protecting it by the note : 'A phenomenon which I have often noticed.') reinforces Baudelaire's city of ghosts jostling matter-of-fact human beings.

The swarming ghostly city overlaps the teeming world of shades of Dante's masterpiece which Eliot used to carry in his pocket while working on The Waste Land.[751] Eliot's indebtedness to Dante in this specific respect is best acknowledged, again, by Eliot himself in 'What Dante Means to Me' (1950) :

> Certainly I have borrowed lines from him, in the attempt to reproduce, or rather to arouse in the reader's mind the memory, of some Dantesque scene, and thus establish a relationship between the medieval inferno and modern life. Readers of my Waste Land will perhaps remember that the vision of my city clerks trooping over London Bridge from the railway station to their offices evoked the reflection 'I had not thought death had undone so many'; and that in another place I deliberately modified a line of Dante by altering it — 'sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled.' And I gave the references in my notes, in order to make the reader who recognized the allusion, know that I meant him to recognize it, and know that he would have missed the point if he did not recognize it.[752]

London, the city in which the shades are as real as flesh and blood, casts up in the way of the protagonist one, named Stetson. The reference to the naval battle at Mylae that took place in 260 B.C. in the first Punic war between the Romans and the Carthaginians implies Stetson to be dead long since. But Valerie Eliot asserts, presumably on Eliot's authority, that he was based on a bank-clerk acquaintance of the poet.[753] The familiar ghostly figure of Stetson (some sort of a precursor of the 'familiar compound ghost' of Four Quartets), therefore, confronts the poet with his own spiritual crisis. The identity of the corpse that he planted in the garden last year is one of the dark mysteries in the poem. Meeting this bank-clerk, when Eliot was a bank-clerk himself, may represent Eliot's facing himself, and the corpse planted may be the corpse of somebody analogous to the girl 'done in' in Sweeney Agonistes. The agony of watching a person uneasily buried in the grave is similar to that of watching, as in the melodrama, the dead kept in the bath in lysol. The man waits for somebody who will knock on the door and find out the crime, as the protagonist here fears the 'Dog' which may dig up the corpse. The 'Dog' as 'foe to men' in the original drafts becomes 'friend to men' in the revised version. The detecting, retributive force, as represented by the 'Dog' (the capital 'D' is a puzzle to the reader) may remind one of the classical 'Eumenides' (Is the capitalization accounted for by Eliot's deification of the retributive force?), who turn out to be beneficial ('the kindly ones') in the last resort. The theme is elaborated in The Family Reunion, in which the imagined killer of the woman pursued relentlessly by the Eumenides, chooses to follow the Eumenides of his own accord.[754] Kenner, it is relevant to note, draws parallels between The Waste Land and The Family

Reunion regarding the guilt consciousness of the protagonist.[755] The concluding quotation from Baudelaire, equating the protagonist to the reader, generalizes the submerged guilty character of everyone :

> Any man has to, needs to, wants to
> Once in a lifetime, do a girl in.

The somewhat neat construction put upon the passage, however, cannot explain away the rich ambiguity of the situation. The planted corpse may, indeed, be seen as the buried god of the fertility myth, agreeing with Eliot's formal reference in the prefatory Note. The 'Dog' may, in another way, be connected with the dog in 'Dans le Restaurant'.[756] The corpse planted may as well be that of Jean Verdenal, whose memory is revived by the cruel spring. The two passages at the beginning and the end of the poem have the common motif of the agonizing recrudescence of life in death : lilacs flowering and the corpse sprouting out of the snow-bound, dead land. The section of the poem, it is to be noted, bears the title : 'The Burial of the Dead' which may be an attempt to lay the ghost. There is yet another interpretative possibility in the interchangeability of the characters of Jean Verdenal and the poet himself. Verdenal's death may lie behind the 'Death by Water' as much as the poet's own imagined death.[757] The heart of the ambiguity may really be in a coalescing, in different degrees, of some or all of the interrelated motifs. There is a close affinity between the experience described in the last passage and a private whim that Eliot sometimes indulged. He once communicated to Aiken, as Gordon notes :

> it would be interesting to cut oneself into pieces and to watch, as if one's life were another's, and see if the fragments would sprout.[758]

II A GAME OF CHESS

The title : The original title 'In the Cage' which has been recognized as much more revealing was discarded by Pound for 'A Game of Chess' following up the reference to a game of chess in lines 137-8. The new title will be more intelligible, if we trace the lines back to their original context in an unpublished poem, 'The Death of the Duchess' found among the Waste Land drafts.[759] The game of chess in that poem does not lead to a stalemate, which Gardner holds to be the theme of the section,[760] but to a tragic end of the female partner. The duchess there descends from the 'Duchess' of Malfi in Webster's great tragedy. When the Duchess in Webster talks on, at a climactic point of the story (Eliot commented on the 'breathless tension' of this scene),[761] brushing her hair with her back to her husband, the latter leaves the room momentarily for a joke. She turns round with the words, 'Have you lost your tongue?' and finds not her husband but her brother, her enemy and executor. The lady in 'The Death of the Duchess' also talks on, brushing her hair, to a silent male partner who expects her for reasons best known to him, to meet a similar fate. This rather cruel wish or wishful thinking, of the man who has apparently failed to meet her love demands, and has consequently been rendered paralysed and speechless, underlies the situation in 'A Game of Chess'. It is the same desire again of a man to 'do a girl in'. The distraught lady, therefore, is not expected to force a stalemate, but prattle on to her perdition (her insistent utterances seem one tangible offence for which she should be sent to her doom : Eliot's own reading of the lines emphasizes the 'shrill, rasping voice of the lady'.[762] The misallied couple press lidless eyes upon a chess board and wait 'for a knock upon the door', as in Sweeney Agonistes

> you wait for a knock and the turning of a lock for you know
> the hangman's waiting for you.[763]

The lower-class woman, aged prematurely by drudgery and child-bearing, is expected to meet a similar end, as presaged by the insistant 'HURRY UP PLEASE ITS TIME' (the capitalization possibly emphasizing its fatefulness and its increased frequency giving the impression that time is really running out) clinched by the quotation of the farewell greetings of Ophelia a short while before her death.

Eliot's own note on the game of chess, formal and laconic ('Cf. the game of chess in Middleton's Women beware Women'), seems to hide as much as it reveals, and may be taken as a pointer to what Eliot does with his guarded secrets. The game of chess in the play by Middleton who, incidentally, wrote a play entitled A Game at Chess, is relevant in so far as it has a sinister motive and covers the undoing of another woman in another way. So Eliot seems to imply the undoing, scarcely noticeable to a reader, of the female partner in the episode. The note to that extent is helpful. But the injury done to the lady in Middleton's play is seduction which is little relevant to the situation in 'A Game of Chess'. The harm, if any (the reference to Women beware Women postulates the existence of one), must go beyond seduction to annihilation, as made explicit by the situation in 'The Death of the Duchess' based upon one in The Duchess of Malfi. What lies behind the 'game of chess' is, therefore, not merely a situation in Middleton's play, but, through related circumstances, that in Webster's.

'The Death of the Duchess', a poem accidentally surviving among the Waste Land drafts, gives us an insight into a matter not to be made intelligible by Eliot's formal note.

The discarded title, 'In the Cage', according to Valerie Eliot, refers to the passage from the Satyricon of Petronius, which replaced the 'Horror' passage from Heart of Darkness as epigraph to The Waste Land.[764] But the title, 'In the Cage', was used when the quotation from Petronius was not there, and the new epigraph appeared when that title had been dropped. So the 'cage' in the title should be understood in the sense of a kind of prison house for an ill-matched couple, rather than in the sense of a coop in which the solitary Sybil sat longing for death.

Ll. 77—110. The last three verses of this passage are derived from the lines in 'The Death of the Duchess':

> Under the brush her hair
> Spread out in little fiery points of will
> Glowed into words, then was suddenly still.

preceded by a somewhat rambling description of the 'inhabitants of Hampstead' leading a humdrum routine life. Against this background, there is the couple shut indoors, the male spouse gripped by the feeling :

> ... it is terrible to be alone with another person.

and contemplating :

> We should have marble floors
> And firelight on your hair
> There will be no footsteps up and down the stair

In 'The Game of Chess' or what was earlier 'In the Cage', the crowding Hampstead people are blotted out to focus entirely on the lady enthroned on the marble floor with the seven-branched candelabra glittering upon her.

The elevation of a frail woman in a strictly middle-class setting to a too gorgeously embellished aristocratic figure (G.L.K. Morris traced the origin of the portrait to Marie Larisch's My Past without being able to supply a causal link,[765] and Grover Smith lists several Shakespearean analogues[766]) gives rise to the question whether the first half of Part II is a continuous passage and the quoted speeches can at all be ascribed to the enthroned lady. The continuity is unbroken in 'The Death of the Duchess'. But the abrupt shift in exposition in 'A Game of Chess' creates a real structural problem.

Ll. 111-34. The speeches of the insistent, overwrought woman, put in quotation marks, which make up the bulk of the passage, replace two speeches by the woman in 'A Game of Chess' — both borrowed from The Duchess of Malfi (III.ii.69-70 and III. ii.67-8). It may be noted that when the speaker is a woman of common stature and, in her familiar situation, not unlike Eliot's own wife, the speeches assigned are literary and dignified; but when she is transformed into a staid, aristocratic lady in her exquisite boudoir, inviting comparison with Cleopatra or Dido, speeches are snatches of conversation of extreme realism. The ringing voice of an excited, nervous woman may easily be ascribed to Vivienne, Eliot's first wife, who was a psychiatric patient at that time. 'Photography?' is Pound's comment on lines 111-14 along with 'Photo' on line 126. These comments, according to Valerie Eliot, imply 'too realistic a reproduction of an actual conversation'.[767] The lines had the enthusiastic approval of Vivienne who wrote 'Wonderful' repeatedly in the margin.[768] 'Form notations on the typescript,' Schneider concludes, 'it is apparent that the dialogue of 'A Game of Chess' is in some degree autobiographical.'[769]

In answer to the urgent queries of the wife, there are words, presumably of the husband, not uttered but contemplated, as the absence of quotation marks implies. Thrice in the meditated replies there are, it may be noted, references to the death of some person. '... we are in a rat's alley/ Where the dead men lost their bones' is followed by 'The wind under the door' on which Eliot's note alludes to Webster's 'Is the wind in that door still?' the question (in The Devil's Law Case, III. ii) is asked by a surgeon as he hears a groan from a man supposed to be dead. (Eliot later tried to explain the line as an adaptation of a phrase from Webster which ment 'Is that the way the wind blows?')[770] The third reference is in the line 'Those are pearls that were his eyes, yes!'

The lines therefore may be taken to harbour a reference to a dead person whose memory seems to be standing between the narrator and the importunate woman.

Ll. 135-38. These lines are modified from ll. 59-64 of 'The Death of the Duchess':

> We should say : This and this is what we need
> And if it rains, the closed carriage at four.
> We should play a game of chess
> The ivory men make company between us
> We should play a game of chess
> Pressing lidless eyes and waiting for a knock up the door.

which are followed by a speech of the woman and a narrative sequence indicating a Duchess of Malfi situation and a tragic end of the woman.

