CHAPTER TWO

MILIEU AND INFLUENCES:

I

We cannot fully understand a person's life, and grasp the totality of his being, until he is dead. Once he is dead, the acts of his life fall into their proper perspective and we can see what he was tending toward. T.S. Eliot died on January 4, 1965, and by this time it can be safely assumed that almost everyone important in the literary world knows him quite well. Scholarship has barely omitted to scrutinize a single important aspect of his works, and his private life has become no more private than he had chosen to keep it. Yet, in the midst of a hundred tangential guesses, opinions concerning Eliot, who is one of the most influential men of letters of the twentieth century, an age of systematized literary scrutiny, have been irritatingly mystifying. Many enthusiasts have persistently — sometimes perfidiously — tried to dig out traces of a confession between the intriguing lines of his poems, Eliot himself with his characteristic tendency for under-statement and self-effacement has said:

I am used to having cosmic significances, which I never suspected, extracted from my work (such as it is) by enthusiastic persons at a distance; and to being informed that something which meant seriously is vers de société, and to having my personal biography reconstructed from passages which I got out of books, or which I invented out of nothing because they sounded well; and to having my biography invariably
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ignored in what I did write from personal experience; so that I am inclined to believe that people are mistaken about Shakespeare just in proportion to the relative superiority of Shakespeare to myself.

(Shakespeare and Stoicism of Seneca', Selected Essays, p.127)

We have, therefore, to try to steer clear of this error in dealing with the poet's milieu and influences. Eliot himself was extremely reserved about the significant events of his life, and his reticence has always been a stumbling block for his biographers. It is quite understandable that Eliot derided the biographical kind of interpretation of poetry and yet it is undeniable that poetry may have its most significant sources in private experiences. The idea of some impersonal core in the poet's soul whence his inspiration springs may be a useful check to critics of the extreme biographical school, but a man does not arrive at his opinions simply by deductions from abstract premises, nor does a poet write poetry through a merely mechanical gestation of impersonal matter. Poetry is sometimes prophecy, sometimes recollection and autobiographical, though, according to Eliot, 'this autobiography is written by a foreign man in a foreign tongue, which can never be translated '(1) With the passage of time it has become quite clear that Eliot can be fully understood only when his links with his

(1) Nation and Athenaeum, February 12, 1927.
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background — his milieu and influences, — are traced out properly. For example, Eliot's genealogy is of special importance and interest because he owes certain of his gifts to his Puritan heredity and his works contain many allusions to his ancestors. These mute forebears find frequent expression in the words of their distant descendant.

With Eliot we shall have to look for what Henry James called the 'figure in the carpet', which, for the poet, is both significant and complex. There is, in addition, the difficulties of the need to tell a story which is dynamic and moves forward in time. Its remote origin lay in Somerset three centuries ago, though it properly started in St. Louis, Missouri, towards the end of the last century. It unfolds in Gloucester and Cambridge, Massachusetts, in Paris and Munich, and continues in London during the last two world wars and the years of depression between and after. 'In my beginning is my end'. These words from the Four Quarters were ultimately vindicated in the life of the poet. Eliot's journey ended where it began: the mortal remains of the poet were buried in East Coker's parish church.

In 1917 Eliot wrote that a writer's art must be based on the 'accumulated sensations of the first
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twenty-one years of his life. This is a period when knowledge and experience come to him with the greatest novelty and when his opinions, tastes and attitudes become clear in their main outlines. This is also a period which has vital links with the present. ' Fare forward, voyagers ', Eliot has said: throughout his life there was something of an exploration of, and a search for roots in the past which would nourish the present — a pilgrimage to 'the source of the longest river'. His Puritan heredity and his milieu prepared Eliot for his voyage — for the quest of his soul, which was a distinctly Christian soul. He has, himself, written in 1948:

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.

(Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, p.43)

II

T.S. Eliot was born at 2635, Locust Street, St. Louis, in a room with walls covered with plenty of photographs, mirrors and engravings — engravings of Murillo's Immaculate Conception, of Theodorus and St. Ambrose and of a Winged Victory. He was the youngest of the seven children of Henry Ware Eliot and Charlotte
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Champe Stearns, daughter of a Boston tradesman, whose ancestor Issac Stearns had been one of the pioneers of the colony. Eliot's ancestors came from further afield; they were of Norman stock. The Elyots were known in Somerset and Devon — above all in East Coker, where lived Sir Thomas Elyot, author of A Boke Named the Governour, a few lines of which Eliot in his characteristic manner uses in Four Quartets. The first to emigrate to America was Andrew Eliot who settled in Massachusetts and was a witness at the Salem witch trial. His numerous descendents played prominent roles in the history of New England. The Eliots of Boston, strictly orthodox Presbyterians were converted to Unitarianism, a sect which discarded the essence of Christian dogmas and sought to reconcile some residue of Platonism with the wisdoms of the Gospels.

The poet's grandfather William Greenleaf Eliot represented the best tradition of the Unitarian leaders who, at the end of the eighteenth century, tried to convert New England from its grim Calvinism through their astonishing personal purity and moral beauty. Quick, keen and decisive, he left the security of the East and choosing the frontier arrived one day in the late fall at St. Louis, a city which for all its glitter of wealth accumulated through fur-trade and the superficial elegance lent by its
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French founders, was still primitive in many ways. Driven by an indomitable will and a creative sense of responsibility and personal involvement, he founded the First Congregational Society of St. Louis and the first Unitarian Church, the Church of the Messiah. Social work was the natural and concomitant expression of Unitarian morality. It was an attempt to regulate the world, and this, in another field, inevitably led to the desire to bring order into the microcosm of one's subjects. In the midst of the intersecting tangles of the Civil war, Dr. Eliot lived like a nineteenth-century descendant of Chaucer's parson:

... Cristes lore, and his apostles twelve,
He taughte, and first he followed it himselfe.

He would have been amazed if anyone had predicted that his grandson would one day adopt most of the traditions represented by the town of St. Louis, founded by the French under Louis XIV — royalist, Latin, Catholic — traditions which recall Ignatius Loyola rather than Calvin, Thomas Aquinas rather than Emerson. But within a liberal church he was a strongly conservative force. As a young man it may have been a source of strength to him to feel that he was the evangelist of an outcast doctrine — 'Our Church
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vilified and ourselves excluded from the Christian communion. But he emphasized what his church shared with the Christian churches and cherished 'all that was sacred and memorable in the past, as a priceless legacy, a repository of truth, even though commingled with error'. (2) Like all Unitarians he was a believer in perfectibility, but he was very cautious in his estimate of man's capacity to arrive at perfection. He found it difficult to accept the national assumption that everybody's opinion should weigh equally in the management of human affairs. The objective of wider and better education for which he worked day and night was to prepare all men to form and apply opinions, but he could not foresee any rapid general progress. 

The dedication of a biography written by his daughter-in-law and mother of T.S. Eliot, says, 'Written for my children, lest they forget'. Although he died before the birth of the poet the power of his personality was pervasive and his influence was intensely felt by the members of his family. When Eliot addressed the

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members of Washington University in 1953 he referred to the memories of his early years and of the general atmosphere in his home:

The standard of conduct was that which my grandfather had set; our moral judgements, 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 .... This original law of Public Service operated especially in three areas: the Church, the City, and the University .... 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 would be subordinate to the general good which they represent.

