CHAPTER – V

Eliot and his later poetry

A detailed survey of philosophic and pessimistic career

Since\(^1\) the beginning of the twentieth century, there has been a growing interest in the study of \“mysticism\”. The monumental work of Miss Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness* (1911), gives a clue to the awakening of this interest, which is not limited to academic circles. But, with the broadening of scope, a great deal of irrelevant material has been added and the outcome is the resultant muddle in the field of systematized scholarship. At any rate, \“mysticism\” was able to absorb nearly everything that was ascribed to it. But the cry for specialization has been reechoed since the early decades of our era more than ever before.

The appearance of Dean Inge’s *Christian Mysticism* at the turn of the century (1899) and Sir Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan’s *Indian philosophy* in two volumes (1923-27), has partly filled the gap in the West as well as the East. The work of German scholar Mr. Rudolf Otto has brought the two channels together and his *Mysticism: East and West* (1932) is valuable in the field of comparative study. He builds his thesis on the assumption of conformity to the spiritual experience and hastens to prove it by selecting two great representatives of Oriental and Occidental philosophy of mysticism, namely the Indian Acharya Sankara (A.D.788-?) and the German Meister.Eckhart (1250-1327). He elucidates the spirit of kinship that is exemplified in the works of both by referring
to the Upanishads and Bible. But this is only the preliminary step that brings us to the more striking parallelism of their subtle systems of speculation which culminate in the revelation and unity with the eternal Being, the invisible and the inexpressible. These systems are based on what Professor Otto calls the intuitus mysticus that is intimately related to the higher modes of perception.

The recent publication of Fumio Masutani’s Comparative Study of Buddhism and Christianity (1957) deals with the affinity between the lives of Christ and Buddha and cites also certain instances of “faith” in which the two religions are contrasted; the one appeals to the soul, whereas the other rests avows the reliance on one’s own effort and considers self-discipline essential for the sublimation of consciousness and the merging of the depossessive self into the absoluteness of the Universal Whole.

In this sense, Hinduist and Buddhist mysticism is mainly concerned with the life of man on earth, whereas the Christian quest for salvation, which is the major theme of Ash Wednesday, is fundamentally based on faith and readiness to proceed to the “next” world.

Ash Wednesday is thus a record of the spiritual drama of the soul and the struggle toward quiescence, which is rarely achieved. The poem abounds with moments of strife against the attractions of life, which are naturally followed by complete resignation to a superior power. There is a sense of deprivation when
the protagonist feels that he is forsaken and thus appeals to “the veiled sister” to intercede for those who are mocking themselves with falsehood and those who are dejected and weak in spirit.

This period of loss and turmoil is essential for the mystical development of the soul and is stressed in *The Dark Night of the Soul* as one of spiritual aridity and in *The Cloud of Unknowing* as a moment of forgetfulness. It is necessary for a further purging of the soul which is now prepared to experience the timelessness of the mystical moment by transcending time and peeping through the Garden of Eden.

In this sense, Eliot’s preoccupation with the problems of mysticism runs throughout all his poems. Even in the period between “The Hollow Men” (1925) and the Four Quartets (1934-42), though prominence is given to Christian mysticism. The parallel types of mysticism are still lurking at he back of the poet’s mind and will be treated more elaborately in the *Four Quartets*. *The evocation of certain “common” images is in itself indicative of the perpetuation of the major themes of mystical philosophy whether applied to the East or the West.*

*Par as nature cette poesie [d’Eliot] tend a la forme pur, a l’abstrait et au mysticisme: dans ses subjets prefers qui sont la condition malheureuse de l’homme pecheur, les possibilities de sauver l’ame les rapports du monde ou*
nous vivons, celui que nos sens nous revelent, avec le monde reel qui est clui de Dieu.¹ (H.W.HAUSERMANN)

The poet in the *Quartets* gives a glimpse of reality, a mystical moment of peeping into the “heart of light,” and relates it to the time-movement and to the eternal flux of the four elements of existence that used to busy the minds of the Greek philosophers in the pre-Christian era. He uses for his location places that are reminiscent of childhood (the Gloucestershire Garden of Burnt Norton), of ancestry (the village of East Coker from which the poet’s ancestors emigrated to America in 1627), of craggy shores (the rocks of the Dry Salvages at Massachusetts) and of religious devotion (Little Gidding of Nicholas Ferrar). They introduce the theme of history as servitude-means serving certain ends and as freedom-timeless moments.