'The closed carriage at four' ('carriage' changed to 'car' at Pound's instance, as 'This and this is what we need' to 'The hot water at ten' in deference to Pound's marginal remark, 'particularize') reminds one, as Gordon notes, of an afternoon drive in a hired car after one of Vivienne's bad nights, mentioned by Eliot in one of his health bulletins (January 1916) to Russell, while Vivienne recuperated at the Torbay Hotel, Torquay.[771]

The line 'The ivory men make company between us', considered by Schneider 'the most intimate, possibly, in the whole of The Waste Land'[772] was removed before publication at the instance of Vivienne,[773] most probably for its embarrassingly personal content. The line is not cancelled in The Waste Land typescript and was retrieved from memory by Eliot in 1960 in a fair autograph copy of the poem to be sold at auction for the benefit of the London Library.[774]

Advocating that the line be reinstated in the established text, Schneider holds that without it the title does not make much sense to a reader. 'Puzzled,' she says, 'we have gone dutifully where Eliot's note sent us, to the game of chess in Middleton's Women Beware Women, and have returned only the more puzzled if now able to disguise our mystification by talking about Middleton.'[775] But the mystification is of a complicated nature. It is not that Eliot is out to hoodwink the reader, but he does not know how to help him better. It is not simply mystifying, but half conceding the truth — the whole truth being beyond his capacity to make public. Middleton, as analysis shows, is not beside the point, but a step towards the understanding of the situation — in a devious way (one should be prepared for this in Eliot sometimes); and, therefore, proving more confusing. The dark purport of the passage should rather he understood by taking into account the lines in 'The Death of the Duchess' with its parallels in The Duchess of Malfi. The game of chess is not merely 'a futile bridge, and a futile barrier also, between two solitudes', as held by Schneider,[776] but, as we have seen, a cover for a plot. The wife is being pitilessly sent to death, for an offence not understandable to an ordinary reader; but possibly enlightened by some remarks of Eliot on the death of Harry's wife in The Family Reunion, as called attention to by Gordon :

> The effect of his married life upon him was one of such horror as to leave him for the time at least in a state that may be called one of being psychologically partially desexed : or rather, it has given him a horror of women as of unclean creatures.[777]

Recreating the exact circumstances of the incident, Eliot continued :

> Suppose that the desire for her death was strong in mind, out of touch with reality in her company. He is standing on the deck, perhaps a few feet away, and she is leaning over the rail. She has sometimes talked of suicide. The whole scene of pushing her over — or giving her just a little tip — passes through his mind. She is trying to play one of her comedies with him — to arouse any emotion in him is better than to feel that he is not noticing her — and she overdoes it, and just at the moment, plump, in she goes. Harry thinks that he has pushed her; and certainly, he has not called for help, or behaved in any normal way, to say nothing of jumping in after her.[778]

If the woman could be looked at as basically 'unclean' and if her assertion of emotional claims could be treated as 'one of her comedies with him', her tragic end may be taken as deserved. The man's condition of 'being psychologically partially desexed', the woman's trying vainly to play upon his deadened sensibilities, the man's secret desire to see her dead ('to do a girl in'), the actual execution being left to an unknown agency, are recurrent motifs in Eliot.

Ll. 139-172. The unhappy conjugal setting is repeated in the second half of Part II on the working class level and its hidden drift has been examined before.[779] But Eliot's attitude to lower-class life needs some comments. The vignette of working class life, so rare in Eliot, is, as Bergonzi points out,[780] under considerable influence of the music hall, and of Marie Lloyd, who, according to Eliot, was its greatest exponent of the day.[781] A sharer of what may be called upper-class 'snobbery' and a virulent critic of the middle class, Eliot had an unexpected weakness for the lower-class life. In his dreary Boston days, he was a frequenter of the slum areas where his mind 'came to rest, with a curious sense of repose'.[782] We also know that in his childhood Eliot was fascinated by the life of the fishermen and, in Part III, the pleasant whining of the mandoline during their midday repose at Lower Thames Street brings a whiff of gentle breeze on the arid plains of The Waste Land. It may be pointed out that in his enthusiastic support for the music hall, he once wrote :

> The middle classes, in England as elsewhere, under democracy, are morally dependent upon the aristocracy, and the aristocracy are subordinate to the middle class, which is gradually absorbing and destroying them. The lower class still exists.... In the music-hall comedians they find the expression and dignity of their own lives; and this is not found in the most elaborate and expensive revue.[783]

with further comment on its greatest contemporary exponent :

> she represented and expressed that part of the English nation which has perhaps the greatest vitality and interest.[784]

There is no reason to think that in 'Marie Lloyd' (an essay flanked by 'Francis Herbert Bradley' and 'Wilkie Collins and Dickens' in his Selected Essays) Eliot was talking with his tongue in his cheek. We should read this essay with Eliot's occasional statements which, in isolation, would sound startling and paradoxical :

> Poetry is a superior amusement : I do not mean an amusement for superior people.[785]
>
> From one point of view, the poet aspires to the condition of the music-hall comedian.[786]
>
> I myself should like an audience which could neither read nor write.[787]

The passage in Part II is Eliot's tour de force in imitation of the music hall style. According to Bergonzi,

> the setting is not a real pub, but a music-hall adaptation of one, with a comedienne of the Marie Lloyd type delivering a spirited monologue just before closing time.[788]

An interesting sidelight is shed on the passage by Eliot's comment that it is 'pure Ellen Kellond', a maid employed by the Eliots, who recounted the story to them.[789] Sencourt identifies the maid as a 'rough, crude charwoman (who) talked boldly of abortions'.[790] Incidentally, Eliot specially mentions 'a middle-aged woman of the charwoman class' whose tone of voice is imitated by Marie Lloyd in one of her most hilarious stage performances.[791]

ful expedition and instead of Ariel's ethereal ditty the scrap of a vulgar ballad : 'O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter'. Mrs. Porter is said to have kept a bawdy-house in Cairo and became a legend in her life time.[796] C.M. Bowra informs that the above song was sung by Australian soldiers when they landed at Gallipoli in 1915[797] — thus being connected with the time and place of Verdenal's death. Eliot's note : 'I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken : it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia' leaves something unsaid, according to Bowra,[798] and may be an attempt to bypass the identification made above.

Ll.207-14. The episode described is said to have a factual basis. 'Years later', notes Southam, 'Eliot told an inquirer that he had in fact received such an invitation from an unshaven man from Smyrna with currants in his pocket. The homosexual implications that some interpreters have read into these lines did not, said Eliot, occur to him.'[799] But the sexual implications, bypassed also by Eliot's unnecessary technical note on 'C.i.f. London', etc., are in keeping with the drift of the poem. These are also underscored by the bird songs recalling an episode of sexual violation — words almost onomatopoeically reproducing the situation of Philomela's forced surrender : 'jug jug', in Elizabethan English, being 'a crude joking reference to sexual intercourse'[800] — which sandwich the passage in the original drafts. 'To make the nightingale sing' (cantar l'usignolo) in Italian is also an indecent joke on the sex act.[801]

Ll.215-48. This single continuous and coherent episode of the typist and the house-agent's clerk in the final version of The Waste Land involves simpler issues and illustrates Eliot's persistent view of the sexual union

III. THE FIRE SERMON

The title & 11.173-86. Part III is perhaps the most obvious in meaning as suggested by an expressive title unaltered by Pound. 'The Fire Sermon', an exhortation against the 'fires of lust, anger, envy and the other passions that consume men',[792] was preached by Buddha, whose religion Eliot is said to have been thinking seriously of embracing at the time of the composition of The Waste Land.[793] The verses are variations on the theme of lust in images and episodes in a setting recognizably of Eliot's London.

The first 70 lines of the original drafts, a strained satire, in imitation of Pope, on the female sex was replaced by the description of the Thames bank, the word 'nymph' possibly serving as the only link between the two passages (and The Rape of the Lock which the discarded passage parodied). The satire now subdued to irony is turned on both the 'nymphs' and their casual lovers, and the stage is better set for the typist-house agent's clerk episode and the Thames daughters' songs — all touched by the consuming fire of lust.

The modulated discourse on lust has the counterpoint of the very private mood of dejection of the narrator. Beside the gay Thames there is the sorrowful Lake Leman (near Lausanne where Eliot stayed for his rest-cure) and, later in the poem, beside the songs of the Thames daughters, there are the reminiscences of Margate Sands (where Eliot had spent some weeks for the same purpose). The real contrst seems to be between the vulgar gaity around and the deep personal grief of the narrator rather than between modern and Elizabethan London, as often supposed. The private concern makes sense of the connected image of the 'rattle of bones, and chuckle spread from ear to ear' and also of the next passage dealing with deaths and dead bodies by providing a possible cause of that grief.

Ll.187-206. As discussed earlier, the narrator's brooding over the deaths and the dead bodies may have behind it the poet's own experience of the deaths of his father and a dear friend in the recent past.[794] The friend being called 'brother' is noticed elsewhere in the response to the first message of the thunder in the original drafts :

DATTA. we brother, what have we given?
My friend, my blood shaking my heart....

The transposition of dates of the deaths of father and friend may just be a minor poetic licence, if not a deliberate Eliotic device to mystify. The death of Eliot's father has been described as a 'terrible ordeal' for Eliot by Peter Ackroyd on the evidence of Vivienne.[795] The death of Verdenal, likewise, may have been as overwhelming to Eliot as that of Arthur Hallam to Tennyson. The sympathetic bond thus resulting between the avant-garde 20th-century poet and the outmoded Victorian may have prompted Eliot's very perceptive and sympathetic appreciation of In Memoriam which he called 'great poetry' and, to strike a very personal note, 'the concentrated diary of a man confessing himself' (note how suddenly Eliot switches over from the 'artist' to the 'man' without stressing any need for an insulation between the two).

While weeping on the supposed death of his father, Ferdinand, in The Tempest, hears a music creeping by him on the waters. The narrator on the river bank in Eliot's poem hears horns and motors accompanying a lustful expedition and instead of Ariel's ethereal ditty the scrap of a vulgar ballad : 'O the moon shone bright on Mrs. Porter'. Mrs. Porter is said to have kept a bawdy-house in Cairo and became a legend in her life time.[796] C.M. Bowra informs that the above song was sung by Australian soldiers when they landed at Gallipoli in 1915[797] — thus being connected with the time and place of Verdenal's death. Eliot's note : 'I do not know the origin of the ballad from which these lines are taken : it was reported to me from Sydney, Australia' leaves something unsaid, according to Bowra,[798] and may be an attempt to bypass the identification made above.

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Ll.215-48. This single continuous and coherent episode of the typist and the house-agent's clerk in the final version of *The Waste Land* involves simpler issues and illustrates Eliot's persistent view of the sexual union of man and woman as a sort of coupling of animals (the two are bracketed together in the lines : 'coupling of man and woman/ And that of beasts' in 'East Coker'). The deleted lines of the original drafts : 'London, the swarming life you kill and breed,/ Huddled between the concrete and the sky,/ Responsive to the momentary need' preluding the episode are epitomized in Sweeney Agonistes with ruthless reiteration : 'Birth, and copulation and death. That's all, that's all, that's all, that's all.'

Reduced to one half of the original, the account leaves out some of the over-explanatory references : 'life ... responsive to the momentary need,/ Vibrates unconscious to its formal destny' and 'the human engine .../ Like a taxi throbbing waiting at a stand —/ (To spring to pleasure ...)' prefiguring the character of the casual lover; '(Phantasmal) gnomes, burrowing in brick and stone and steel', 'these pavement toys', 'these crawling bugs', etc., representing human beings as less than worms and 'at the corner where the stable is,/ Delays only to urinate and spit' underscoring the physicality and repulsiveness of the so-called lover's act. Tiresias, introduced as one of the 'minds, aberrant from the normal equipoise' is later elevated in Eliot's note to the central intelligence of the poem. The humbler way of introduction of the character also indicates that the note was an after thought. The circumstances accounting for the formulation of Eliot's note and its implications have been discussed earlier.[802]

Ll.249-56. The boredom of the typist following the event is generalized by Eliot in Sweeney Agonistes in Doris' 'I'd be bored' and Sweeney's reiterating 'You'd be bored', repeated once again, after Sweeney's summing up of a way of life as 'Birth, and copulation and death' repeated five times like hammer-blows.