(To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.44)

Dr. Eliot's eldest son, Thomas Lamb Eliot inherited and adopted almost without modification his father's doctrines and his code of life. He expected of his children the obedience that God requires of man. To him it was 'an easy transition from filial respect to religious awe'. The relationship between the parents and their children was a parallel of the relationship between God and man -- a relationship based on 'the respectful and reverential submission to authority, under
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the sense of duty'. That was his understanding of the eternal order. Thomas Lamb Eliot went west to the Pacific coast and established a Unitarian Church in Portland, Oregon. There he did everything his father had done in St. Louis, and was blessed with a happy Christian domestic fulfilment. His biographer, Earl Morse Wilbur has given a vivid description of the way in which the round of daily life permeated by religious awareness, and the round of the Christian year were maintained strictly in his Portland home. Readers of 'Little Gidding' are familiar with an English seventeenth century household dedicated to the annual round of religious observances with the concomitant pieties and filial loyalties. It will not be difficult to establish broad features of resemblance between the Perrars of the seventeenth century with their devotion to strictly religious life and the Eliots of the nineteenth century household at Portland. To the Eliots the unneglected rounds of religious observances was a satisfactory source of strength for work, and for leading a virtuous life. These and his wife's story-book, Laura's Holidays reveal the life and hopes of the reticent people who constituted the finest stratum of American society in the late

(3) W.G.Eliot, 'Early Religious Education considered as the divinely appointed way to the regenerate life', quoted by Herbert Howarth, p. 14.
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nineteenth century. It is not difficult to construct, from these fragments, glimpses of the St. Louis home on which the Portland home was modelled, and glimpses of the corresponding daily and yearly rounds in which T.S. Eliot grew up.

The poet's father, Henry Ware Eliot felt that he had had enough of Church and Sunday school obligations in twenty years of a preacher's home. 'Too much of pudding choked the dog', (4) he remarked. And so through a combination of moral passion and business efficiency characteristic of the Eliots, he became a prosperous businessman in St. Louis. He was tremendously successful and gave generously not only money but also his own personal initiative and involvement, and thus maintained the family tradition after his one act of non-conformism. His life added the morality of the Puritan businessman to the family ethos. T.S. Eliot once wrote that in the Puritan morality 'it was tacitly assumed that if one was thrifty, enterprising, intelligent, practical and prudent in not violating social conventions success was assured. Eliot regarded this as a 'secular heresy' but his own adherence to it probably contributed

(4) Quoted by Herbert Howarth, p. 19.
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to his success in worldly affairs. (5) Like all the other children of William Greenleaf Elliot, Henry Ware Elliot was responsive to the arts. He was a member of the Philharmonic and Choral societies and filled his house with pictures. His taste was conservative and it is difficult to imagine that his son would become a poet devoted to daring experimentation with words.

But, the poet's mother, Charlotte Champe Elliot, herself a minor devotional poetess, sympathized with her son's adventure, and his progress as a writer was her happiness. Growing up as an intense girl with a longing expression in her face she always carried a burden of nostalgia, bitterness and frustration because of the lack of opportunity for women to develop their aptitudes under the discipline of a university. In keeping with the tradition of the Eliots she developed a career in social work and also wrote poems in which she showed a steady preoccupation with form and extension of her technical range. For Mrs. Elliot her poetry and her religion were inseparable. She wrote a series of poems dramatizing events taken out of the Christian story. Her dramatic poem on the martyrdom of Savonarola was published in 1926 with an introduction by T.S.Eliot stating that it was 'steeped in the doctrines of

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Schleiermacher, Emerson and Herbert Spencer*. Disappointed that her poems had gone almost unrecognised she took comfort from her son's literary promise and looked forward to the day when he would become one of the country's most prominent writers, and achieve something she had longed to. When The Waste Land appeared she read it with sympathy and only hoped that with its suffering and struggle, it was an interim work to be followed by a poem of fulfilment.

III

As a member of a distinguished Boston family, T.S. Eliot grew up in a prosperous and cultivated Unitarian home in St. Louis. A poet's childhood, is always fascinating. We should like to know more about Eliot's childhood, but he has been rather reticent about his early years. It is a fact that his sensuous natural surroundings made a deep impression on the sensitive boy. The mighty river Mississippi, the 'strong brown god - sullen, untamed and intractable' of The Dry Salvages, was something which he could never forget. St. Louis itself, with its fogs and 'the sunsets and the dooryards and the sprinkled streets' is the setting of 'Prufrock'. Perhaps his mother used to tell him stories of the martyrdom of Savonarola and of the struggle and sacrifices of George Washington. Perhaps his Irish nursemaid Annie Dunne, to whom young Eliot was deeply attached, was the first to introduce
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him to Catholicism. He, at least, remembers an occasion when she took him along to her little Catholic Church. (6)

Eliot spent the first sixteen years of his life in St. Louis and then went to Massachusetts and lived in and near Boston. Since the Eliots were originally from New England and since the poet spent quite a long time in Cambridge, it is generally assumed that he was essentially a New Englander, and that his early life in Missouri can be dismissed as an irrelevance. But Eliot saw the matter differently. He was profoundly aware of his mixed background so that for him what Henry James called the 'complex fate' of being an American was unusually complex, even before he struck out to assume a European identity for himself.

In a letter to the late Sir Herbert Read, he wrote in 1928:

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 a 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.

(Herbert Read: 'T.S.E. - A Memoir', T.S.Eliot, ed. Allen Tate, p. 20.)

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(6) T.S.Eliot, 'American Literature and the American Language', To Criticize The Critic, p. 47.
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The Eliots, when they settled in Missouri, jealously preserved their links with Boston. It is quite natural that the Eliot children have absorbed in their home something of the atmosphere of Massachusetts, where their mother had grown up, whence sprang their ancestors on both sides, and where the family still maintained its deepest links. Eliot himself tells us that his family

... guarded jealously its connections with New England; but it was not until years of maturity that I perceived that I myself had always been a New Englander in the South West, and a South Westerner in New England. ... In New England I missed the log, dark river, the ailanthus trees, the flaming cardinal birds, the high limestone bluffs where we searched for fossil shell-fish; in Missouri I missed the fir trees, the bay and goldenrod, the song-sparrows, the red granite and the blue sea of Massachusetts.

(Preface to E.A. Mowrer: The American World, 1928)

Gradually the young man from St. Louis came to love the Boston of his ancestors, but all his instincts were opposed to the intellectual tradition of Franklin, Emerson and Trine. Then, at the time of his birth New England culture was declining. The literary tradition was exhausted. The religious tradition, dissolving before the

(7) These thinkers and writers stand for the age of Reason and Enlightenment in America. With minds open to the scepticism of the age, they found themselves on the side of natural rights rather than that of divine prerogatives. They revolted against religious orthodoxy and laid foundations for the doctrines of individualism, self-reliance, the moral sense and the correspondence between natural and moral law.
progress of Roman Catholicism, Jewry and Christian Science, was also in an advanced state of decay. And 'The Boston Mind', says Van Wyck Brooks, 'once so cheerful, was full of the sense of last things, as if it hoped for no resuscitation'. (8) The fatigue must have reached the Bostonians in St. Louis. Some of the unhappiness and pessimism in Eliot's early poetry may have been because of this. To the poet the family background of Unitarianism, an extreme form of Protestant rationalism, seems to be intimately connected with what he calls 'the Boston doubt: a scepticism which is difficult to explain to those who are not born to it. This scepticism is ... not destructive, but it is dissolvent'. (9) Somewhere else he also speaks of 'the best aspect of Unitarianism, a kind of emotional reserve and intellectual integrity'. (10) This kind of influence could have appealed to his temperament at a mature stage of growth, but to a sensitive child the


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austerity of Unitarianism could have been irksome. It lacked the picturesque elements of other Christian creeds. In a way it excluded itself from Christianity. Eliot himself has written:

I was brought up outside the Christian fold, in Unitarianism; and in the form of Unitarianism in which I was instructed, things were either black or white. The Son and the Holy Ghost were not believed in, certainly; but they were entitled to respect as entities in which many other people believed.