The main theme of Four *Quartets* is the human relationship to time and eternity, to the flux of time that operates on all created objects of the world and to the timelessness of “the still point.” The idea is cited in the second epigraph to the poem, which is based on the Heraclitean concept of elemental transmutations: “Though the Word governs everything, most people

The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,

The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning

Or the waterfall.
The suddenness of the "distraction fit" that is lost in the "sunlight" "shaft" might betray a flash of immortality. Yet it will remain unseen to a world in which the "wild thyme," the winter lightning" and the "waterfall" are understood as the final realities.

These views on the time-cycle of the world

are only hints and guesses,

Hints followed by guesses; and the rest

Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.

The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is

Incarnation.

Here we have the major theme of the *Quartets*: Eliot's "hints" are the landmarks in the succession of time, his "prayer" for time-sojourners, his "observance" of their chaotic life, "his thought" of the prospect of humanity and the possibility of salvation through the mysticism of "action" crystallized in Krishna's dictum “fare forward”, are the poet's main concern in these poems. But the reconciliation of this time-cycle with timelessness in the mysticism of the Incarnation, is the "gift" that is half understood" by the voyagers in time. It symbolizes "the impossible union" of the divine and the human, of eternity and time, which Miss Gardner takes to be "the subject of the poem in “the mystical sense.” It gives full realization to our conception of the conquest of "past and future." as it also marks the totality of Being. In it the antagonistic opposites are wedded happily for it gives vent to the activity that is accomplished in a spirit of non-attachment. In this sense, "right action is freedom/ From past and future
also." It is the release from the hard and binding rules of purposeful deeds which have driven us to the "daemonic, chthonic/Powers" of an Inferno; but

For most of us, this is the aim

Never here to be realized.

Even then, we should go on trying and be

content at the last.

Our temporary journey across the world is not bereft of "reversion" to the past. It is measured by the "yew-tree" of our death and nourished by the "significant soil" of rebirth.

_The Pentecostal Flames and the Crowned Knot of Little Gidding._

The mysticism of _Little Gidding_ is that of the _illuminatio_, of the "brief sun" that "flames the ice," and of the "Pentecostal fire/In the dark time of the year." With the prophetic flames the "soul's sap quivers,"

Our denial of the significance of sacrificial action ended in the loss of an integral factor in mysticism. This element together with the other factors of cleansing "the doors of perception" and the possibilities of spiritual revival have become the "marred foundations" of our past.

To give expression, to the existence of this past in our life, the poet imagines that he has encountered "a familiar compound ghost" of ancestry and mastery in the poetic tradition of which he is a part. The corning of the ghost from the cleansing fire is set against the smoky atmosphere after an air raid "Before
the urban dawn” in World War II. Instead of the white dove of peace, there is "the dark dove" that causes conflagration and loss of many victims with its bombs.

In a semi-dramatic dialogue the poet converses with this ghost and both come to a "concord at this intersection time/Of meeting nowhere, no before and after." Time "before" and time "after," the place "here" and the place "nowhere," are insignificant if we consider time as a composite whole uniting both time and place in a universal simultaneity. This view is made possible through the combination of time and the timeless, the here-ness and nowhere-ness, in the point of intersection where opposites are reconciled. It has rendered our dissection of time and division of place illusory and superficial.

With their agreement on the falsity of these demarcations, the poet’s conversation with the ghost shifts to their concern with learning "to get the better of words." Their common aim is “To purify the dialect of the tribe” and the poet’s further intention is to disclose, "The gifts reserved for old age" and "set a crown" upon a "lifetime's effort" for the revival of the poetic tradition.

Mystical detachment from the fruits of action does not mean inactivity but abstention from results that normally vanish instantaneously. It is also the non-attachment to the previous errors or to any haunting prospect, the "liberation/From the future as well as the past:" To be associated with "desire" is to be baffled in love and disappointed in value. The love of one’s "own field of action" begins with attachment and shifts toward the right detachment without
belittling one’s activity. Viewed in this sense, the past as it exists in the present is not servitude but freedom. The “faces and places” of history—"with the self” that extolled them—are renewed, "transfigured, in another pattern". The self has benefited out of considering the phases of history objectively, not as "an eternal repetition of the same events" but as "a sequence of creative moments in which something new enters the world and determines the future"; and, instead of involving itself in the blind alley of personal prejudices that lead nowhere, it ponders the past too in a meaningful retrospection.