It is true that Eliot had extremely strong abhorrence for the casual, purely physical approach to sex, a modern phenomenon according to him. What he renders in images and metrics (regularity of metre and rhyme somewhat diversified in the edited version) was put in plain prose in a passage in Baudelaire (1930) :

> Baudelaire has perceived that what distinguishes the relations of man and woman from the copulation of beasts is the knowledge of Good and Evil (of moral Good and Evil which are not natural Good and Bad or Puritan Right and Wrong). Having an imperfect, vague romantic conception of Good, he was at least able to understand that the sexual act as evil is more dignified, less boring, than as the natural, 'life-giving', cheery automatism of the modern world. For Baudelaire, sexual operation is at least something not analogous to Kruschen Salts.[803]

'Automatism' of the sex act affects the typist's smoothing her hair with 'automatic' hand, and her total divorce from 'the knowledge of Good and Evil' is proved by her 'half-formed thought' : 'Well now that's done : I am glad it's over'.

Ll.257-65. The gramophone music, with the intermediate link of 'This music crept by me upon the waters', is contrasted with the music of the mandolin played by the fishermen. An admirer of fishermen's life from his childhood, Eliot, as mentioned earlier, finds the 'pleasant whining' of the instrument truly life-giving. Further autobiographical links are dug out by Gordon :

> During his lunch hours at Lloyd's bank he used to wander along Lower Thames Street to a fishermen's wharf, perhaps the oldest on the Thames, in use from Saxon times. Seeing fishermen always at rest at midday,

> he imagined they 'spat time out' and spurned conventional habits. The fishermen ... recall Bunyan's impression of the natural grace of three or four poor women in a doorway lit by sunlight. From there he moved on to view the 'inviolable splendour' of Magnus Martyr, a church near the fish market. At other times, when he walked across London Bridge amidst horse-drawn carts, open-topped buses, canvas-topped lorries, street vendors, and dark-suited busy hordes, he saw in the distance St. Magnus the Martyr rise out of the dingy mass of London buildings, its white tower and fine Wren steeple surmounting the brown ratty buildings near a quayside edged with rusty machinery.[804]

On the possible demolition of this church and St. Mary Woolnoth (referred to in Part I, 1.67), Eliot wrote in The Dial (June 1921) :

> the loss of these towers, to meet the eye down a grimy lane, and of these empty naves, to receive the solitary visitor at noon from the dust and tumult of Lombard Street, will be irreparable.[805]

Ll.266-306. What is explicitly stated in Eliot's note as the first song of the Thames-daughters contains echoes ('The barges drift/ With the turning tide/ Red sails ...') of the description of the Thames at the beginning of Conrad's Heart of Darkness ('the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide ...'),[806] in which the river is likened to the dark river in the Congo, 'the infernal stream', bearing resemblance to the River Acheron in Dante's Inferno. It should be remembered that Eliot originally proposed the line 'The horror! The horror! from Heart of Darkness as the epigraph to his poem and justified it to Pound as 'much the most appropriate I can find, and somewhat elucidative'. The scarce verbal echoes in the description of the river, indeed, reverberate in the wider vision of the waste land, the modern, western version of the hell of both Conrad's Congo[807] and Dante's Inferno.

The Thames-daughters, modelled on the Rhine-daughters of Wagner's Die Gotterdammerung, differ from the latter in their complaints of sexual violation, which conform to the theme of lust of this section of the poem. They may be the nymphs of the initial lines (the Spenserian quotation recalling the 'Nymphes' of 'Prothalamion' called 'Daughters of the Flood') whose unfaithful lovers 'Departed, have left no addresses' with greater unkindness than suspected. 'The river sweats' is echoed in 'the surface of the blackened river/Is a face that sweats with tears' — lines from 'The wind sprang up at four o'clock', a later poem in which also the 'river is ... associated with an injured woman.'[808]

Elizabeth and Leicester, celebrated in the second song of the Thames-daughters, conform to the degenerate amorous drift around, as Eliot's note invites us to think.[809] The lines are one of the finest examples of Eliot's contrasting the glory of the past with the sordidness of the present, at the same time implying their basic similarity, which involves, to use his memorable assertion in 'Tradition and the Individual Talent', 'a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence.' Elizabeth on her royal barge and the suburban girl on the narrow canoe drift down the same stream.

Ll.292-306. The three individual songs of the Thames-daughters are like the expressions of sorrow and remorse of the damned souls in Dante's Inferno. 'Highbury bore me. Richmond and Kew/ Undid me' is admitted by Eliot's note to have been based on Dante's line meaning 'Siena made me, Maremma unmade me', a statement of La Pia who was the lady of Siena (a town in central Italy) and was murdered at Maremma. The original draft over-elaborates the role of the two places (for which reason the inevitable Poundian excision came upon it) :

> Highbury bore me. Highbury's children
> Played under green trees and in the dusty Park.
> Mine were humble people and conservative
> As neither the rich nor the working class know.
> My father had a small business, somewhere in the city
> A small business, an anxious business, providing only
> The house in Highbury, and three weeks at Bagnor.

The undoing at Richmond and Kew, not murder, as of La Pia, but sexual violation, has the preluding of the tea, as in the typist-house agent's clerk episode :

> At Kew we had tea.
> Near Richmond on the river at last I raised my knees
> Stretched (on) the floor of a perilous canoe.

In the second Thames-daughter's account of 'the event' after which 'He wept' and promised 'a new start', she makes no comment ('outcry' in the original draft), showing the same bored acceptance of the prototype typist : 'What shd I resent?'

The third daughter's account beginning with 'I was to be grateful' gets discontinuous in the revisions. The last sentence of the story : 'On Margate sands/ There were many others. I can connect/ Nothing with nothing..../ I still feel the pressure of dirty hand' (cf. 'Exploring hands encounter no defence') is changed to 'The broken fingernails of dirty hands' deflecting the meaning altogether. 'My people humble people' ('My people are plain people' in the original draft) seems to be a fragment salvaged from the discarded account of the first daughter, which shows, whatever it may be worth, their common background.

Eliot's personal links with the places are noticed in the facts that while working at Lloyd's Bank, he used to arrive each morning at the underground station of Moorgate, 'no doubt travelling on the Metropolitan line from his flat near Baker Street'[810] and he spent a few weeks at Margate, a seaside resort on the Thames estuary, for a rest cure following his nervous breakdown in 1921. In a letter (undated, possibly 11 October) to Richard Aldington, he wrote :

> I am going to Margate tomorrow, and expect to stay at least a month. I am supposed to be alone, but I could not bear the idea of starting this treatment quite alone in a strange place, and I have asked my wife to come with me and stay with me as long as she is willing....[811]

Ll.307-11. To Eliot's pretty adequate note on the collocation of the Buddha and St. Augustine, the 'two representatives of eastern and western asceticism', in these lines, may be added what was pointed out by John Peter (1952) :

> Augustine 'came' twice to Carthage and that on the second occasion he had travelled to it in order to escape from the misery into which he had been plunged by the death of a friend, one with whom he had enjoyed a friendship which he himself describes as 'delightful to me above all the delights of this my life.'[812]

Following up the cue, James Miller, Jr., quotes the following passage from Augustine's Confessions, Book IV :

> At this grief my heart was utterly darkened; and what I beheld was death. My native country was a torment to me, and my father's house a strange unhappiness; and whatever I had shared with him, wanting him, became a distracting torture. Mine eyes sought him everywhere, but he was not granted them.[813]

written on 4 October 1923, he dispelled the mystery by answering the question himself : 'As for the lines I mention, you need not scratch your head over them. They are the 29 lines of the water-dripping song in the last past.'[815] In Paris in 1921, Pound later recalled, 'The Waste Land was placed before me as a series of poems.'[816] In his 'Paris Review Interview', as elsewhere, Eliot was quite categorical about the 'structurelessness' of The Waste Land, both in its finished form and the original drafts.[817] All these combine to suggest a singular character of Part V, and the view of The Waste Land as an integrated whole, a perfect unity, with Part V as its climactic end, has little support from Eliot himself.

b. The special character of this part of the poem is indicated by Eliot's explicit statement about the manner of its composition : it was written at a stretch at Lausanne in a state of illness which Eliot thought to be 'extremely favourable, not only to religious illumination, but to artistic and literary composition'.[818] 'A piece of writing', Eliot elaborated, 'meditated, apparently without progress, for months or years, may suddenly take shape and word; and in this state long passages may be produced which require little or no retouch.' Terming the process 'automatic writing', Eliot characterized the poet of this kind of writing as 'a vehicle rather than a maker'.[819] Part V, therefore, of all Eliot's writings, is expected to bear the imprint of his mental-physical condition, its acutely unhappy and disturbing manifestations at that time and the relief sought.

Augustine's loss of a very dear friend puts him in the same rank as Tennyson and Eliot, and Eliot's reference to it, if at all, unacknowledged to be sure, in these lines would again revive the image of the dead who could not be laid to rest.

IV. DEATH BY WATER

This part has been discussed at length in pp. 152-56.

V. WHAT THE THUNDER SAID

A closer examination of Eliot's own observations on this part of *The Waste Land* yields a fresh set of conclusions :

a. This is a section apart in the general plan of *The Waste Land*. 'Part V ... in my opinion', Eliot wrote to Bertrand Russell on 15 October 1923, 'is not only the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole, at all.'[814] About a couple of months before he had written to Ford Madox Ford : 'There are *I* think, about 30 *good* lines in *The Waste Land*. Can you find them? The rest is ephemeral.' In another letter to Ford written on 4 October 1923, he dispelled the mystery by answering the question himself : 'As for the lines I mention, you need not scratch your head over them. They are the 29 lines of the water-dripping song in the last past.'[815] In Paris in 1921, Pound later recalled, '*The Waste Land* was placed before me as a series of poems.'[816] In his '*Paris Review* Interview', as elsewhere, Eliot was quite categorical about the 'structurelessness' of *The Waste Land*, both in its finished form and the original drafts.[817] All these combine to suggest a singular character of Part V, and the view of *The Waste Land* as an integrated whole, a perfect unity, with Part V as its climactic end, has little support from Eliot himself.

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c. In spite of the presence of what appear to be some Christian images, it will be wrong to surmise a Christian drift of this section. The first nine lines of Part V may very well be taken to depict Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. But this theme, which must be treated as major, had the identification been correct, is not mentioned in the catalogue of three themes in the first part of this section in Eliot's notes. He does mention Christ's journey to Emmaus as one of the main themes; but, oddly enough, his specific note to the relevant lines refers to 'the account of one of the Antarctic expeditions (I forget which, I think one of Shackletons's to have stimulated them. Thus, to a critical reader's surprise, Eliot allows a flimsy bit of psychological curiosity to supersede a serious religious theme. Snatches of the supposed knight's journey never come within sight of the Holy Grail, which could reasonably round off the theme of the Waste Land, had that been really Eliot's preoccupation. On the contrary, the message of the thunder, derived from Hindu scriptures, seems to occupy the climactic position in the poem, and that too largely divorced from its religious implications. Finally, there remains Eliot's very disparaging remark on Christian faith in his original note to 'Shantih' : '"The Peace which passeth understanding" is a feeble translation of the content of this word.'[820] Over and above, Eliot's view of the poem as 'the relief of a personal and wholly insignificant grouse against life', more applicable to this part than to any other, lends little support to a religious interpretation.

d. The so-called 'quest' motif in The Waste Land falls through as there is little attempt to arrive at the culminating point of the journey, i.e., the sight of the Holy Grail in the Castle of Carbonek. Eliot, instead, brings in what he calls in his notes the Chapel Perilous, at best a stage in the Grail journey. In place of the mystic vision restoring fertility and health, therefore, there are the images of horror and desolation ending up with the abrupt and largely unnoticed reassurance : 'Dry bones can harm no one.' If one would give up the false trail of the Grail legend, one would see the logical conclusion of a protagonist's obsessive and disquieting awareness of some dead man's bones referred to continually in the poem, which now seem to be finally laid to rest. The description of the chapel, as analysis will show,[821] bears greater resemblance to one in Marie Larisch's My Past than to one in Jessie Weston's or Malory's book. In fact, all problems relating to the quest theory will look irrelevant if we pay attention to Eliot's sad admission : 'I regret having sent so many inquirers off on a wild goose chase after Tarot cards and the Holy Grail.'[822]

e. The basic motif of this part, which may be that of the whole poem, if we like to see The Waste Land as some kind of a unity, does not seem to be that of a journey, but of arranging one's disorderly experiences, metaphorically speaking, setting one's house in order, re-phrased, with a rhetorical question, towards the and of Part V :

Shall I at least set my lands in order?