(Book Review, The Criterion, July, 1931)

This kind of stern enlightenment could have been salutary in many respects but there was something constringent in this, which allowed no nourishment for the senses, emotion and intellect. Young Eliot, who was very sensitive and intellectually wide-awake, felt this deeply. The poet who thought 'that man is best through experiences which are at once sensuous and intellectual,'(11) sought refuge in a kind of ironic aloofness. Edmund Wilson in his *Axel's Castle* says that like Henry James and other New England writers, Eliot spent much of his maturity regretting an emotionally undernourished youth' caused by the thin moral purity and the emotionally starved world of Puritanism.(12)

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Nevertheless, in the third quarter of the nineteenth century, St. Louis had a culture, a circumambience favourable to the growth of genius. The poet's grandfather, W.G.Eliot's career encapsulates the rise and fall of Unitarianism as a moral and social agency. Its energies, channelled through him, helped to make St. Louis a great city of mid-America. During the years following the Civil War, it was at the height of its prosperity and reputation. It was the centre of a minor cultural explosion and an advanced intellectual life — a blending of Unitarianism, Hegelianism and German social-democracy with a university initiated by W.G.Eliot himself, providing the best educational system in the country. W.G.Eliot's whole being with that of his family was invested in the destiny of the city. The Eliots were leaders of a practical aristocracy in whom Unitarianism never came in conflict with the 'virtuous materialism' of de Tocqueville.

However, the formation of Eliot's basic social and moral attitudes coincided with a period of intense disillusionment with St.Louis as the ascendent city of mid-America. Eight years before his birth the census of
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1880 revealed that Chicago’s population had outstripped St. Louis’s. Worse still, the Steffens revelations (incorporated in Steffens’s *The Shame of the Cities*, 1904) revealed St. Louis as flagrantly boss-ridden and corrupt. This exposure spelt the end of socially committed progressive Unitarianism and the beginning of a turn towards Republicanism and Conservatism. In St. Louis, Boston Unitarianism lingered longer than in Boston itself and Eliot’s youth was passed in the shadow of its final decline. St. Louis had been an all-American experiment which had failed; for Eliot, probably, America had failed with it. The poet’s journey through Harvard to England and to Europe was, in a sense, a reversion of the direction of the Pilgrim Fathers. However, the drama which took place in St. Louis, was propitious to a poet growing up there in the nineties. It helped him to discover his future attitudes and prepared him for the adventure lying ahead. Eliot himself told a St. Louis audience in 1953:

> I am very well satisfied 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.

*(To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.39)*

IV

Eliot received his early formal education in the preparatory department of Washington University called
Smith Academy, which provided a good grounding in what he regarded as 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!

(To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.45)

As a small boy his interest in literature had been sporadic. He had 'a liking for martial and sanguinary poetry' such as 'Horatius', 'The Burial of Sir John Moore', 'Bannockburn', Tennyson's 'Revenge' and some of the border ballads. Shakespeare left him cold. At the age of fourteen or so Fitzgerald's Omar Khayyam affected him like a sudden conversion, making the world appear painted with 'bright, delicious and painful colours'. Then he took 'the usual adolescent course with Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, Swinburne'.

The boy was also introduced to the classic poets of Greece and Rome. He enjoyed reciting Homer and Virgil in his own fashion, but he 'instinctively preferred the world of Virgil to the world of Homer — because it was a more civilized world of dignity, reason and order'.

As for contemporary American and English writers, there were apparently none that contributed to his education.

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This continued even after he had entered Harvard:

...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.

('Ezra Pound', New English Weekly, Oct., 1946)

In 1905, Eliot left St. Louis for Massachusetts where he spent a year at Milton Academy and then entered Harvard, which was like an 'ancestral home' to him, in 1906. Here, he took his bachelor's degree in 1909; his master's in 1910, spent a year in Paris, and studied for three years more from 1911 to 1914. It was Harvard's 'golden era'. It saw great teachers and men of powerful intellect, such as, William James, Santayana, Babbitt and Royce training their students in varied branches of learning. Eliot's debt to Harvard of his time was considerable.

Eliot has consistently defended the study of the classics. In the twenties he wrote that 'neglect of Greek means for Europe, a relapse into unconsciousness'.(14)

In the thirties he defended the programmes as a discipline on the grounds that we are best educated not when we choose the subjects of study which appeal to us but when we follow

(14) Commentary in The Criterion, April, 1925.
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those imposed on us by minds, more experienced than ours. Even though Greek and Latin were not popular Eliot gravitated to the unpopular and the conservative. Along with these he took courses in French, German, medieval history and Comparative literature. These courses under expert teachers and books written by them might have prepared Eliot for his doctrine of tradition and the creative assimilation of the past. He must have got ideas of the continuity of the Roman tradition into the Middle ages and also of the routes by which the classics ramified into the Christian West.

At Harvard there was a well-established tradition of Dante studies. Great nineteenth century scholars like Tickner, Longfellow, J.R.Lowell and Charles Eliot Norton, inspired by that sense of the past which, Eliot says, 'is peculiarly American' were drawn to European literature, which was explored with profound zeal. In the Harvard way Eliot read Dante before he had any Italian grammar and gradually steeped himself in Dante's poetry. His Dante essay of 1929 sketches a diagram of the European cultural pattern and shows Dante as its consummate representative at the moment when it was strongest. 'The culture of Dante was not of one
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European country but of Europe', he has said. In 1950
his 'Talk on Dante' revealed that even after forty years
Dante's poetry was still 'the most persistent and deepest
influence' upon his own:

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 ...

(To Criticize the Critic, 1965, p.120)

Dante taught him how to establish a relationship
between the inferno of Dante and the hell of a modern
metropolis and also provided inspiration for developing
and refining the language of his own nation:

The task of the poet, in making people comprehend the
incomprehensible, demands immense resources of
language; and in developing the language, enriching
the meaning of words and showing how much words can
do, he is making possible a much greater range of
emotion and perception for other men, because he
gives them the speech in which more can be expressed.

In addition to this, Eliot had great love and
concern for the health of the European community, and he
found Dante to be the supreme example of a European poet:

'... Dante is, beyond all other poets of our continent,
the most European'. Dante's influence on Eliot was, indeed,
deep and persistent. In an article in The Egoist, Eliot
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referred to ' a kind of stimulus for a writer which is more important than the stimulus of admiring another writer'. He has explained it as

... a feeling of profound kinship, or rather of a peculiar intimacy with another, probably a dead author. ... ... 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 into a person. ... ... we have not borrowed, we have been quickened, and we become bearers of a tradition.