The Little Gidding of the seventeenth century with its religious Anglicanism and its Civil War is associated in the poet's mind with the "king at nightfall," King Charles I (1600-49.), with those who died "here and abroad," like Nicholas Ferrar (1592-1637) and Richard Crashaw (1612-49), and with John Milton, the "one who died blind and quiet." Shall we celebrate “These dead men more than the dying?” The past does not exist in ringing "the bell backward" for this is an artificial attempt to awaken our memories. It is the "silence" of death that has brought all contradictions to a harmonious unison and has brought the meaning behind the strife of those seventeenth century figures to a perfection, that is, the constructive life that follow the schism what matters. The life of reasonable and sound activity naturally comes after the struggle with the elements of evil, as

Sin is Behovely, but

All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.

In the words of Dame Julian of Norwich:

It behoved that there should be sin; but all shall be well, and all shall be well, and all manner of thing shall be well.

"Sin, is behovely" because it is the preliminary step in the building up of personalities. It has rendered discipline meaningful and resistance of temptation more comprehensive; and, both are essential for the right conformity to society. "All shall be well" through the power and effect of "divine love."

The lyric Fourth Movement is the manifestation of the mysticism of this love in the descent of the dove (the Holy Ghost)

Of which the tongues declare,

The one discharge from sin and error.

The "tongues" of flame that inspired the Disciples are meant to discharge the human race from an indulgence in "sin and error" through purgatorial fire. The flame links this lyric with “the dark dove” and "the flickering tongue" of bombardment. For the poet.

The only hope, or else despair

Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre-

To be redeemed from fire by fire.

The "choice" which may come after a state of "despair," lies between the consuming fire of destruction and the "refining fire" of a Purgatorio.

The driving force that motivates the sacrificial process of purification is Love,
The unfamiliar Name

Behind the hands that wove

The intolerable shirt of flame

Which human power cannot remove.

In the final Movement all the threads of thought are recapitulated, and all thematic development of the mystical symbolism of the *Quartets* is brought to the climax of "the crowned knot of fire" which is the resting spot of all the movements and levels on which the poem operates. The mystical themes of the poem move backward and forward composing a pattern of "time" in which "beginnings" and "ends" are inseparable and indivisible wholes. In this sense,

What we call the beginning is often the end

And to make an end is to make a beginning.

The end is where we start from.

It is also the same case with language as "Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning," provided that the word is "neither diffident nor ostentatious" but forming an integral part in a well-balanced and composite totality in which the "complete consort" of individual components is achieved.

Each moment in the stream of "time" is both death and mystical rebirth, as

We die with the dying:

See, they depart, and we go with them.

We are born with the dead:

See, they return, and bring us with them.
In this "consort" the dead are revived partly through "the use of memory," and partly through the continuation and development of their actions. This simultaneity of time is exemplified in the revisitation of the "compound ghost" which is highly significant not only from the mystical view of the necessity for purgation and abstention from attachment, but for the purification of the tribal dialect.

The Eliotesque "rose" is symbolic of this divine love typified in the lotus of *Burnt Norton*, the briars of the crucifixion in *East Coker*, the apex of the saintly preoccupation of "a lifetime’s death in love," in *The Dry Salvages* and the decisive moment in the pattern of history in *Little Gidding*. It is also the same token that merges in the end "Into the crowned knot" where "the fire and the rose are one." This fusion of the "fire" and the "rose" into the oneness of being, is significant partly in removing the shadows of despair and partly in harmonizing the foregoing elements: the purgatorial fire of suffering and the rose of divine love are here linked together. For the apprehension of their unity in "the crowned knot," we must turn once more to the illuminating treatise *The Cloud of Unknowing* in which the anonymous mystic advised the young man saying "I would hope ultimately to help you tie the spiritual knot of burning love between you and your God in spiritual unity and harmony of will." With this all-inclusiveness of the "knot," the symbol has gained universality by tying up all the versatile elements of the human and the divine will in a harmonious whole.
Commenting on these poems as a whole, Mr. D. S. Savage praises them as "they bear the marks of deep sincerity, of a mature intelligence and of experienced and conscientious craftsmanship." He then changes his attitude and censures them “as imperfectly realized summaries of experience, [and] as poetic failures.” He builds his accusation on a comparison between the earlier and the later poems and says that the dominant emotions conveyed by the early poems are those of weariness, boredom, frustration, self-doubt and dissatisfaction [which] are brought within the crystallizing range of the poet's craftsmanship and are thereby mastered and transformed, made truly significant.