The earlier passages of this part (as well as the earlier parts of the poem) may be taken to reflect the depressing and disintegrating panorama of life around the protagonist, the second half of Part V showing an attempt to find an order and meaning in the general chaos. (That may be the reason why, according to Eliot, this is 'the only part that justifies the whole, at all.') The effort is not to end up in a make-believe optimism, but in an acceptance of reality, however stark and disappointing. In consequence, the line quoted expresses a desire, however diffident, for an integration and equipoise, 'These fragments I have shored against my ruins' implying the cool consolation of salvaging only bits and pieces of a total collapse, and 'Hieronymo's mad againe' admitting an imediate relapse. It is not a satisfactory conclusion, had the poem been primarily for public consumption; but, knowing as we do, that Eliot considered it the venting of a private grief, the despairing finale may have been inescapable. Eliot sometimes indicates the way a poem should be read by some hints given in the poem itself, the last line of 'Gerontion' being a notable example of it.[823] The noticeably interrelated final observations in Part V should, therefore, turn our attention from the motif of the 'quest' to that of a frantic but futile bid to set things to rights, to find order in a 'heap of broken images' which the many disjointed and disintegrated items in the poem may really be.

The above conclusions are supported by a more detailed analysis of the lines.

Ll. 322-30. The passage that readily reminds one of Christ's agonized prayer in the garden of Gethsemane, followed by his arrest, trial and death, has widening implications of the death of a god of a primitive religion (Brooks associates Christ with 'other hanged gods'[824]), that of an imaginary figure dear to the narrator (Phlebas, in Peter's theory[825]), that of a particular friend (Verdenal, in Miller's theory[826]) and of the imagined death of the speaker himself who often identifies himself with the dead person in the poem.

An earlier version of these lines found among the Waste Land drafts, along with a few parallel passages, however, shifts the emphasis markedly to the personal identification. The relevant untitled draft beginning 'After the turning of the inspired days' catalogues a series of images, most of them incorporated with modifications in the final version, and ends somewhat bathetically :

> After the end of this inspiration
> And the torches and the faces and the shouting
> The world seemed futile — like a Sunday outing.

The 'Sunday outing', one must admit, does not agree with the life of Christ and takes one back to Eliot's quite old preoccupation with it as a symbol of empty ceremony and a vapid round of life repellent to him. In 'The Death of the Duchess' (an unpublished poem written around 1918 and found among the Waste Land drafts[827]) 'The inhabitants of Hampstead have silk hats/ On Sunday afternoon go out to tea'. 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' shows the ironic comment on Sunday rituals by Sweeney's shifting from ham to ham in his bath tub and in the juvenile exercise 'Spleen', 'this satisfied procession/ Of definite Sunday faces;/ ... this dull conspiracy' revolts the personified 'Life', resembling Prufrock, and for that matter, Eliot himself ('a little bald and gray,/ Languid, fastidious .../ Punctilious of tie and suit'), who waits on the doorstep of the Absolute 'Somewhat impatient of delay'. This 'Life', paraphrased, one may say, into 'He who was living' in Part V, 'is now dead', and his impatience of delay wears out into 'a little patience' of those who follow him suit. The stumbling block in taking 'He' as Christ lies in the fact that there is an identification between 'He' and 'We' (the supposed redeemer and the degenerate humanity) as both are either 'dead' or 'dying' and the death of one does not give life to others, as it should. In 'Journey of the Magi', the explicit Christian poem, the antithetical relationship is made clear by representing Christ's birth as 'Hard and bitter agony for us, like Death, our Death'. In Murder in the Cathedral, 'the blood of Thy martyrs and saints/ Shall enrich the earth'.[828] But the death in the passage under discussion is a shared experience of the speaker and his present company ('We') and a third person ('He') who may be the same mysteriously dead person lurking behind the lines of the poem with whom the speaker often identifies himself.

'The frosty silence in the gardens' and 'the agony in stony places' also have close personal associations apart from their obvious connections with the life of Christ. The older draft again makes the point clearer. The relevant lines in it read

> After the praying and the silence and the crying
> After the inevitable ending of a thousand ways
> And frosty vigil kept in withered gardens
> After the life and death of lonely places

The 'praying' and 'crying' echo 'I have wept and fasted, wept and prayed' in 'Prufrock' and the 'ending of a thousand ways' (rhyming with 'the turning of a thousand days', a variant of the first line of the draft) has the Prufrockian touch of 'the but-ends of my days and ways'.

'The life and death of lonely places' is less applicable to Christ than, say, to St.Narcissus, as in 'The Death of Saint Narcissus', a poem that supplied some important lines in Part I ('Come in under the shadow of this red rock ...') and came up against a publication problem because Eliot 'might have considered the poem too confessional.'[829] 'The frosty silence in the gardens' can also be associated with the speaker's — and, in the last analysis, the poet's — own experience. In the 'hyacinth garden' (Moody, among others, notices the link),[830] the speaker, frozen into speechlessness and sightlessness, looks into 'the heart of light, the silence'. The draft line, 'And frosty vigil kept in withered gardens', has the key word 'vigil' which has more significance in Eliot's life than is ordinarily suspected. A discarded portion of the second section of 'Little Gidding' contained a line :

> The agony and the solitary vigil

which is the reworking of the line

> The dark night in the solitary bedroom.[831]

Gordon shows how, around 1911, Eliot developed a habit of all-night vigils (yielding a sizable crop of vigil poems) contemplating philosophic truth and the reality of life, often giving himself up to extreme dejection, panic and fantasies of dissolution (from 'the overwhelming question' to 'my head brought in upon a platter' in 'Prufrock').[832] The experience possibly came closest to Eliot's celebrated 'dark night of the soul'. In the discarded 'Little Gidding' passage, Eliot called it one of 'the essential moments' of his life.[833]

The 'torchlight red on sweaty faces', coming in the seventh line of the earlier draft, evokes a scene of martyrdom, but it is not necessarily Christ who should hold the stage. The martyr in question could as well be any one of a number who had fascinated Eliot's imagination long since, and with whom Eliot often identified himself (the obsession yielding a sheaf of saint poems[834]). There was indeed a period when Eliot was preoccupied with the idea of martyrdom, though not with Christianity; and the image of the martyr merged into that of the unidentified dead — thus producing an ambiguous composite picture.

The passage, therefore, seems to have a more personal relevance than commonly suspected. Instead of ascribing a specific religious significance to it, we had better look at it as an expression of Eliot's deep despair at the prospect of a life out of which inspiration (a word repeated thrice in the older draft) has ebbed away. This hypothesis has two justifications : it agrees well with the mental, spiritual state in which this part of the poem was composed (almost automatically, according to Eliot) and makes for a smoother transition from this passage to the next dwelling exclusively on the theme of drying up ('Here is no water but only rock') consequent upon the loss of inspiration. In fact, a specifically religious interpretation of the first nine lines overshadows the so-called water-dripping song and negates its importance as the 29 really 'good' lines, according to Eliot, in The Waste Land, the rest (including the supposedly 'Gethsemane', 'Emmaus' and 'Chapel Perilous' passages) being 'ephemeral'.

Ll. 331-58. Held by Eliot to be the core of the poem, the passage reminds one of Eliot's more or less lifelong fear of losing his poetic inspiration, of the empty tantalus jar which will possibly never fill up again. It has been seen how several times in his life he thought of completely drying up and consequently gave up writing pure poetry since the Quartets. Looked at from this angle the lines bear comparison with Wordsworth's 'Immortality Ode' and Coleridge's 'Dejection : an Ode'. Parallels may be drawn between Wordsworth and Eliot as poets who brought about revolutions in poetry in two successive periods by the very exceptional poetic personalities they possessed. Eliot seems to have been aware of this too. His 'Preludes' echoing Wordsworth's 'The Prelude' and 'The Whispers of Immortality' echoing 'The Intimations of Immortality' may have made way for a more profound Wordsworthian parallel in the contemplation of the loss of creative imagination. But Eliot's neo-classical mode of suppressing the personal link, in contrast to the practices of Wordsworth and Coleridge, along with the blurring of the theme of personal inspiration in the preceding passage through the revision, makes it difficult to see, at one with Eliot, the decisive superiority of this passage. It may be noted that the contrasting images in 'Marina' in which the 'grey rocks' (in place of the sullen 'dead' rock), the 'water lapping the bow' (overfulfilling the desire for 'the sound of water only') and the 'scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog' (replacing the hermit thrush singing in the pine trees its false water-dripping song) have a poignance in the context of what Moody calls 'distinctive elements of romantic feeling : the regrets for past happiness and longing for an ideal world, poignant evocations of personal anguish and ecstasy'[835] — elements tellingly present in the companion pieces of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

Ll. 359-65. Whatever these lines may otherwise be, they are products of Eliot's old habit of experiencing and recording private whims and fantasies. What Eliot meant by the juvenile title, Inventions of the March Hare,[836] was extended to the whim of counting an extra 'dead sound on the final stroke of nine' and, in these lines, to 'another one' when 'there are only you and I together'. Though a formally exalted meaning can be found by interpreting the lines as a description of Christ's journey to Emmaus, with the support of Eliot's own note, there can also be an interpretation in terms of a hallucinatory experience of the mind in a state of extreme exhaustion, as in the case of some antarctic explorers, with the support of Eliot's another note. The crucial test possibly lies in the line, 'I do not know whether a man or a woman', which cannot so much apply to Christ as to the mysteriously dead person ever present in the poem. 'You and I' and 'another one', according to this hypothesis, may stand for the speaker, the companion and the ghostly presence of an unnamed dead (the triangular relationship highlighted in Part II).

Ll. 366-84. The theme of the loss of inspiration now seems to be followed by that of mental exhaustion yielding further fantasies and more acutely hallucinatory experiences. Some of the images of fantasy in the passage are traceable to an unpublished earlier fragment in which the poet attempts an explanation that lends support to this conjecture :

> Oh, through the violet sky, through the evening air
> A chain of reasoning whereof the thread was gone
> Gathered strange images through which {we / I} walked {alone / along} :[837]

The first of the images missing the rational link is that of a woman who

> ...... drew her long black hair out tight
> And fiddled whisper-music on those strings

to be followed by a second :

> The shrill bats quivered through the violet air
> Whining, and beating wings.

and a third :

> A man distorted by some mental blight
> Yet of abnormal powers
> I saw him creep head downward down a wall
> And upside down in air were towers
> Tolling reminiscent bells —
> And (there were) chanting voices out of cisterns and of wells.

The poet's 'feverish impulsions/impulses' gathering head, he had two more fantasies.