('Reflections on Contemporary Poetry', *Egoist*, July, 1919)

Eliot might have had Dante or Laforgue or both, when he wrote the article. Meanwhile he continued his studies, and along with the exploration and creative assimilation of Dante, he read medieval history as a freshman in 1906-1907 under Professor Charles Homer Haskins. Work under him and the course on Latin under Professor Rand trained Eliot in the understanding of the institutions, the life and art of the period. It is possible that the course on Comparative Literature under Professor W.H. Schofield, together with the courses under Haskins and Rand might have attracted Eliot to the process of the spread of literary themes and forms
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through Europe as a paradigm of the creative movement
and gestation of impulses in his own mind. It, at least,
gave him a sense of the interconnection of the units
of the European comity, and prepared him for the doctrine of the unity of European culture and tradition.

About 1906 Eliot took the freshman course in
English Literature given by Dean Briggs, who introduced
him to Donne and the metaphysicals. But in the nineteenth
century America Donne and other seventeenth century
writers were revered by New Englanders as the fountain
of their own experience. When W.G.Eliot wrote a poem,
when Charlotte Eliot wrote her religious lyrics they
used the accent and the forms of seventeenth century
religious poetry. Briggs read Donne to his classes
because Donne was one of the possessions of the Americans
who cared for poetry. What Eliot did was to use Donne
creatively and inspire others to continue the tradition.
Out of that grew, not rapidly, but over a decade and
more, a revolution in Eliot's experience, which was
ggradually converted into a revolution in general literary
taste.

In December 1908 Eliot discovered in the
Library of the Harvard Union, Arthur Symon's's The
Symbolist Movement in Literature. This came to him 'as
an introduction to wholly new feelings, as a revelation'.

He has written:

But for having read his book I should not, in the year 1908, have heard of Laforgue or Rimbaud; I should probably not have begun to read Verlaine; and but for reading Verlaine, I should not have heard of Corbiere so the Symons book is one of those which have affected the course of my life.

(The Sacred Wood, p. 5)

Twenty years later he said:

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.

Laforgue and the later Elizabethan drama were the main influences behind the Eliotesque synthesis which provided the form and means to make actual what was potential in the art of the poet, something which might be called Eliot's entelechy. In Laforgue's Complaintes Eliot found examples of a living language. He was intrigued by Laforgue's idiom and technique. The French poet brought the modern world and its language into poetry, and he experimented with a great diversity of lines and broken sequences. When Eliot was searching for some criterion of formal beauty which would enable him to master English verse technique, he came across the poetry of Jules Laforgue who 'was the first to teach me how to
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speak, to teach me the poetic possibilities of my own idiom of speech. (15) In him Eliot found also themes which answered his own requirements, his uncertainties, his taste for irony, his discretion, his refinement, and his 'dandysm'.

From Laforgue, Eliot had learned the possibility of an ironic, self-deprecating diction with sonorous texture and interbreeding of nuances, which offered scope for subtle expression of the regnant sensibility of his time. Laforgue suddenly engulfed a shy and sensitive young poet shaping slender lyrics at Harvard in the first decade after the nineties, showed the means of distancing and presenting for sardonic contemplation experiences too painful to encounter more intimately. However, the shallowness of Laforgue's roots in tradition, and his lack of ground bass like the Alexandrines of Racine echoing in Baudelaire required correction before his methods could be put to sustained use. In Eliot a kind of crossing between the method of Laforgue and that of Elizabethan drama with is arsenal

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of devices for experimenting with the iambic pentameter, stiffened the lines against a virtuoso's rhythmic opportunism and an entertainer's moral evasiveness. On the other hand the poetry of the French Symbolists like Laforgue and Corbiere acted as correctives to the rhetoric and rant of late Elizabethan drama.

Eliot was keenly aware of the growing despair of the age, of the lack of faith in anything, and of the need to avoid the easy, stereotyped emotions of the Georgians, or the large Romantic gestures. The pessimism and irony of Laforgue and Corbiere, their regular puncturing of any attempt of sentimentality, self-pity, pose or unadulterated lyricism with flashes of irony deeply impressed Eliot and brought to him the intellectual and moral support necessary to deal with his own experiences, which were essentially those of his own age. Laforgue taught him how to deflate sentiments with an irony born of an ever acute sense of the inanity of certain gestures and of the inability to find a steady stance. Corbiere with greater toughness, resilience and blacker irony than that of Laforgue 'provided Eliot with the stern example of a poet who could carry the real despair with the courage, true pessimism and lack of affectation of Leopardi'.

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Another French writer, Baudelaire was one of the most important influences in the life and art of Eliot. In his lecture, 'What Dante means to me', delivered on the 4th of July, 1950, Eliot has said:

I think that from Baudelaire I learned first a precedent for the poetical possibilities never developed by any poet writing in my 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.

*(To Criticize the Critic, p. 126)*

Deeply religious writers like Dante, Baudelaire and Pascal meant a lot to Eliot, who was also, from the very beginning, a man hovering over the fringes of the spiritual and religious world. They were the nourishing sources, which enabled him to discover, and to develop the essential structures of his genius. They prepared him for a creative life, which was, to him, nothing but the life of the spirit. His intense concern with method, medium, and his apprenticeship, were merely preparations for the journey of his soul. But after Laforgue and Corbiere Eliot adopted a kind of self-destructive introspection, or auto-irony - an 'empathy' betraying self-disgust,
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disgust with the creatures without the spiritual
nostalgia of Baudelaire. Eliot, like Baudelaire, had
an overwhelmingly tragic, if not pessimistic view of
life, which had to be transcended. Baudelaire not only
strengthened Eliot's love of irony and of the realistic
aspects of life, in contrast with the imprecise and
tired imagery of the Georgians, but also brought to
him the love of the city of the 20th century metropolis
teeming with men, living in anonymous, monotonous streets
and houses, all alike, all harbouring men with standardized
emotions, desires and appetites.

In an interview to La France Libre in 1944,
Eliot, explaining what France meant to him, said that
if he had not discovered Baudelaire, and the lineage of
Baudelairean poets, he believed that he would not have
become a writer. A little more than half a century
separates the two poets, but each, in his own age, gave
evidence of the same gifts and the same creative make-
up — the analysis, the lucidity, and the hesitant and
ironic delineation of the Self. Both struck along a path
to rediscover authentic human values, and to expose those
forms of stagnation which in each generation man invents
for his own misery. Baudelaire and Eliot were never
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militant members of any group. Somewhat distant and somewhat secretive, but with an intellectual firmness which caused them to be respected and even a bit feared, they studied certain crucial matters which had exercised the critical conscience and creative talents in Europe and America during the last one hundred years.