Whereas the air of aridity, of weariness, which is exhaled by these later poems is marginal, is not part of the substance of the poetry itself, but is unintentional, arising from qualities which the poet has failed to bring in subjection to his inspiration.

Mr. Savage considers the crystallization of emotion, which is “dominant” in the early poems, lacking in the Quartets as he fails to recognize an insistent theme of an "objective correlative" to use Eliot's own epithet-that runs through the later as well as the earlier poems. They may betray certain limited personal touches which are inevitable in writing poetry, but Mr. Savage seems to have missed the relation between the "situation" or the external "set of objects" and the very texture of the poems. The attitude here is one of perpetual struggle that
gives vent to the mystical philosophy of suffering which Mr. Savage has completely severed from the "tissues" of the poems by considering them as.

Little more than loosely connected philosophizing about the nature of reality and the value of experience, of which the poetry is ornamental rather than essential.

This is the exact reverse of Eliot's theory of the relation between poetry and philosophy which he has expounded in his essay on Dante" and of which he was obviously quite aware in the *Quartets*. Considering too the relationship between the different parts and the wholeness of perception experienced in these poems, it becomes evident that they are not "loosely connected philosophizing," as Mr. Savage assumes, for the parts are related to one another in as much as they are intimately related to the whole. These "philosophizing," moreover, are functional rather than ornamental as they have played consistent roles in thematic developments and in enriching the poetic experience expounded in these poems, for example, the vision the rose-garden in *Burnt Norton*, the theme of mystical renunciation of St. John of the Cross in *East Coker*, the theme of Krishna's depossessiveness in *The Dry Salvages*, and the peace-ful vision of Dame Julian of Norwich in *Little Gidding*. *The Quartets*, in this sense, do not constitute patches of imagery [which] are stuck on, as it were from outside, to give poetic verisimilitude to a skeleton of abstract intellectualism, as Mr. Savage puts it, for the imagery veils behind it a long train of mystico-
symbolical connotations that emanate from the inside. They abound with the Heraclitean symbolism of elemental flux and transmutation, and with the recurrence of highly accentuated spiritual moments that symbolize the mystical insight of looking into the heart of things. These moments mark not only specific developments in the emotive-intellectual or physico-spiritual life of the individual but purgatorial stages in his mystical progression too. In the endless metamorphoses of the water-imagery—to take only one example—the poet in *The Dry Salvages* relates the river of life to the vast seas of eternity associating the former with the life-death cycle or series of beginnings and ends, and the latter with the everlastingness of "the granite" or the permanence of "the rock" in the oceans of humanity. In its eternal reality, "the granite" points to the Bergsonian "duree," the Spenglerian "time-sensation" which is an "image of eternity" and the Bradleyan "absoluteness."

The "granite teeth" and the "ragged rock" which are scattered across "the restless waters" of purification are those of agony and terror, of "torment" and "sudden fury."

There is no end" in this "trial and judgment of the sea" of suffering for "People change, and smile: but the agony abides." Its abiding takes place in "the dark cold and the empty desolation" of the physical and social decay of *East Coker* where "the wave cry" and "the wind cry" across "the vast waters" of purgatory, are reminiscent of the same theme of affliction. Its perpetuation is essential for "there are other places" of valuable experience along the way to
Little Gidding, "some at the sea jaws./Or over a dark lake," either at the menacing and haunting "jaws" or the infernal darkness that presides over the lake of torture. In this sense, "We shall not cease from exploration;" "here and now cease to matter" for this purpose, as

We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion,

till we gain perception of "the drained pool" of *Burnt Norton* that "was filled with water out of sunlight" in a state of insight and mystical ecstasy.