> So in our fixed confusion we persisted, out from town.[838]

Along with his own fantasies, Eliot seems to have made use of some borrowed ones also. The visions of disintegrating cities and falling towers, as Gordon notes, are influenced by some hallucinatory experiences of Bertrand Russell :

> When Eliot was living in Russell's flat during the second year of the war, Russell confided strange observations which later found their way into The Waste Land. After watching the troop

> trains — full of patriotic Englishmen — depart from Waterloo, he would see London's bridges collapse and sink, and the whole great city vanish like a morning mist. 'Its inhabitants began to seem like hallucinations', he said. He would wonder whether the world in which he thought he lived was not merely a product of his own hightmares.[839]

According to Eliot, the grotesque imagery in his draft poem was partly inspired by a painting of the school of Hieronymus Bosch, the fifteenth-century Dutch painter.[840] The 'bats with baby faces' bear resemblance to 'a batlike creature, with dull human features, crawling head first down a rock wall', in Bosch's 'The Deluge'.[841]

The series of hallucinatory images, therefore, seem to represent a senseless and disconcerting reality — the life bereft of the 'visionary gleam', 'a light, a glory' in Wordsworth's and Coleridge's plainer terms.

Ll. 385-94. The lines describing, according to Eliot's note, the Chapel Perilous (a penultimate stage in the quest of the Holy Grail), evoke, oddly enough, a picture more in common with one in Marie Larisch's My Past (a tumbledown chapter-house, a mangled body, the winds and a pale moon[842]) than with one in Jessie Weston (a dead body laid on an altar, a Black Hand extinguishing tapers, strange threatening voices and storm winds[843]) or in Malory (a desolate and deserted chapel in a mountain, where a voice gives helpful instructions[844]). The link with the dead body in Marie Larisch's or, for that matter, in Jessie Weston's description is found in the reference to the dry bones which now 'can harm no one'. Often passed over, the image must be of crucial importance. How the bones, so disturbing to the protagonist's imagination so far, even threatening to sprout back into life, should finally be laid to rest, is not explained. Nor is it clear why, if at all, the abrupt pacification of the bones brings in the welcome release. Eliot must have left some gap at this point which, till otherwise bridged, will continue to baffle the reader's understanding.

Ll. 395-99. Instead of the questing knight's pertinent question, there is the cock's (a mechanical cock's though) crowing, reputed to send the wandering spirits back to the grave[845] — an idea agreeing with the theme of laying the ghost. The sharp meteorological change following — the lightning flash and the damp gust — is climaxed by the thunder-clap.

The message of the thunder modelled on a story from Hindu scriptures, is further removed from Christianity by Eliot's drastic modification of it to suit a theme of personal relationship with pronounced emotional and also sexual implications. Describing the three injunctions of the thunder as 'ethical injunctions consistent with any religion or none', D.W. Harding underscores 'their bearing on the making of a personal relation ..., a relation which can be sexual but is less sterile than the sexual relations glimpsed in the earlier parts of the poem.'[846]

Ll. 400-26. The fable from the Brihadaranyaka-Upanishad was altered considerably by Eliot to make it convey or, conceal, a meaning of his own. In the original fable, Prajapati, the Lord of Creation, is asked by the three categories of his children, namely, the gods, men and the demons ('asuras'), regarding the secret knowledge. In answering to them in a voice of the thunder, he utters the same syllable, 'Da', which each category interprets and accepts in its own way. By 'Da', the gods understand 'Damayata' (control yourselves), men 'Datta' (give alms) and the demons 'Dayadhvam' (be compassionate); and Prajapati appoves them all. It is important to note that the instructions are given to three categories of creatures, they are but suggestions (not spelled beyond the first syllable) and each one of them is understood as it evokes a particular self-awareness and a consequent self-knowledge in each category of listeners.

In the altered version, to which three parties in the present story, or whether to three parties at all, the instructions are given is kept altogether vague. The order of the instructions is changed from 'Damayata', 'Datta' and Dayadhvam' to 'Datta', 'Dayadhvam' and 'Damayata' and their contents are also considerably changed. 'Datta' in the new context means 'give', instead of 'give alms', 'dayadhvam' 'sympathize', instead of 'be compassionate' and 'Damayata' 'control', instead of 'control yourselves'. The divergence of meaning in the last is the widest of all, since, instead of meaning 'control yourselves' it means the opposite of it, 'control another'.[847]

In interpreting the message of the thunder, one possibility that the instructions may have been given to three different parties in conformity with the original fable, has, strangely enough, eluded all critics who have uniformly held them as addresses to the same protagonist. But a careful analysis shows that these are of distinctly different tones and tempers and instead of being injunctions from above, they are likely to be, as in the original fable, responses from within, exposures of the characters themselves seeking self-knowledge and self-fulfilment.

The point may be elaborated a little further. The Lord Prajapati, in the original fable, does not spell out his instructions, but as soon as he utters the first syllable, each category of creatures betrays its own nature in taking it to mean something appropriate to it and admitting what is needed to realize its fullest self. There is a possibility that the cryptic monosyllables of the thunder trigger off trains of confessional thought in the mindsof the listeners with indications as to how they could fulfil their destiny.

If there is any substance in this hypothesis, the trio of the dramatis personae are not far to seek. The already mentioned 'You and me' and 'another one' in the so-called Emmaus passage as well as 'We' and 'He' of the so-called Gethsemane passage before it, can be traced back to three major entities in the whole poem : the protagonist, representing the Eliotic zone of consciousness, a female presence sketched out as a distraught woman in Part II and the ghostly presence of a dead person called 'brother' (Part III) or "brother/friend" (original drafts of Part V). Sorting out the problematic triangular relationship and finding a way to salvation according to each one's nature, could be a genuine concern of the poet. Allowing for typical Eliotic obscurity of expression and even wilful mystification, the first message of the thunder may be related to the friend (the word 'friend' is repeated insistently in the original draft), the second to the protagonist himself, and the third to the female partner.

The first response to the injunction vindicating what may be called the dictate of the blood (underlined by highly emotional phrases like 'blood shaking my heart', 'The awful daring of a moment's surrender', etc.) is out of tune with most of Eliot[848] and not in the least in conformity with the generic Eliot character from Prufrock to the Hollow Men. The distinctly un-Eliotic voice (we should recall that the original title made room for 'different voices') takes the first 'Da', true to the listener's nature, to be 'Datta', meaning not the original 'give alms', but the very different 'give yourself away', a motto of self-surrender.[849] The implications of 'sexual consent',[850] from other angles seen as 'sexual indiscretion'[851] or even 'sexual blunder',[852] in this passage cannot be otherwise accommodated in Eliot's thematic scheme.

The second response embodied in the image of the room and the locked door, the faint resolution and the immediate relapse is a classic exposition of the Eliotic situation. The Bradleyan quotation in Eliot's note, summing up a philosophy so akin to his, to which he devoted several years of doctoral research, is the best doctrinal formulation of this kind of existence. 'Sympathize', evidently, 'with your fellow beings', instead of 'be compassionate (to weaker creature)', in the original, may be taken as the best instruction for getting out of the prison house of the 'finite centres'.

The third response differs from the preceding two in a significant way. Instead of the first person 'we ('what have we given?') or 'I' ('I have heard the key'), it resorts to the second person 'you' ('your heart would have responded') and instead of the speaker's own reaction, there is the vicarious feeling of somebody else's. The other person, in Harding's identification, is of the female sex,[853] made explicit by the image of a boat under a helmsman. 'Damayata', originally meaning 'control yourself', now means 'control another person',[854] the word 'control' appearing in the specific combination of 'controlling hands'.

An intriguing aspect of this expository passage is the use of the past conditional tense in 'would have responded' ('would have' later added to simple 'responded' in the manuscript) which implies 'an irrevocably lost opportunity'.[855] While the navigational image may have derived from Eliot's early interest in yachting, the regret for a missed chance can be traced further back to Eliot's childhood experience of the rose garden. The core of the incident being detailed in 'Dans le Restaurant', the situation seems to have inspired many earlier (such as 'La Figlia') and later (as some passages in Four Quartets) verses of Eliot. Harding again points rightly to the lines in 'Burnt Norton' which prelude the rose-garden passage, employing, incidentally, the same past conditional tense :

> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.
> What might have been is an abstraction
> Remaining a perpetual possibility
> Only in a world of speculation.
> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.

adding that in The Waste Land 'what might have been is still a matter of self-reproach.'[856] To put it plainly, the speaker admits that 'her heart would have responded if he had been able to offer an effective invitation.'[857]

The passage, as a response of the woman, could also be in the first person as the preceding two. But through an abrupt lover-beloved transposition comparable to the narrator-lover transposition in 'La Figlia' ('So I would have had him leave,/ So I would have had her stand

and grieve' followed unexpectedly by 'I should find ... Some way we both should understand' — a result of what Kenner calls a 'doubling of consciousness' [858]),the lover records the thoughts of the beloved towards him; as in 'Burnt Norton', conversely,

My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

Smidt's remark on the insufficient detachment between the observer and the agent-sufferer in 'La Figlia' applies to the 'Damayata' situation also : 'The general effect ... is of something intermediate between objective description and personal confession.'[859]

Ll. 423-34. A mood of guilt and remorse (which connects easily with the situation of the male partner in the preceding passage) imbues the lines following without a break in the original drafts :

I left without you
Clasping empty hands.

(apologetic 'empty hands' offering a sharp contrast to deft 'controlling hands') — some of the few lines deleted from the draft of this section which needed, according to Eliot, 'little or no retouch',[860] most probably for their overtly confessional tone.

The situation, therefore, is not one of three divine exhortations in unison, but one of jarring and conflicting points of view, the impact of the third reducing the protagonist to his most abject self :

I ~~sit~~/sat upon ~~the~~/a shore
the arid plain
Fishing, with ~~the~~/a ~~desolate~~ ~~sunset~~ behind me

It is cool consolation that the arid plain is now 'behind',[861] not only because the image is a variant of 'a desolate sunset', but because all that follow add up to an encompassing gloom. In the manuscript, 'Shall I at least set my lands in order?' has the earlier variant 'Can I at least, etc.' to imply lesser self-confidence; and, alongside 'my lands', there are 'my kingdom' and 'my own lands' suggesting the protagonist's residue of hope lying in working out his individual salvation apart from others'. A satisfactory resolution of the problem should have rested on a synthesis of all three points of view, which is simply beyond his reach. Inevitably, therefore,

> London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down

— a line set apart from the preceding and following passages in the original drafts as well as the first published version[862] to mark the finality of the statement. In fact, the revisions and rearrangements of verses from the third 'Da' onwards in the later versions are calculated to disrupt the continuity of sense and blur the original intention of the poet without any tangible gain in poetic effects.

Ll. 427-33. Beginning as a new paragraph in the original drafts as well as the first printed text, the heterolingual quotations illustrate Eliot's attachment to great specimens of literature and his attempt to see not only 'the pastness of the past, but of its presence'[863] to assure himself of the timeless quality of his affliction. In the manuscript, 'these fragments' are said to be 'spelt into/shored against' the ruins of the protagonist. It is noticeable that two of the quotations relate to male characters and one to female : the line from Dante is a speech of another poet whose lustful propensities landed him in his present plight and that from Gerard de Nerval shows the situation of a man in sheer isolation and despair. The quotation from the late Latin 'Pervigilium Veneris' meaning 'when shall I be like the swallow', completed with the clause 'that I may cease to be silent',[864] expresses the nightingale's desire to acquire the 'inviolable voice'[865] following the violation. Eliot's substituting 'O swallow swallow' for the second clause makes the drift of the line less clear.