Eliot was deeply impressed by Baudelaire’s feeling for his age and by Baudelaire’s art which revealed an intense awareness of man’s situation in the modern world. For Eliot, Baudelaire was more than a poet; he was the inventor of a significant attitude, an outlook in the disorder which was the principal characteristic of nearly a century of European and American civilization. He was also the inventor of a way of feeling, a way of understanding disorder. Believing in moral values he, at the dawn of modern poetry, claimed that all first-rate poetry is preoccupied with morality. He brought to Eliot something which he with his strong Puritan conscience was well prepared to receive, the sense of sin, the Pascalian need for despair before grace could descend and illumine the soul. Eliot said:

Baudelaire had great strength, but strength merely to suffer. He could not escape suffering and could not transcend it, so he attracted pain to himself. But what he could do, with that immense passive strength and sensibility which no pain could impair, was to study his suffering. And in this limitation
he is wholly unlike Dante, not even any
color of Dante's hell. But, on the other
hand, such suffering as Baudelaire's implies the
possibility of a positive state of beatitude.
Indeed in his way of suffering there is already
a kind of presence of the supernatural and of
the superhuman.

(Selected Essays, p. 385)

He further said:

... the possibility of damnation is so immense a
relief in a world of electoral reform, plebiscites,
sex reform and dress reform, that damnation itself
is an immediate form of salvation — of salvation
from the ennui of modern life, because it at least
gives some significance to living.

(Ibid, p. 389)

According to Eliot, Baudelaire's greatness
was largely due to his awareness of the very meaning of
existence, his awareness of the problem of good and evil.
If Baudelaire discovered for himself certain religious
values — humility, for example, the need for prayer,
the notion of original sin — his obligation as a poet was
not to practise Christianity as a religion, but to make
its necessity felt in the modern world. In his essay on
Baudelaire (1930) Eliot said: 'Man is man because he
can recognise supernatural realities not because he can
invent them'. He emphasized Baudelaire's respect for order
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and defined the French poet's situation as essentially Christian. Feeling a sense of growing spiritual affinity with Fauvolaire, Eliot, in his spiritual quest, took the fertilizing help of the French poet to arrive at the Christian meaning of the real, which is concealed beneath the appearances of the real.

When Eliot entered Harvard in 1906 its President, Charles William Eliot, a distant cousin of his, was completing a long and active period in office. Brought up in the atmosphere of Boston Unitarianism, the president was a perfectibilist, who believed that the world was striding towards the light and called his time 'the happiest age the world has ever known'. He was the supreme exponent of the American concept of democratic education through the elective system, the popular American life of ingenuous, hard-working, tradition-defying hopefulness, liberal-democratic activism and left-wing Unitarianism. After retiring from office in 1909 the patriarch appeared before Harvard's Summer school of Theology to enunciate seven propositions for the 'Religion of the Future': (17)

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(1) The religion of the future will not be based on authority, either spiritual or temporal.

(2) There will be no personifications of the primitive forces of nature.

(3) There will be no worship, express or implied, of dead ancestors, teachers, or rulers.

(4) The primary object will not be the personal welfare or safety of the individual in this world or the other ... but ... service to others, and ... contribution to the common good.

(5) It will not be propitiatory, sacrificial, or expiatory.

(6) It will not perpetuate the Hebrew anthropomorphic representations of God.

(7) It will not be gloomy, ascetic, or maledictory.

It is interesting to observe that Eliot differed from the president on almost all the issues of the time. He was against the university administrators' concentration on the Whitmanite dogma of numbers and size: 'American Universities, ever since Charles William Eliot and his contemporary educationists have tried to make themselves as big as possible in a mad competition for numbers'. He was against the elective system. According to him 'No one can become really educated without having pursued some study in which he took no interest — for it is a part of education to learn to interest ourselves in subjects for which
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we have no aptitude'. His view was that 'natural and ungenerate man' left free to choose, is not likely to make the right choice. (18) His concept of religion was dependent on authority, tradition, a Johnsonian sense of the terror of death and a severe askesis. (19)

President Eliot represented the prevalent view of the time that sane and good men are liberal-minded. T.S.Eliot has fought against that assumption, following the lead of two teachers who were critics of the president, Wendell and Babbitt.

Born in Boston, Professor Barrett Wendell who lacked the characteristic American muscle, which was compensated with a lordly and ferocious temper, taught English literature, American literature and World literature in Harvard from 1882 to 1917. When Eliot joined his classes he was playing the public role of the reactionary, the 'last of the Tories'. It is possible that his example encouraged Eliot on the way to conservatism and royalism. His book, A Literary History of America,

(18) The quotations in this paragraph, taken from a paper Eliot gave to the Classical Club at Harvard in 1933, are culled from Herbert Howarth's book, Notes on Some Figures behind T.S.Eliot.

(19) Ibid, p.89.
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a chronicle of New England thought and its consequences on American Literature, concentrates on the 'national inexperience'. His thesis was that the sum of American history, 'a great national inexperience' had stunted the literature and the arts of America. One or two writers like Howthorne, 'self-searching', 'permeated with a sense of the mystery of life and sin', 'typically puritan', had overcome the defects of their environment by making it the very material of their writing. But Howthorne's localisation 'to isolated aesthetically starved new England ... ... may very likely have made literature the poorer'. (20) This was echoed along with a Baudelairean concept of the significance of corruption in Eliot's Athenaeum Review of April 25, 1919, which was at once an astringent criticism and a moving lament: '... what the Americans, in point of fact, did suffer from was the defect of society in the larger sense ... Their world was thin, it was not corrupt enough'. It is probable that Wendell encouraged Eliot to avoid the thin moral purity of the American emotional climate and give his creative powers the opportunity to grow in the Old World. He might

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have driven Eliot to Dante's Europe, to Pascal and Racine, to the old Church with its experience and its systems in which the experience is harmonized as it is expiated.

Irving Babbitt's course in French was a very powerfully formative experience for Eliot. Like Wendell, Babbitt was a Tory, a critic of President Eliot, and influence strengthening T.S. Eliot against the progressive assumptions of his society. He was a lover of Europe, but the typical American, with all the muscle and force. He preached harmony, order and control of super-abundant energy of his nation. His craggy loneliness, his intellectual heroism, and his uncompromising assault on the popular, all these enchanted Eliot who heard at his table and read in his book, Literature and The American College, the doctrine of classicism and the complementary doctrine of tradition, which were later to be reinforced by the influence of Charles Maurras, Julien Benda and the French neoclassical movement.

Babbitt's Classicism instructed Eliot to concentrate on the essentials and to strengthen his will to surrender everything else. He further introduced the young poet
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to the theory of the living past. Eliot wrote:

Babbitt's motive was awareness of, alarm at the ills of the modern secular world; and his work as a whole constitutes the most complete and thorough diagnosis of the malady, as it shows itself in literature, in education, in politics and philosophy, that has been made.


Babbitt was an authoritarian and anti-romanticist who believed in the suppression of sentiment and the emotion. But in later years Eliot came to differ with his teacher on the subject of Humanism. Babbitt, for all his abhorrence of individualism, was an idealistic believer in human nature, its power to keep itself under an 'inner check' and the possibility of creating a sound society by rational discipline. Eliot found these views incompatible with Christian orthodoxy.