Obviously these images which support the structural symbolism of the *Quartets* are not the disjointed unsymmetrical "patches" which are attached to a worn-out bulk of the poems as Mr. Savage claims, for they constitute a constructivist, robust and an arterial organism. The "skeleton" that holds the body of the poems together is not only one "of abstract intellectualism" but also of an objectified emotionalism upon which the validity of the intuitive perception of the previous visions rests. The sense of objectification here relies upon the embodiment of thought in the image, which is the essence of mystico-philosophical poetry.

Thus the role played by imagery in the *Quartets* is predominantly architectonic partly in the visualization of the mystical experience and partly in
associating it with the plane of actuality. It is not then one of "poetic verisimilitude" but the portrayal of reality has become here poetically potential. The imagistic function in these poems is one of nearness and clarification in relating the super-conscious experience to the level of consciousness and in elucidating the vagueness of the ineffable.

Eliot's aim behind this theme of interrelatedness is the rehabilitation of "time before and time after," of history as "freedom" (of detached moments) and "co-existence" (in relation to other planes of life), partly through a pattern that includes both time and timelessness and partly through experiencing the past in our present activities. The riddle of time is solved in this way through its recognition as history, personal and family history: time as suffering: time as the "still centre", the timeless moment when past, present and future are joined and compressed into one moment of vision.

Eliot seems to be rather Bergsonian only in relating these aspects of time to the concept of "duration" and succession; but he is basically mystic in considering "time as suffering" and in taking it to be the crystallization of the visionary moment. In this mysticism of "the still point" temporality and eternity are reconciled in "The point of intersection of the timeless/ With time," which is "an occupation for the saint."
MARIANNE MOORE² once acutely remarked that Eliot’s poems “are so consistently intricated that one rests on another and is involved with what was earlier.” Thus *Four Quartets* rests firmly on a basis of imagery and theme built up by Eliot’s other works; and this may be said of all his poems: any given one is best apprehended in the context provided by the body of Eliot’s achievement. This is true of all poets in some degree; indeed, assessing the degree of "intrication" among poet’s various works may be one element in deciding the problem of greatness. With these concerns in mind, I should like to explore Eliot’s symbol of "the still point," the dominant symbol of his poetry since *The Waste Land*; and at the same time to stress, in relation to the body of his poetry, the significance of one work, which has been neglected in recent essays on Eliot—*Murder in the Cathedral*.

One must first recognize the double meanings in the words, *suffering*, *patient*, and *patience*. *Suffering* is not simply undergoing *misery* or pain; it is also *permitting*, *consenting*; he, who consents to an action must suffer for it, must accept responsibility for it. The Chorus of Women of Canterbury, the "type of the common man," understands no such responsibility as the play begins for us, the poor, there is no action./But only to wait and to witness." It is this responsibility that the women strive to evade as they realize they are being "drawn into the pattern of fate"; this is what they finally admit at their great moment of exaltation and vision: "I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented."
Thus, too, the patient is everyone, martyr, murderer, and spectator: he is at once suffering pain and permitting action; in Becket and the Chorus, he is also self-controlled. The same ideas are seen in the lyric of "East Coker," where the "hospital" patient is saved by Christ from "Adam's curse": "Beneath the bleeding hands we feel/The sharp compassion of the healer's art." Becket is the Christ of his age, who by suffering heals those who also suffer, as he explains just before his martyrdom:

We are not here to triumph by fighting, by stratagem, or by resistance,
Not to fight with beasts as men. We have fought the beast
And have conquered. We have only to conquer
Now, by suffering. This is the easier victory.
Now is the triumph of the Cross, now
Open the door!

This eternally decreed pattern of suffering, which is also action, and of action, which is also suffering, Eliot symbolizes by the image of the wheel which always turns, yet, at the axis, always remains still. This image lies at the heart of Eliot's poetry. In Ash Wednesday against he word the unstilled world still Whirled About the centre of the silent Word.