Allowing for Eliot's undeniable tendency towards obscurity, the multilingual quotations may be connected with the three characters of the already mentioned dramatis personae to throw further light on their three different positions. The 'different voices', coming here through different languages too, bring out an obscure, discordant message covered by the professedly enigmatic 'Hieronymo's mad again' — the bitten-off tongue ruling out any further communication. The three dicta repeated in the penultimate verse cannot be a resolution of the problem all of a sudden. Assumed madness and resolute silence cannot herald an apocalypse which more propitious circumstances failed to do. 'Shantih', in the last resort, is 'the Peace which passeth understanding' in more senses than one : it may be a benediction granted (which will simply be a mystery), or held out as a promise, or only sought after by the protagonist.

There has not yet been any evidence of the much-awaited rain quenching the persistent aridity and thirst except in the onomatopoeic effect of 'Shantih shantih shantih' — a misquotation, whether inadvertent or deliberate (to save the drizzling sound?), of the formal ending of an Upanishad : 'Om shantih, om shantih, om shantih'.

* * * *

F.O. Matthiessen used 'An Essay on the Nature of Poetry' as a subtitle to his very perceptive and illuminating early study, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot (1935). In fact, any careful examination of Eliot's poetry brings one up against the fundamental issues of the origin, shaping and the significance of poetic expression. Eliot took poetry as a highly exclusive kind of occupation. His poetic composition was not immediately related to publication : some of his poems took years to see the light of day. There is a sharp contrast between his prose and his poetry in this respect. His essays, so impressively voluminous, were written in his early years mostly as pot-boilers in the form of book reviews and articles and in his later life as papers and formal addresses. But the meagre trickle of poetry, fitful and often threatening to dry up (Eliot really gave up writing poetry as such after the Quartets), turns out mostly to be a private kind of activity. Cutting across the conflicting formulations and pronouncements indulged in by Eliot, one can arrive at the heart of the matter and have a glimpse of how poetry — especially of one kind, which is after all the most vital — originates in the mind of a poet and gradually takes shape. One also faces the mystery that surrounds this kind of activity in the last analysis. Eliot's best poetry, issuing from his innermost self , has a central obscurity which, to borrow his words on Shakespeare, 'is by hypothesis unknowable' and the reader, to understand his poetry, 'should have to understand things which (the poet) did not understand himself'.[866] Poetry so uncompromisingly genuine though obscure has asserted its atypicality. No formal label can stick to Eliot's poetry comfortably. He was an imagist (within certain limits) before 'Imagism' appeared on the scene as a movement. He took up and gave up vers libre in his individual way. His observations regarding his poetic practice do not suggest that he was following the 'symbolist' method. The critical concepts of 'Impersonality', 'Objective Correlative', 'Dissociation of Sensibility', etc., were advanced and then avoided as embarrassing liabilities. He criticized a novel literary theory right at the time he was going to initiate one.[867] But though the features of modernist poetry (some of which have just been catalogued) are so manifest in him, in attempting a systematic formulation of his poetry, one has to fall back upon the old concepts of 'personality', 'inspiration' and 'vision of life' ('the Eliotic zone of consciousness'). Eliot appeared, and was extensively used, as a challenge to biographical, historical and romantic approaches to literature. He also served as a powerful counter to the Marxist view of art that has been playing an important role during this century. But the idea of art as really autonomous, as divorced from personality and society, is not what his poetry demonstrates. Eliot ultimately comes to terms with personality, inner necessity of the artist and the place of art in the larger context of life. Had this fact been recognized in time, much of the controversy, artificial and wasteful, could have been avoided. The lesson learnt from Eliot, a symbol of formalistic aesthetics and literary practice to many even now, can still save a lot of futile critical theorization.

Eliot wrote poetry as most great poets of the past, especially those breaking new grounds in a new situation, had done. His method, as he put in general terms as early as 1917, 'is new in the sense that it is essentially different from that of the second-rate peoeple about him, and different in everything but essentials from that of any of his great predecessors.'[868]

The controversy centring on whether his poetry is presonal or an expression of the 'disillusionment of a generation' is also an artificial one in the last analysis. During the greater part of Eliot's poetic career, his poetry was often considered devoid of personal content as well as social implications. It was mostly looked upon as poetry as poetry. But there is a huge proportion of personal, autobiographical and confessional elements in Eliot's poetry; and what is personal can , at the same time, reflect the society at large. His personal boredom and horror were acutely symptomatic of the age. The aridity and sterility that he was so preoccupied with beset the age he lived in. The World War that laid waste the civilization may have appeared to him in the form of the great personal loss of a friend that created his inner waste land. There is no bar to his private experience being the experience of the age. Eliot later came to realize this and admitted, 'The great poet, in writing himself, writes his time' and 'the struggle — which alone constitutes life for a poet (is) to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal.'[869]

As a matter of fact, in great poetry, people of different times, circumstances and interests — can find different levels of significance. Eliot, again, comes to terms with this when he admits the possibility of finding different meanings by different readers including the poet himself when he has finished with the composition :

> But what a poem means is as much what it means to others as what it means to the author; and indeed, in the course of time a poet

> may become merely a reader in respect to his own works, forgetting his original meaning — or without forgetting, merely changing.[870]

So, even after recognizing in Eliot's poetry the essential personal basis and the presence of 'a very much more interesting and tragic' (to adapt Eliot's own remark on Tennyson[871]) Eliot, we can find in it the mood of a generation, the angst of an age and also the universal human predicament. In consequence, Eliot's poetry, like any poetry of a very high order, can satisfy readers of a wide variety of persuations and predilections. Eliot was, and still is claimed by critics of Christian as well as Marxist inclinations. His poetry can lend itself to varied interpretations. But the point this discussion has been at pains to emphasize is that one should not imagine things which are not there and disregard issues undeniably present. The further point emphasized, with the support of Eliot himself, is that the critic should concern himself not so much with interpretation as with elucidation. But though the critic should better avoid rigid interpretations — to fix Eliot in 'a formulated phrase' which Eliot so much dreaded — the reader must have some interpretation every time he comes to a poem. An interpretation of this kind will vary from person to person and, in the case of the same person, from occasion to occasion. But such an interpretation should be the reader's own,[872] as Eliot, putting himself in the position of a reader of his own poem, observes :

> There are many things, perhaps, to know about this poem, or that, many facts about which scholars can instruct me which will help me to avoid definite misunderstanding; but a valid interpretation, I believe, must be at the same time an interpretation of my own feelings when I read it.[873]

This is a way of recognizing the open-endedness and inexhaustibility of the type of poetry as Eliot wrote.

ABBREVIATIONS

A.S.G.	After Strange Gods (1934)
A.W.	Ash Wednesday (1930)
C.C.	To Criticize the Critic (1965)
C.P.	Collected Poems 1909-1962 (1963)
C.P.P.	The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S.Eliot (1969)
F.Q.	Four Quartets (1943)
N.D.C.	Notes towards the Definition of Culture (1948)
P.P.	On Poetry and Poets (1957)
S.E.	Selected Essays (3rd enlarged ed., 1951)
S.W.	The Sacred Wood (2nd ed., 1928)
U.P.U.C.	The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (1933)
W.L.	The Waste Land (1922)
W.L.Drafts	'The Waste Land' : a facsimile and transcript of the original drafts including the annotations of Ezra Pound, ed., Valerie Eliot (1971)

In these notes the place of publication is London unless otherwise specified.

NOTES

CHAPTER - I

1. *S.W.* p.x.; *U.P.U.C.*, p. 34; *BP.*, pp. 99-100 & 112; etc.
2. Grant Webster, 'American Literary Criticism : A Bibliographical Essay' in *American Studies International*, XX, i, p. 8.
3. *P.P.* p. 111.
4. Eliot wrote to Ford Madox Ford on 14 August 1923 : 'There are, I think, about 30 good lines in *The Waste Land*.... The rest is ephemeral.' (*W.L. Drafts*, p. 129).
5. *S.E*. p. 127.
6. 'The Unfading Genius of Rudyard Kipling', reprinted from *The Kipling Journal* XXVI, no. 129 (March 1959), in *Kipling and the Critics*, ed. Elliot L. Gilbert (1966), p. 123.
7. Helen Gardner, *The Art of T.S. Eliot* (Cresset Press, 1949), referred to hereafter as *A.T.S.E.*, p. 1.
8. *New Bearings in English Poetry* (Chatto & Windus, 1932), p. 16.
9. *S. E.* p. 14.
10. *Ibid.* p. 420.
11. See Chapter on 'Auditory Imagination' in *The Art of T.S. Eliot*. (Genesius Jones thinks that Gardner over-emphasized her point. See *Approach to the Purpose* (Hodder & Stoughton, 1964), p. 16).
12. *T.S. Eliot : The Design of his Poetry* (Cresset Press, 1949).
13. Preface to the Third Edition of F.O. Matthiessen's *The Achievement of T.S. Eliot* (New York : Oxford Univ. Press, 1958), P. xi.
14. Eliot refers to them as a 'few notorious phrases which have had a truly embarrassing success in the world' (*P.P.* p. 106) and admits his dismay 'when earnest scholars, or schoolchildren, write to ask me for an explanation' about them (*C.C.*, p. 19).
15. George Watson, 'The Triumph of T.S. Eliot', *Critical Quarterly*(1965), reprinted in *The Waste Land : A Casebook*, ed. C.B. Cox & A.P. Hinchliffe (Macmillan, 1968), p. 48.
16. Pp. 64-5n.
17. *S.E.* p. 269 & *U.P.U.C.*, p. 130.
18. *S.E.* p. 368.
19. *W.L. Drafts*, p. 1.
20. Elisabeth Schneider, *T.S. Eliot : The Pattern in the Carpet* (Berkeley & Los Angeles : Univ. of California Press, 1975), p. 4.
21. Eliot's own summary of the debate in a letter to H. Gardner. See Helen Gardner, *The Composition of 'Four Quartets'* (Faber & Faber, 1978), p. 3.
22. *Loc. cit*.
23. E. Martin Browne, *The Making of T.S. Eliot's Plays* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1969, reprinted with supplementary material,1970),p.2.
24. 'A Poet's Notebook : The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism', *The Laterary Criticism of T.S. Eliot*, ed. David Newton-de Molina (Athlone Press, 1977).
25. *Ibid*. p. 141.
26. *U.P.U.C.* p. 154.
27. *W.L. Drafts*, p. xvi.
28. W.T. Levy & V. Scherle, *Affectionately, T.S. Eliot* (J.M. Dent & Sons, 1968), p. 105.
29. *W.L. Drafts*, p. xviii.
30. Levy & Scherle, pp. 106-7.
31. *U.P.U.C.* p. 29.

32. *P.P.*, p. 26.
33. *C.C.*, p. 33.
34. *P.P.*, p. 106.
35. *C.C.*, p. 20.
36. *P.P.*, p. 106.
37. *C.C.*, p. 20.
38. Anne C. Bolgan, *What the Thunder Really Said* (Mcgill : Queen's Univ. Press, 1973), p. 24.
39. *Ibid.* p. 4.
40. Bernard Bergonzi, *T.S. Eliot*, 2nd ed. (Macmillan, 1978), pp.67-8.
41. Schneider, p. 3.
42. Kristian Smidt, *Poetry and Belief in the Work of T.S. Eliot*, revised ed. (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), p. 16.
43. George Williamson, *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot* (Thames & Hudson, 1955), p. 57-8.
44. Robert Sencourt, *T.S. Eliot : A Memoir* (Garnstone Press, 1971),p.11.
45. *Ibid.* pp. 11-2.
46. A.Bryan Appleyard, 'A Poet's Wife and Letters', *The New Nation* (Dhaka, 7 October 1988), p. 5.
47. *P.P.*, p. 109.
48. Matthiessen, p. 129.
49. E.M. Stephenson, *T.S. Eliot and the Lay Reader*, 2nd ed.(New York : Gordon Press, 1974), p. 15.
50. *Ibid.* p. 5.
51. Levy and Scherle, p. 107.
52. George Watson, *The Literary Critics* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1962), p. 178.
53. *Loc. cit.*
54. *C.C.* p. 145.
55. Ezra Pound's letter to Harriet Monroe (30 September 1914), reproduced in Hugh Kenner, *The Invisible Poet* (W.H.Allen,1960),p.63.
56. Gardner, *The Composition of 'Four Quartets'*, referred to hereafter as *C.F.Q.*, pp. 14-5.
57. *Ibid.* p. 5.
58. *Ibid.* p. 27.
59. *U.P.U.C.*, p. 154.
60. '*Paris Review* Interview', reproduced by Donald Hall in *Remembering Poets : Reminiscences and Opinions* (New York : Harper & Row,1977), referred to hereafter as '*Paris Review* Interview', p. 221.
61. *C.C.*, p. 14.
62. *Loc. cit.*
63. *Loc. cit.*
64. *S.W.*,p. vii.
65. *C.C.*, p. 145.
66. P. xi.
67. John Press, *A Map of Modern English Verse* (Oxford Univ. Press, 1969), p. 75.
68. *The Waste Land : A Casebook*, p. 38.
69. Press, p. 74.