George Santayana, a man of singular charm was a contemporary of Babbitt in Harvard. In 1909, Eliot elected Santayana's course on the History of Modern Philosophy. Different from Babbitt in many respects, Santayana based his philosophy on disillusion and was committed to beauty. His religion of beauty had grown out of Spanish Catholicism into which he was born. Because of his Stoic religion, which he called naturalism, assuming that life had no meaning or metaphysical import, but that
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there was a unity in nature to which man belonged and that a relative purpose could be achieved by means of gratuitous good. Santayana rejected the dogmas of his Church, but not its rituals. For beauty's sake he cherished the Christian epic and all those doctrines and observances which bring the religion down into daily life. He was a Classicist, who declared that the poet was never greater than when he grasped and expressed the philosophic vision of his universe, as Lucretius, Dante and Vergil did for their ages. Many of his ideas appealed to Eliot; the philosophy of disillusion and naturalism could well attract a sophisticated young man who was exploring himself creatively among the French Symbolists. Also the defence of Classicism in its various aspects chimed with Babbitt's teaching. His book, *Character and opinion in the United States* (1920) tells of a dourness in American life, a lack of completed beauty and his contribution to *The Dial* of June, 1922, draws the conclusion that America slays her poets:

> The chronic state of our literature is that of a youthful promise which is never redeemed.

> This kind of lamentation might have echoed Wendell and confirmed the fears of some ardent young
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expatriate who doubted whether his abilities could
prosper at home. Josiah Royce was another teacher at
Harvard who influenced Eliot in the formation of his
ideas and attitudes. One of the leading monists and
post-Kantian idealists, Royce held the whole universe
to be contained in an all-comprehensive Mind, the
Logos, or the Absolute. Within that mind individuals
can be differentiated. Successive moments in the life
of an individual are held together by a common memory
in a larger self. The life of an individual can be
enriched if it can lose itself in devotion to other
individuals and to common causes. This was Royce's
theory of loyalty, a real virtue for individuals, taking
them beyond themselves and thus redeeming them for the
life of reality. As with Babbitt, belief in order and
authority was an ethical corollary of Royce whose
reflections on loyalty and the Church leading to his
ideas on God, hell, sin, evil and atonement, influenced
Eliot in the gradual formulation of his ideas and
attitudes.

In the autumn of 1910 Eliot, after taking
M.A. Degree spent an academic year in Paris, studying
French literature and philosophy at the Sorbonne. It was
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A very propitious time for an intellectually alert
and creatively responsive young man to discover Paris,
whose air was full of ideas:

Anotole France and Remy de Gourmont still
exhibited their learning and provided types of
scepticism for younger men to be attracted by
and to repudiate; ... Peguy, more or less
Bergsonian and Catholic and Socialist, had just
become important, and the young were further
distracted by Guide and Claudel. ... ... the sociologists, Durkheim, Levy-Bruhl, held
new doctrines; ... ... over all swung the spider-
like figure of Bergson. His metaphysic was
said to throw some light upon the new ways of
painting, and discussion of Bergson was apt to
be involved with discussion of Matisse and
Picasso. (21)

Bergson's critical faculties shocked and
astonished his young audiences and drove them to unpre-
meditated undertakings. By demolishing a clutter of
assumptions and claims, especially the claims of
nineteenth century scientific law, Bergson created an
atmosphere in which work and play could begin afresh.
If he liberated the human mind, as some observers feared,
for experiments in anarchy, he also created conditions
in which new conservation might grow by reaction.

(21) Letters of R.M.Bilke, translated by Greene and
Herter Norton (New York, 1948), Vol. II, pp. 23-24,
a book recommended by Eliot in his commentary in
The Criterion, April, 1934.
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Bergson's philosophy worked on Eliot and the reactionary consequence was to strengthen his tendencies towards authority, tradition and conservatism.

Un présent parfait, Eliot called the epoch when he tried to recollect for La France Libre the intellectual excitement, the refreshing and yet chastening atmosphere of Paris of the five years before the Great War. (22) Laforgue, Corbiere and Baudelaire were not the only French poets to influence Eliot. He came under the spell of Verlaine, Laurent Tailhade, Rimbaud and Theophile Gautier. Among prose writers he greatly admired were Stendhal, Flaubert, Remyde Gourmont, Charles Maurras, Julien Benda, and later, Maritain. In Paris of 1910-1911 Eliot established friendly relations with many important Frenchmen of the day — Alain-Fournier, Jacques Riviere, Jean Verdenal and others. The novels about the Parisian low-life written by Charles-Louis Phillipe were also read at an impressionable age, and this gave him additional knowledge of the corruption of city-life and sharpened

(22) La France Libre, June 15, 1944, quoted by Herbert Howarth, p. 152.
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his agonised city sensibility. Claudel was another writer, sensitive and humane, attracted to order and authority, who might have influenced Eliot in the formation of his style.

Eliot's indebtedness to France was, indeed, considerable. In 1934, when he looked back at the cultural conditions in England and America at the beginning of the twentieth century, he saw nothing but a stark and demoralizing wilderness:

Younger generations can hardly realise the intellectual desert of England and America during the first decade and more of this century. ... In America the desert extended, a perte de vue, without the least prospect of even desert vegetables.

(Criterion, April 1934, p. 451)

Paris provided a welcome contrast, and his visit there in 1910-1911 was like a reconnaissance into a fertile and cultivated land of promise. He retained an impression of an almost overwhelming variety of influences. One of the most important and powerful influences that Eliot encountered was that of Charles Maurras, French thinker, writer and leader of
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*Action Francaise.* (23) It is quite possible that Irving Babbitt at Harvard predisposed Eliot to read Maurras, and as it happened, Maurras continued to be one of the poet's spiritual guides up to the time of his confirmation in the Anglican church. For nearly thirty years Eliot continued reading the books of Maurras, elaborating his thoughts, and constantly affirming his respect for him.

With Babbitt Maurras shared a distrust of most of what was associated with the idea of romanticism. In his book *L'Avenir de l'intelligence* (1905) he drew a

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(23) *Action Francaise* was basically a political movement led by Charles Maurras. The movement had been born out of the Dreyfus Affair in 1898, when a newspaper article by Maurras had rallied right-wing anti-Dreyfus opinion. Young supporters of the movement were formed into the corps of *camelots du roi*. At a more intellectual level it had members like Léon Daudet, Louis Dimier, Henri Massis and Jacques Maritain. The movement believed in nationalistic monarchism and strongly supported the Catholic church as an embodiment of the Roman virtues of order, authority and tradition, while rejecting Jewish and mystical elements in Christianity. It called for a return to hierarchical and non-republican order even by means of violence.
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terrifying picture of the mind which will be reduced to a condition of total servility or hungry isolation if the trends of the nineteenth century persisted, and offered the hope that the dangers might be prevented by a counter-revolution. This counter-revolution might, according to him, bring about a fourth moment privilege, a successor to the perfect moments of life in Greece, Rome and Classical France. Maurras was committed to rationalism as a philosophy and *modus operandi*, and when he made a historical analysis of contemporary French life he argued that intelligence is the force of decisive importance for the nation. Along with this he argued for a strongly defined sense of order, and for monarchism as a viable political philosophy. All these ideas of Maurras — his ideas about the highest points of cultures of Greece, Rome and France, about classicism, about hierarchies, about institutions and monarchy — analysed, synthesized and interpreted by a French thinker and teacher of philosophy as the 'aesthetic of three traditions', formulated as classique, catholique and monarchique.