Loeb Library edition, for the words of Fragment LXX echo, throughout the

Four Quartets:

LXIX. The road up and the road down is one and the same.
LXX. The beginning and end are common.

"Heracleitus is referring to a point on the circumference of circle." These fragments appear in "The Dry Salvages": "And the way up is the way down, the way forward is the way back"; but the image of the wheel is presented most extensively in Section II of "Burnt Norton," opening with the image of "the bedded axle-tree," and continuing with the familiar words:

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;

Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,

But neither arrest nor movement.

This still point of peace is variously symbolized throughout Eliot's poetry, and the variety of the symbols has led readers to miss the connection between Eliot's image of the "rose-garden" and Becket. The "rose-garden," as Mr. Unger explains in his study of this image (THE SOUTHERN REVIEW, Spring, 1942), represents in Eliot a moment of contact with reality, a moment, of rare consciousness and "sudden illumination," which flashes across the drab flux of ordinary life as the only meaningful moment (or moments) of that life-an experience which the individual may try constantly and unsuccessfully to recapture. It is in short, the "still point" in the life of the individual.

To be conscious is not to be in time

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,

The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,

The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.

Only through time time is conquered.

Lawrence’s woman seeks to recapture the experience of an early love by revisiting the rose-garden where the experience had occurred, a garden in bright sunlight, with “blue sea” visible beyond: . . . she came to a high wall by the wayside. Under this she went slowly, stopping at length by an open doorway, which shone like a picture of light in the dark wall. There in the magic beyond the doorway, patterns of shadow lay on the sunny court…. She tiptoed nervously into the courtyard. . . Irresolutely she took a step forward, and again forward, leaning, yearning, towards the garden beyond.

Slowly she went down one path, lingering, like one who has gone back into the past. Suddenly she was touching some heavy crimson roses that were soft as velvet, touching them thoughtfully, without knowing, as a mother sometime fondles the hand of her child . . .. Then she wandered on in abstraction. Sometimes a flame-coloured, scentless rose would hold her arrested.

Indeed, in this book of the Confessions (Ch. XI) Augustine expresses the central question of Eliot’s later poetry:
Who will hold the heart of man, so fix it, that it may stand a while, and a little catch at a beam of light from that ever-fixed eternity, to compare it with the times which are never fixed, that he may thereby perceive how there is no comparison between them . . . and that all both past and to come, is made up, and flows out of that which is always present? Who now shall so hold fast this heart of man, that it may stand, and see, how that eternity ever still standing, gives the word of command to the times past or to come, itself being neither past nor to come? Can my hand do this or can the hand of my mouth by speech, bring about so important a business?

The difficulty is that the search for the still point involves the grasping of so many false points a confusion represented in the Coriolan poems, which are closely related to Murder in the Carhedral. In “Triumphant March” the crowd is seeking desperately for “light,” for a still point in the meaningless flux of life without faith, where the Sanctus bell announces only “crumpets.” As they watch the parade of death and daily banality, they find the supreme moment, mistakenly, in their glimpse of the worldly Leader. The error of clinging to such a “point” is displayed in “Difficulties of a Statesman,” where the Leader, lost in the flux of worldly affairs, is himself desperately searching for “a still moment, repose of noon.” Becket's career, as presented in the play, provides the best commentary on Coriolan. The still point, of peace for which all cry is not of this world, though it may be glimpsed in this world, as Becket's Christmas sermon shows: “He gave to His disciples peace, but not peace as the world gives.”
To this theme of the timeless reality glimpsed in the world of time Eliot returns again and again in *Four Quartets*, with constant, parallels to *Murder in the Cathedral*. Thus, in “The Dry Salvages”:

Men's curiosity searches past and future
And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time, is an occupation for the saint
No occupation either, but something given
And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
For most of us, there is only the unattended
Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight . . .

Among the saints who are thus prepared to recognize the moment when it comes are Augustine, Becket, Pascal, and the devotees of Little Gidding; the Chorus of the play represents "most of us," unable to anticipate, to understand, or to arrest the timeless moment.

The deception, I think, is chiefly the illusion that peace and vitality and fruition can be fully realized and sustained on this earth:

Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

For the saint, however, such a perception is neither unbearable nor illusory, since he understands the true significance of the earthly moment and sees the higher realm in which the need will be satisfied. Hence Becket is able to explain the torment of the Chorus in its great cry, "I have smelt them, the death-bringers," which ends with the recognition of deep guilt and of deep need for a Mediator:

I have consented, Lord Archbishop, have consented.
Am torn away, subdued, violated,
United to the spiritual flesh of nature,
Mastered by the animal powers of spirit,
Dominated by the lust of self-demolition,
By the final utter uttermost death of spirit,
By the final ecstasy of waste and shame,
"O Lord Archbishop, O Thomas Archbishop, forgive us,
forgive us, pray for us that we may pray for you, out of our shame.