70. Bergonzi, p. 103.
71. Press, p. 75.
72. Gardner, *C.F.Q.*, p. 4.

CHAPTER - II

73. Georges Cattaui, *T.S. Eliot*, trans. Claire Pace & Jean Stewart (Marlin Press, 1966), p. 3; John Press, p. 75.
74. A review of Edward Garnett's *Turgenev* in *The Egoist* IV. 11 (December 1917), p. 167.
75. '*Paris Review* Interview', p. 220.
76. *C.C.*, p. 45.
77. Quoted in A.D. Moody, *Thomas Stearns Eliot Poet*, Ist paperback ed. with additional appendix (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1980), referred to hereafter as *T.S.E.P.*, p. 4.
78. *Loc. cit.*
79. *C.P.*, p. 205.
80. 'The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet', *Daedalus* (Spring,1960), pp. 421-2.
81. *C.P.*, p. 104.
82. Herbert Howarth, *Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot* (Chatto & Windus, 1965), p. 114.
83. Robert Giroux, 'A Personal Memoir', *T.S. Eliot : The Man and His Work*, ed. Allen Tate (Chatto & Windus, 1967), p. 344.
84. *Daedalus* (Spring, 1960), p. 422.
85. Quoted from Eliot's preface to E.A. Mowrer's *This American World* (1928) in Williamson, pp. 207-8.
86. *Ibid*. p. 207.
87. Herbet Read, 'T.S.E. — A Memoir', *T.S. Eliot : The Man and His Work*, p. 15.
88. Howarth, p. 114.
89. Sencourt, p. 22.
90. *Loc. cit.*
91. *Loc. cit.*
92. Gordon, p. 6.
93. *W.L. Drafts*, pp. 62-69.
94. *Ibid*. p. 129.
95. Lyndall Gordon, *Eliot's Early Years* (Oxford Univ. Press,1977), p.8.
96. Cattaui, p. 6.
97. *N.D.C.*, p. 43.
98. *Ibid*. p. 44.
99. See Note 87 above.
100. *C.C.*, p. 44.
101. Howarth, p. 4.
102. Gordon, p. 9.
103. Levy & Scherle, pp. 53-4.

104. Gordon, p. 11.
105. Levy & Scherle, p. 121.
106. Gordon, p. 4.
107. *W.L. Drafts*, p. xvi.
108. Gordon, p. 2.
109. Howarth, p. 35.
110. Gordon, p. 4.
111. Gordon, pp.5-6.
112. Howarth, p. 31.
113. *Ibid*. p. 29.
114. *Ibid*. p. 22.
115. See Eliot's letter to John Quinn, 6 January 1919 (*W.L. Drafts*, p. xvi) & *U.P.U.C.*, p. 154.
116. *C.C.P.*, pp. 464-65.
117. Quoted in Moody, *T.S.E.P.*, p. 4.
118. Eliot, 'Why Mr. Russell is a Christian', *Criterion*, 6 (August, 1927), p. 179.
119. Sencourt, p. 20.
120. Reproduction of manuscript in *T.S. Eliot : a symposium* ed. Richard March & Tambimuttu (Editions Poetry, 1948), between pp. 84-5.
121. Moody, *T.S.E.P.*, p. 3.
122. *P.P.*, p. 124.
123. *Loc. cit*.
124. Charlotte Champ Eliot, *William Greenleaf Eliot* (N.Y.: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), p. 336; quoted in Gordon, p. 3.
125. Autograph letter to Thomas Lamb Eliot (7 March 1914), Reed College Archives, Portland, Oreg.; quoted by Gordon, p. 27.
126. See Eliot's letter to John Quinn (6 January 1919), *W.L. Drafts*, p. xvi.
127. *S.W.*, p. 32.
128. *C.C.*, pp. 44-5.
129. Ezra Pound, *Selected Poems* (Feber, 1948), p. 16.
130. *S.E.*, p. 17.
131. *The Criterion*, Vol. XII, No. 46, Oct. 1932, p. 167.
132. Gordon, p. 7.
133. *C.C.* p. 45.
134. *Loc. cit*.
135. *U.P.U.C.*, p. 32.
136. *Ibid*. p. 33.
137. Sencourt, p. 29.
138. *U.P.U.C.* pp. 32-3.
139. *Ibid*. p. 33.
140. '*Paris Review* Interview' p. 203.
141. Moody, *T.S.E.P.*, p. 3.
142. *S.E.*, p. 337.
143. *Ibid*. p. 336.
144. *Ibid*. p. 332.
145. Gordon, p. 39.

146. *S.E.*, p. 421.
147. *A.S.G.*, p. 52.
148. *Loc. cit*.
149. *Ibid*. p. 53.
150. *U.P.U.C.*, p. 33.
151. Piers Gray, *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetical Development : 1909-1922* (Sussex : Harvester Press, 1982), p. 4.
152. *U.P.U.C.* , p. 34.
153. *Loc. cit*.
154. *S.E.*, p. 424.
155. Newton-de Molina, p. 139.
156. *U.P.U.C.*, p. 78.
157. *Ibid*. pp. 78-9.
158. *Ibid.* pp. 147-8.
159. *Op. cit*., p. 4.
160. *Loc. cit*.
161. *W.L.* I, l. 12.
162. *Op. cit*., p. 4.
163. *U.P.U.C.*, p. 148.
164. *Ibid.* p. 154.
165. Howarth, p. 137.
166. Gordon, p. 11.
167. *S.W.*, p. 12.
168. *P.P.*, p. 247.
169. *S.W.*, p. 12.
170. *Ibid.* pp.14-5.
171. *C.C.*, p. 11.
172. Sencourt, p. 38.
173. *C.C.*, p. 20.
174. Smidt, p. 122.
175. *Ibid.* p. 123.
176. Bergonzi, p. 25.
177. *Ibid.* p. 24.
178. Smidt, pp. 122ff.
179. *A.G.S.*, p. 41.
180. *Ibid.* p. 40.
181. Levy & Scherle, p. 127.
182. *C.C.*, pp. 20-1.
183. Bolgan, p. 173.
184. See Sencourt, p. 39.
185. See Gordon, p. 58.
186. *S.E.*, p. 373.
187. *Ibid*., p. 352.
188. Sencourt, p. 30.
189. Gordon, p. 11.
190. Letter to Paul Elmer More (20 June 1934), reproduced by John D. Margolis in *T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922 — 1939* (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1972), p. xv.

191. Smidt, p. 37.
192. Moody adds Blake (of the Poetical Sketches), Wordsworth, Tennyson, Arnold, et. al., to this list. See T.S.E.P., p. 17.
193. Quoted in George Bornstein, Transformations of Romanticism in Yeats, Eliot and Stevens (Univ. of Chicago Press, 1976), p.99.
194. Bergonzi, p. 31 & Gordon, p. 54.
195. Gordon, p. 54 & Bergonzi, p. 31.
196. Moody, T.S.E.P., p. 6.
197. Eliot's review of Peter Quennell's Baudelaire and the Symbolists in The Criterion (January 1930).
198. C.C., p. 22.
199. Loc. cit.
200. Ezra Pound, Selected Poems, p. 8.
201. Loc. cit.
202. Loc. cit.
203. Loc. cit.
204. C.C., p. 126.
205. P.P., p. 252.
206. C.C., p. 126.
207. Loc. cit.
208. P.P., p. 252.
209. Edmund Wilson, Axel's Castle (Glasgow : Collins, 1961 (First published by Charles Scribner's sons, 1931)), p. 81.
210. Ibid. p. 82.
211. Loc. cit.
212. Loc. cit.
213. Loc. cit.
214. Ibid. p. 81.
215. Wilson mentions Laforgue's falling under the spell of German Philosophy, Axel's Castle, p. 82.
216. C.C., p. 126.
217. Loc. cit.
218. S.E., p. 20.
219. Ibid. p. 21.
220. Howarth, pp. 106-7.
221. C.C., pp. 126-7.
222. Kenner, p. 19.
223. Cattaui, p. 10.
224. The present dissertation makes use of Gordon's paraphrases of Eliot's unpublished early writings contained in a notebook and folder preserved in the Berg Collection, New York Public Library, as access to these writings is strictly limited and quoting lines is prohibited. The present author was fortunate enough to read some of the these manuscripts with special permission from Mrs.Valerie Eliot.
225. Gordon, p. 29.
226. C.C., p. 22.
227. Howarth, p. 105.

228. Cattaui, p. 32.
229. *C.C.*, p. 126.
230. Sencourt, p. 33.
231. *Ibid*. p. 34.
232. *Loc. cit*.
233. Sencourt, p. 33.
234. '*Paris Review* Interview, p. 209.
235. Sencourt, pp. 33-4 & Stanley Burnshaw, *The Poem Itself* (New York: Holt,Rinehart & Winston, 1960), p. 60.
236. *A.S.G.*, p. 40.
237. Howarth, p. 358.
238. *Ibid*. p. 107.
239. Berg Collection, New York Public Library.
240. Gordon, p. 32.
241. *Ibid*. p. 23.
242. *Ibid*. pp.22-3.
243. *Ibid*. p. 112.
244. F.W. Bateson, *Wordsworth : A Re-interpretation* (2nd ed., Longmans, 1956), p. 26.
245. Gordon, p. 19.
246. *Ibid*. p. 18.
247. Bateson, p. 55.
248. Gordon, p. 19.
249. Bateson, p. 55.
250. Gordon, pp. 33-4.
251. *Ibid*. p. 38.
252. *Ibid*. p. 40.
253. *Loc. cit*.
254. *Ibid*. p. 38.
255. 'The Influence of Landscape upon the Poet', *Daedalus* (Spring, 1960), p. 422.
256. Gordon, p. 48.
257. *Ibid*. pp. 48-9.
258. *Ibid*. p. 24.
259. *Ibid*. p. 15.
260. Quoted in F.W. Bateson, p. 60.
261. Gordon, p. 35.
262. *Ibid*. p. 42.
263. *Loc. cit*.
264. *Ibid*. p. 45.
265. *Ibid*. p. 46.
266. *Ibid*. p. 39.
267. *Ibid*. pp. 41-2.
268. *Ibid*. p. 59.
269. *Ibid*. p. 28.
270. *Loc. cit*.
271. *Ibid*. p. 65.
272. Quoted in Gordon, p. 143.
273. Vicki Mahaffey,'"The Death of Saint Narcissus" and "Ode" : Two suppressed Poems by T.S. Eliot', *American Literature*, Vol. 50, No. 4 (January, 1979), p. 607.