(24) *Nouvelle Revue Francaise* published two articles on Charles Maurras written by Albert Thibaudet, in the first half of 1913. When Eliot was back at Harvard in September 1911, he tried to keep in touch with the French and subscribed to the *Revue* and continued to learn from them through its pages. The three traditions of Maurras were discussed in these articles, and Herbert Howarth believes that Eliot must have read and digested the contents of the articles.
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might have deeply influenced the thinking of Eliot.

Julien Benda, author of Belphégor was another magnificent Frenchman who engulfed Eliot with his power of discrimination, his hard and clear attitudes, his rational and intellectual aesthetics, and his pure and terse phrases. Glorifying in his isolation as the essence of virtue, Benda rounded on other neo-classicists like Maurras, exposed their faults, and branded in advance his own friends and followers who would 'Clap the hands to sword-hilt, strike the Castilian attitude and shout "I am a classicist."' (25) Eliot has always honoured the non-compromisers of his time — Wendell, Babbitt, the idiosyncratic Pound, the truculent Wyndham Lewis, the lonely and self-assured Joyce, Maurras and Benda. Of these men and of Eliot we may hazard a few ideas: that it helps an artist to feel embattled against the world; it helps him if he discovered one or two friends committed to the same struggle; it helps him if he

can see in them not only his allies but his competitors, not only his competitors but his critics, not only his critics but his superiors, by whose merits he is chastened and inspired.

VI

In September 1911, Eliot was back at Harvard and applied himself to ancient Indian Philosophy, reading Sanskrit and Pali under Charles Lanman and studying Patanjali's metaphysics under James Haughton Woods. For a long time, America, rebellious against the rulings of Puritan theology, had been hankering after ancient India. (26) To the people on the frontier,

(26) Scholarly interest in Indian philosophy had been growing in the West since the days of Sir William Jones and the Schiegels. It is quite safe to guess that sometime in the 1820s American Unitarianism discovered Raja Ram Mohun Roy of Bengal, and in that process it discovered India. After that tides of interaction began to wash over both the countries. The New England transcendentalists, Emerson and Thoreau found Indian philosophy quite stimulating, and their thoughts reveal in their contents many correlations with Indian philosophic thinking. Several aspects of Indian thought had been enshrined in the writings of Whitman, Whittier, Alcott and Melville. Swami Vivekananda, who made a deep and stormy impact on Chicago, Harvard and other intellectual centres of America, designated Whitman as 'a Sanyasin of India'. When Eliot was a student some very valuable works concerning Indian philosophy had already been done by Americans in the Sanskrit department of Yale University and in Harvard, which published its Harvard Oriental Series.
the occult was tempting; and because it was tempting, it was rigorously suppressed in New England. But the suppression entailed a kind of contradiction. In a Puritan nation everyone seeks the disclosure of the divine for himself; and the suppression of any interest in the occult and the mysterious like the witch trials showed the New England communities disavowing a cardinal principle of their own religious experience. This kind of contradiction was always a part of American experience. But as the frontier receded, and as the spirit of freedom of enquiry was rehabilitated by the American Revolution and the French Revolution, the suppressed impulses disgorged themselves in a burst of speculation and experiment. The New England Transcendentalists pursued the literature of the Orient and exulted in a mode of life and thought, which, craving esoteric knowledge and contact with the world of the spirit, devalued the material progress around them. T. S. Eliot, in his quest for the world of the spirit must have been deeply influenced by these studies at Harvard. He writes:

Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit under Charles Lanman, a year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Woods, left me in a state of enlightened mystification.

(After Strange Gods, 1934, p.40)
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He would have forgotten "how to think and feel as an American or a European", and this, for practical and sentimental reasons, he did not want to happen. However, the impression left was permanent. He himself says:

"...my own poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility."

(Notes towards the Definition of Culture, 1948, p. 113)

Eliot, now, turned to concentrate on European philosophy. In June 1913, he bought a copy of F.H. Bradley's Appearance and Reality. Conrad Aiken, in his Ushant, referred to this as a homeward journey which brought Eliot to Canterbury. The three years, i.e. 1913-1916 devoted to the study of Bradley and other Western philosophers marked a radical change in Eliot's life. It was probably Josiah Royce, a teacher at Harvard and a leading monist and post-Kantian idealist who led Eliot to take an interest in F.H. Bradley, whose philosophy was a continuation and development of the idealistic philosophies of Plato, Hegel and Kant. In his essay on Bradley, (27) Eliot

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describes the philosopher in words which reveal a strong affinity between the two. Apart from his admiration for Bradley's excellent and persuasive prose, he is struck by the 'catholic, civilized and universal' qualities of his philosophy compared with the 'crude and raw and provincial' philosophy of the Benthamites. Bradley had a great deal of wisdom which 'consists largely of scepticism and uncynical disillusion' which 'are a useful equipment for religious understanding'. As late as 1934 Eliot hoped that Bradley's influence would grow and spread in a future whose characteristic sensibility might be 'infinitely more disillusioned' than that of Shaw, or Hardy or Anatole France, perhaps 'harder and more orderly but throbbing at a higher rate of vibration with the agony of spiritual life'. (28)

But the kind of philosophy based on metaphysics which engaged the minds of men like Bradley and Eliot ended as the First World War ended, Bradley had begun to sound the retreat already in 1910 in the face of Russell's Principia Mathematica. In the public world that kind of

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philosophy was no longer wanted, though its problems and puzzles continued to trouble innumerable private worlds. Starting with 'immediate experience' as the basis of knowledge, Bradley proceeded just about as far as a man could go in a sceptical critique of thought and language and entered into a mystical silence. He took a monist stance, but he allowed that, though reality is ultimately one, human understanding is dual in character, dividing all reality into subjects and objects, reals and ideals in order to make sense of the universe. Eliot was attracted to Bradley's monism, which he ultimately found to be unsatisfactory. He wrote: 'Bradley's universe, actual only in finite centres is only by an act of faith unified'. (29) But this faith was left insecure and unexplained, and Bradley, for all his elegance and skill, had no finally satisfying answer to the question how we may break out of the closed cell of our private world; how 'I' may meet 'you'. The two poles of Eliot's thought signified a humanistic dualism and an ontological monism. All his life Eliot has been looking for a solution to the dilemma, a key to the final singleness and harmony.

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In his early days at Harvard Eliot came under the influence of Babbitt. Babbit and his humanist colleague Paul Elmer More started with the position that the world exists simultaneously on two levels: the level of flesh and matter and the level of mind and spirit. Their task was to achieve a correct relationship between the two levels. Babbitt offered his doctrine of humanism, with its stress upon the fundamental dualism of human experience and upon the importance of classical European tradition as against the extreme libertarianism and expansive Romantic temper of the time. Eliot found that these concepts, necessary as they were for the survival of the truly human, could have no meaning in an individualistic ethic such as Puritanism, or a humanism such as Babbitt's which appeared to have grown out of the decay of Puritanism.

Both Babbitt and Eliot stressed the need for tradition, which is the embodiment of some kind of ultimate kinship of man, a more positive community of the spirit, depending upon some ascetic programme of submission, control and restraint. But when Babbitt spoke of a higher self, Eliot looked for the consummation of man in something which can not be called self but a community of spirit
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which shall have its positive embodiment, not merely in idea, but in action; not merely in tradition but in myth, ritual and creed. Both Eliot and P.F. More moved from Babbitt's humanism to christianity. But, while both of them traced with fascination the christian and Hindu-Buddhist traditions to discover traditional support for dualism, More's concern was simply to establish the wisdom of a dualistic philosophy, while Eliot sought for a possible solution to dualism.