The agony of the Women here, as the sexual imagery shows, comes from recognizing the degradation of humanity into the animal; and the echo of Shakespeare’s "The expense of spirit in a waste of shame" extends the horror. In suffering their Lord to die, they feel "torn away" from the Source of Light. Becket's answer is very close to "Burnt Norton":

Peace, and be at peace with your thoughts and visions.

These things had to come to you and you to accept them.

This is your share of the eternal burden,

The perpetual glory. This is one moment,

But know that another

Shall pierce you with a sudden painful joy

When the figure of God's purpose is made complete.

You shall forget these things, toiling in the household,

You shall remember them, droning by the fire,

When age and forgetfulness sweeten memory

Only like a dream that has often been told

And often been changed in the telling. They will seem unreal.

Human kind cannot bear very much reality.

These passages in "Burnt Norton" and the play may seem far apart, since one relates to a vision of beauty and the other to a vision of ugliness. But the two
visions lead to one end. Either is an escape from the world of Hollow Men, which, says Eliot in “Burnt Norton,”

. . .is a place of disaffection
Time before and time after
In a dim light: neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
Turning shadow into transient beauty
With slow rotation suggesting permanence
Nor darkness to. purify the soul
Emptying the sensual with deprivation
Cleansing affection from the temporal.

The "daylight" is equivalent to the moment in the rose-garden; the darkness is equivalent to that "Dark Night of the Soul"of Sr. John of the Cross, the religious purgation which has been well explained by Mr. Unger in relation to Ash Wednesday and "Burnt Norton," and by Mr. Sweeney in relation to “East Coker” (THE SOUTHERN REVIEW, Spring, 1939, 1941 and 1942). Both ways lead to reality and to salvation, though they appear to be moving in opposite directions. The way of the Dark Night leads down though stage of utter disgust with the physical (as in the above chorus) and reaches at the bottom a state of vacancy, where sense and spirit alike are momentarily nullified—a low point from which one can only return upward to grace. It is this state which the Chorus
describes in its final chant as "the loneliness of the night of God, the surrender required, the deprivation inflicted."

One may clarify the interrelation of these symbols by dividing them into three channels to reality. The average man has two approaches. The first is through the physical and sensuous: through the rose-garden and its related symbols of natural beauty, freshness, and fertility: the hyacinth girl, childish laughter, the bird's song. The second is the opposite, religious way of the Dark Night. The third way, reserved for superior individuals, is also religious, but it leads directly upward, "Light upon light, mounting the saint’s stair," as Eliot says in “A Song for Simeon.”

Hence Becket and the Chorus simultaneously achieve stillness at opposite poles: Becket in a vision of ultimate being, the Chorus in a vision of ultimate nullity:

Becket: I have had a tremor of bliss, a wink of heaven, a whisper,
And I would no longer be denied; all things
Proceed to a joyful consummation.

Comparison with The Waste Land and “The Dry Salvages” shows this chorus as central to the body of Eliot's poetry. Here is "What the Thunder Said": the "Murmur of maternal lamentation," the vision of the dissolution of human
order and history, which lead to the Chapel Perilous and the "damp gust/Bringing rain." The opening of "The Dry Salvages" creates much the same feeling of the dissolution of human order and human time.

Here the river is a "death-bringer," always involved with man, however remote it may appear. The rhythm, the time kept by the river is equated with the natural flow of man's life from birth to death, as Miss Gardner has said (New Writing and Daylight, Summer, 1942). Miss Gardner has also shown that the movement of the river differs from that of the sea, which is without direction; and this is a crucial distinction in understanding the poem. If man looks beyond the rhythm of his own machines, he can understand the river's movement from source to mouth, which is like the movement from past to future; but when the river, the "brown god," merges with the sea, which contains "Many gods and many voices,' man's sense of direction and of time is lost:

The tolling bell

Measures time not our time, rung by the unhurried

Ground swell, a time

Older than the time of chronometers, older

Than time counted by anxious worried women

Lying awake, calculating the future,

Trying to unweave, unwind, unravel

And piece together the past and the future . . .