CHAPTER - III

274. Philip R. Headings, T.S. Eliot (New York : Twayne Publications, 1964), p. 24.
275. P.P., pp. 113-4.
276. Matthiessen, p. 59.
277. Hugh Rose Williamson, The Poetry of T.S. Eliot (Hodder & Stoughton, 1932), p. 63.
278. Headings, pp. 17 & 24.
279. A.G. George, T.S. Eliot : His Mind and Art, 2nd. ed. (New Delhi : Asia Publishing House, 1969), p. 129.
280. J.P. Sen, The Progress of T.S. Eliot as Poet and Critic (New Delhi : Orient Longman, 1974), p. 5.
281. Louis Simpson, Three on the Tower (New York : Morrow, 1976), p.101.
282. Mentioned by Hugh Kenner, The Invisible Poet : T.S. Eliot, p. 35.
283. Granite Review, 24, No.3(1962), pp. 16-20; quoted in Gordon, p. 45.
284. Mathiessen, p. 59.
285. Loc. cit.
286. Loc. cit.
287. Moody in Thomas Stearns Eliot : Poet, p. 32, draws attention to a pun in the use of the term 'etherised'.
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296. Ibid, p. 35.
297. Gordon, p. 31.
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300. Ibid, p. 46.
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306. P.P., p. 101.
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313. C.C., p. 184.
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316. Moody, T.S.E.P., p. 5.
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320. Mario Praz, 'T.S. Eliot as a Critic', T.S. Eliot : the Man and His Work, ed. A. Tate, pp. 263-4.
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324. 'Reflections on Vers Libre', C.C., p. 184.
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329. Loc. cit.
330. C.C., pp. 17-8.
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332. P.P., p. 98.
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336. Loc. cit.
337. B. Rajan observes Eliot's coming full circle in his recognition of the artist's 'personality' in 'John Ford' (1932). See A Tate, ed., T.S. Eliot : The Man and his Work, pp. 364-5.
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340. U.P.U.C., pp. 144-5.
341. Ibid., p. 145.
342. Ibid., p. 144-5.
343. Quoted in Stead, pp. 135-6.
344. P.P., pp. 97-8.
345. U.P.U.C., pp. 145-6.
346. Ibid., p. 146.
347. Loc. cit.
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349. P.P., pp. 97-8.
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351. 'Paris Review Interview', p. 207.

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353. Ibid., p. 100.
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379. Loc. cit.
380. Ezra Pound, Selected Poems, p. 16.
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382. Ibid., p. 238.
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384. Loc. cit.
385. P.P., p. 99.
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387. Loc. cit.
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390. Ibid., p. 215.
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CHAPTER - IV

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480. Smith, p. 30.
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483. Headings, p. 187.
484. Smith, p. 31.
485. Howarth, p. 123.
486. Maxwell, p. 52.
487. Unger, p. 164.
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492. Moody, *T.S.E.P*., p. 350.
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495. Smith, p. 32.
496. *Ibid*., p. 33.
497. Smith, p. 32.
498. See Bergonzi, p. 27.
499. Schneider, p. 21.
500. '*Paris Review* Interview', p. 209.
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513. Headings, p. 40.
514. March and Tambimuttu, p. 30. The similarity is pointed out by Kenner, p. 70.
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CHAPTER - V

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822. *P.P.*, p. 110.
823. Leavis, *New Bearings in English Poetry*, p. 66; Unger, p. 21.
824. Brooks in *The Waste Land : A Casebook*, p. 149.
825. *Essays in Criticism* 19 (1969), p. 161.
826. Miller, p. 115.
827. Gordon, p. 95.
828. *C.P.P.*, p. 281.
829. Gordon, p. 94.

830. Thomas Stearns Eliot : Poet, p. 98.

831. The Composition of 'Four Quartets', p. 183.

832. Gordon, pp. 43-9.

833. The Composition of 'Four Quartets', p. 183.

834. Gordon, pp. 59-64 & 70.

835. Thomas Stearns Eliot : Poet, p. 157.

836. Gordon, p. 22.

837. W.L. Drafts, p. 112.

838. Ibid., p. 114.

839. Gordon, p. 81.

840. Smith, pp. 94-5 & Southam, p. 89.

841. Smith, p. 95.

842. The Waste Land : A Casebook, p. 166.

843. From Ritual to Romance, p. 175.

844. Malory : Works, ed. E. Vinaver (2nd ed.) (London : Oxford Univ. Press, 1971), p. 531; see reference to it in Gordon, Eliot's Early years, p. 114.

845. Smith, p. 95; E.K. Hay, T.S. Eliot's Negative Way (Harvard Univ. Press, 1982), p. 65.

846. Harding in 'The Waste Land' in Different Voices, p. 27. Brooks also recognises the sexual implications. See The Waste Land : A Casebook, p. 153.

847. Ibid., pp. 24-5.

848. David Ward in T.S. Eliot : Between Two Worlds (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 136, notices this discrepancy, though he interprets it in a different way.

849. Among others, Smith (p.96), Harding ('The Waste Land' in Different Voices, p. 24) and Ward (p.136) recognize the sense of 'surrender' or 'self-surrender' in the term.

850. Kenner, p. 150.

851. Ward, p. 136.

852. Smith, p. 96.

853. Harding in 'The Waste Land' in Different Voices, pp. 24-5.

854. Loc. cit.

855. Harding, op. cit., p. 26.

856. Loc. cit.

857. Harding, op. cit., p. 25.

858. Kenner, p. 34.

859. Smidt, p. 87.

860. W.L. Drafts, p. 129.

861. Kenner, p. 148.

862. W.L. Drafts, p. 146.

863. S.E., p. 14.

864. R. Ellmann & R. O'Clair, The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry (New York : Norton, 1973), p. 471.

865. W.L., II, l. 101.

866. S.E., p. 146.

867. See pp. 94-7 above.

868. C.C., p. 184.

869. S.E., p. 137.

870. U.P.U.C., p. 130.

871. S.E , p. 334.

872. See discussion in pp. 127-9 above.

873. P.P., p. 114.

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In the following list, years mentioned in the margin are years of publication. Titles of unpublished writings are put in [ ] and years in the margin in these instances are years of composition.

POETRY

1905 'A Fable for Feasters'
'If Times and Space, as Sages say'

1907 'Song' ('If space and time, as sages say')
'Song' ('When we came home across the hill')

1908 'Before Morning'
'Circe's Palace'

1909 'On a Portrait'
'Song' ('The moonflower opens to the moth')
'Nocturne'
['Caprices in North Cambridge ']
['Opera']

1910	'Humouresque (after J. Laforgue)(composed 1909)
	'Spleen'
	['Convictions']
	['The First Debate between Body and Soul']
	['Gold fish' I - IV]
	['Easter : Sensations of April']
	'Ode' for graduating class of 1910
	['Silence']
	['Mandarins']
	['Fourth Caprice on Montparnasse']
1911	['Inside the gloom']
	['Interlude in a Bar']
	['Entretien dans un pare']
	['He said : this universe is very clear']
	['He said : this crucifixion is dramatic']
	['Interlude in London']
	['Prufrock Pervigilium']
	['Do I know how I feel ?']
	['Bacchus and Ariadne' or 'Second Debate between the Body and Soul']
	['The Little Passion']
1913	['Oh little voices']
1914	['The Burnt Dancer']
	['The Love Song of St. Sebastian']
	['Descent from the Cross']

1915	'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (composed 1910-11)
	'Portrait of a Lady' (composed 1910)
	'Preludes' (composed 1910-11)
	'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' (composed 1911)
	'The Boston Evening Transcript'
	'Aunt Helen'
	'Cousin Nancy'
	'Hysteria'
1916	'Conversation Galante' (composed 1909)
	'La Figlia Che Piange' (composed 1911/1912)
	'Morning at the Window'
	'Mr. Apollinax'
1917	Prufrock and Other Observations
	'Le Directeur'
	'Mélange Adultère de Tout'
	'Lune de Miel'
	'The Hippopotamus'
1918	'Dans le Restaurant'
	'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service'
	'Seweeney Among the Nightingales'
	'Whispers of Immortality'
1919	'A Cooking Egg'
	Poems - 1920
	'Burbank with a Baedeker : Bleistein with a Cigar'
	'Sweeney Erect'
1920	Ara Vos Prec
	'Gerontion'
1921	'Song to the Opherian'
1922	The Waste Land

1924	'Eyes that last I saw in tears'
	'The wind sprang up at four o'clock'
1925	'The Hollow Men' (published in parts 1924-25)
	Poems 1909-1925
1927	'Journey of The Magi'
1928	'A Song for Simeon'
1929	'Animula'
1930	*Ash Wednesday* (published in parts 1927-30)
	'Marina'
1931	'Triumphal March'
	'Difficulties of a Statesman'
1933	'Five Finger Exercises'
1934	'New Hampshire'
	'Virginia'
1935	'Cape Ann'
	' Usk'
	'Rannoch, by Glencoe'
	'Words for an Old Man' (='Lines for an Old Man')
1936	*Collected Poems (1909-1935)*
	'Burnt Norton'
1939	*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*
1940	'East Coker'
1941	'The Dry Salvages'
	'Defence of the Islands'

1942 'Little Gidding'
'A Note on War Poetry'

1943 Four Quartets

'To the Indians who Died in Africa'

1948 'To Walter de la Mare'

1954 'The Cultivation of Christmas Trees'

1959 'To My Wife'

1963 Collected Poems 1909-1962

1967 Poems Written in Early Youth (composed 1905-1915)

'The Death of Saint Narcissus' (composed 1915)

1971 The Waste Land : A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts including the Annotation of Ezra Pound (composed 1914-1922)

'Exequy' (composed 1921)

'The Death of the Duchess'

'After the turning of the inspired days' (composed 1914 or earlier)

'I am the Resurrection and the Life' ('')

'So through the evening, through the violet air' ('')

'Elegy' ('Our prayers dismiss the parting shade')

'Dirge' ('Full fathom five your Bleistein lies')

PLAYS

1932 Sweeney Agonistes (Fragments of an Aristophanic Melodrama) (composed 1926-28)

1934 The Rock (written in collaboration with E. Martin Browne)

1935 Murder in the Cathedral

1939 The Family Reunion

1949 The Cocktail Party

1953 The Confidential Clerk

1958 The Elder Statesman

PROSE

Eliot wrote an extensive number of prose pieces. The following are his published books and anthologies in which most of his important prose writings are collected.

For the remaining published prose writings, see Donald Gallup, T.S. Eliot : A Bibliography. Unpublished titles are put in [ ]

1918 Ezra Pound, His Metric and Poetry

1920 The Sacred Wood

1924 Homage to John Dryden

1926 [On the Metaphysical Poetry of the Seventeenth Century
(Clark Lectures)]

1928 For Lancelot Andrewes

The Sacred Wood, 2nd ed. with new preface

1929 Dante

1932 John Dryden : the Poet, the Dramatist, the Critic

Selected Essays (Ist ed.)

1933 The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism

1934	*After Strange Gods*
	Elizabethan Essays
	Selected Essays (revised ed.)
1936	*Essays Ancient and Modern*
1937	[*The Development of Shakespeare's Verse*]
1939	*The Idea of a Christian Society*
1941	*Points of View*
1948	*Notes towards the Definition of Culture*
1951	*Selected Essays* (3rd ed., enlarged)
1952	[*Scylla and Charybdis*]
1953	*Selected Prose*, ed. J. Hayworth
1957	*On Poetry and Poets*
1962	*George Herbert*
1964	*Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley*
1965	*To Criticize the Critic and Other Writings*
1975	*Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot* ed. F. Kermode
1988	*The Letters of T.S. Eliot*, Vol.I (1898-1922) ed. Valerie Eliot

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