This kind of search in the history of human thought usually finds its expression in art, and particularly in poetry. Eliot's success in philosophy almost decoyed him from literature. In 1914 a Sheldon Travelling Fellowship took him to Marburg and there he observed the conviction with which Professor Eucken pounded the table exclaiming 'Was ist Geist? Geist ist ...'

It seems that he recoiled slightly from Eucken's insistence on an independent spiritual life against the monopoly of the outer life with its oscillation between meaningless work and meaningless leisure. World War cut short his stay in Marburg; he came to England and joined Merton College, Oxford, and continued his
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philosophical studies under Professor Joachim, a
disciple of Bradley and a great authority on Aristotle.
The Bradley thesis was completed and sent back to
Harvard in 1916, and this was his last academic gesture.
Even though the features of the philosopher can be
discerned in the physiognomy of the poet, Ezra Pound
and London rescued him from the Bastille of Philosophy
and recalled him to poetry.

The idea of settling down in London was not
strange to Eliot, who had been, for a long time, feeling
the failure of American life and the thin moral purity
and the emotional starvation of his New England background.
Then, there was the immediate personal influence of
Pound, who was by nature an entrepreneur and impresario
in addition to being a creative artist and a poet. From
1915 to 1920 Eliot benefited from Pound's criticism of
his poetry and indications of desirable territories to be
explored. He said: 'Pound did not create the poets: but
he created a situation in which, for the first time,
there was a "modern movement in poetry", in which English
and American poets collaborated, knew each other's works,
and influenced each other.' (30) Pound always insisted on

(30) T.S. Eliot: "Ezra Pound", New English Weekly,
Oct. 31, 1946.
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the tremendous sacrifice and arduous conscious labour demanded by poetry. It was also Pound, who made Eliot see Yeats in a new light, and introduced him to Gautier and confirmed his admiration for Dante.

When Eliot arrived at London Pound was busy campaigning for Imagism and Vorticism in association with F.S. Flint, Richard Aldington, Hilda Doolittle, Ford Madox Hueffer, Wyndham Lewis and T.E. Hulme etc. Eliot never met Hulme because he had already enlisted at the beginning of the Great War. Hulme was killed in France in 1917, but the handful of poems he left behind epitomized the ideals of Imagism. Eliot admired his poems and prose, particularly the ideas contained in Speculations published in 1924 had a deep confirmative effect on his own thinking. Many of the views of Hulme coincided with that of Babbitt. He was a disciplinarian and classicist, but unlike Babbitt he distrusted humanism and held only the religious conception of ultimate values to be right. Hulme held a strong belief in the reality of Original Sin and the inability of man to attain perfection by any human effort. This kind of religious attitude must have exerted considerable influence on Eliot in the formulation of his basic ideas. In the mean time he was drawn into the Imagist-Vorticist group and came into contact with
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Wyndham Lewis, a daring and eccentric experimenter.

War-time London was an unpleasant place but things were happening there and with courage and perseverance much could be achieved. Eliot grew to like the huge, rambling city with all its ugliness and miseries. Under the pressures of the war Eliot’s sympathies were shaken and remade and extended; his art was deepened and extended with his sympathies and his reflections on man and history took a definitive direction. The physical city helped to gain Eliot for England and the Anglican Church, and this probably helped to regain him for poetry. Gradually the expatriate became a naturalized British citizen, joined the Anglican Church and conquered intellectual London as brilliantly as Dr. Johnson had done about two centuries before him.

In London, under the influence of Pound, Eliot discovered the Italian Trecento poets, Cavalcante, Guinicelli and Cino along with the Provencal troubadours. He came to know Dante’s work more intimately and to esteem it even more highly. In 1915 Eliot married a young English woman Vivien Haigh-Wood, and was trying to find a job. For a small salary he became a teacher at High Wycombe Grammar School, and was later transferred to Highgate Junior
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School. Living with a wife whose health, both mental and physical, was not good and over the years grow worse, with the meagre salary of a schoolteacher, was extremely difficult. In these difficult days the Eliots found in Bertrand Russell both a landlord and a generous friend. After two years, i.e. in 1917 he left Highgate and took a position in the Foreign and Colonial Department of Lloyds Bank, where he worked for eight years. This new employment afforded him in the evenings and at weekends ample time for his literary work.

Because of some unexpected developments Eliot could never take the viva voce examination for his thesis on Bradley, despite the fact that Josiah Royce considered the thesis to be 'the work of an expert'. (31) His parents were probably disappointed, for his mother wrote to Bertrand Russell: 'I have absolute faith in his philosophy but not in the vers libres.' (32) But, between 1915 and 1921 when Pound was leaving for the continent, Eliot benefited from his friendship and from the later's representations to periodical editors such as Harriet Monroe, Harriet Shaw Weaver, and to John Quinn in New York.

(31) Eliot referred to this in Knowledge and Experience, p.10
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In addition he gained much from suggestions made by Pound, such as the reading of Arnaud Daniel and Remy de Gourmont more seriously. Soon Eliot became known further afield than Pound's Kensington haunts. He came into contact with Yeats, George Russell, Walter de la Mare, the Sitwells, Herbert Read and Aldous Huxley. Indeed, the introduction of some of Eliot's early poems among the members of the Bloomsbury circle in 1917 caused quite a stir at Garsington near Oxford. In June 1917 he was appointed assistant editor of the Egoist. About this time he felt uneasy about his own civilian status and tried to enrol in the U.S. Navy, but was rejected. After that, sometime in 1919 he started writing for the Times Literary Supplement and for The Athenaeum edited by John Middleton Murry. In 1922, with the encouragement of Lady Rothermere, Eliot founded The Criterion, which he edited for seventeen years and exercised an authority similar to that of Jacques Riviere and Jean Paulhan of Nouvelle Revue Francaise. In 1925 he left Lloyd's Bank and joined the publishing firm of Faber and Gwyer (now Faber and Faber), of which he became a director in 1919.

For about forty years, three times a week, Eliot used to go to his publisher's office in Russell Square,
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in that part of Bloomsbury which Thackeray used as the setting for his description of the University. In his office on the top floor, Eliot worked as a director of Faber and Faber Ltd., which had discovered many young writers and established many reputations. On the walls of a discreetly furnished room, hang, beside a drawing by Wyndham Lewis and a portrait of Valery, reproductions of the works of art that Eliot prized most highly — the Tomb of Theodoric at Ravenna, St. Zeno at Verona and the Madonna from the large Byzantine mosaic at Murano. With the end of the Second World War Eliot started receiving the attention of lovers of literature throughout the world. In 1948 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature, and also the Order of Merit. The prodigal son became a prophet in his own country; there is an Eliot House in Boston, while at Harvard he has become a popular subject of doctoral thesis and scholarly treatises. In 1958 Eliot was honoured by the Vatican, and he received a Doctorate, honoris causa, at the University of Rome, where he delivered his speech of thanks in French and expressed his attachment to Latin culture, and his debt of gratitude to Virgil and Dante, because he preferred the Thomist philosophy and medieval wisdom that inspired Dante to the Renaissance humanism in which Shakespeare was steeped.