We watch with wonder the sea and
Its hints of earlier and other creation:
The starfish, the hermit crab, the whale's backbone,
The pools where it offers to our curiosity
The more delicate algae and the sea anemone.

Here the relation of this *Quartet* to the play becomes clear. The "anxious worried women" are like the Chorus of Women of Canterbury who are attempting to measure events on a human scale, but are dragged, as by the bell tolling with the ground swell, to a bewildering vision of a universe which will not fit into the human order, to a terrifying sense of some relation with cold not understand it . . .. So, slowly, like a white, pathetic butterfly, she drifted down the path, coming at last to a tiny terrace all full of roses. They seemed to fill the place, a sunny, gay throng. She was shy of them, they were so many and so bright. "They seemed to be conversing and laughing. She felt herself in a strange crowd. It exhilarated her, carried her out of her self….

Then she started cruelly as a shadow crossed her and a figure moved into her sight. It was a man who had come in slippers, unheard. He wore a linen coat. The morning was shattered, the spell vanished away.

Her lover, whom she had thought dead, but who is now zingly before her in the flesh-beyond redemption, as she zes "with horror," for he is insane:
The woman turned and walked swiftly, blindly, between sunny roses, out from the garden, past the house with the blank, dark windows, through the sea-pebbled court-yard to the street. Hastening and blind, she went forward hesitating, not knowing whither.

The wall, the door, the sunlight, the water, the roses, the illusion of a crowd, the laughter, the shattered moment of illuminable—all point inevitably toward “Brunt Norton” and The Family Reunion:

I only looked through the little door
When the sun was shining on the rose-garden:
And heard in the distance tiny voices
And then a black raven flew over.
And then I was only my own feet walking
Away, down a concrete corridor
In a dead air.

believe, too, that in Eliot's line, "The moment in the arbour where the rain beat", one finds added significance by recalling Joyce's story, “The Dead,” which Eliot praises and discusses at length, along with Lawrence's story, in After Strange Gods. In "The: Dead" the significant moment is the wife's sudden vision of her long-dead lover, standing in the garden in heavy rain, "at the end of the wall where there was a tree."
As these stories show, the "moment" may be an experience actually consummated, as in Lawrence, or an experience only desired, never achieved, as in "The Dead," "Burnt Norton," and The Family Reunion. But the desire end is the saving grace; the unredeemable unconsummated moment in the worldly garden is related to and indeed leads on to the Rose of Paradise, for the object of desire is a moment of timeless reality, apprehended in the world of time. Indeed, the rose garden scene of "Burnt Norton" suggests the words of St. Bernard in Dante's Paradise: "That thou mayest consummate thy journey perfectly. . . fly with thine eyes throughout this garden; for gazing on it will equip thy glance better to mount through the divine ray." (Canto xxxi) The religious implications of this imagery are enhanced by the echoes of St. Augustine's Confessions which, I think, introduce and conclude the description of the rose-garden in "Burnt Norton." Recall Eliot's meditation here on the theme that "Time past and time future.../ Point to one end, which is always present"; recall that "Footfalls echo in the memory," that "My words echo/ Thus, in your mind," leading to the evocation of the imagery of the rose-garden as a memory of a possible childhood experience. Then read Augustine's section on the problem of time (Confessions) Book XI), especially this passage:

For if there be times past, and times to come; fain would I know where they be: which yet if I be not able to conceive, Yet thus much I know, that wheresoever they now be, they are not there future or past but present For if there also,
future they be, then are they not there yet: if there also they
be past, then are they not there still. Wheresoever there-

His experience of purgation is similar to that of Ash Wednesdays-. The Chorus is
detached from the world to face a moment of reality, and the vision of utter
destruction, which it sees is really the road to exaltation.

I suggested that the mystic conception of reality, which we find in Eliot's
later poetry, owes a great deal to plato. But the philosophy which seems to have
exercised the most direct influence on Eliot's poetry from first to last is that of
Francis Herbert Bradley, particularly his theory of knowledge. This is not
surprising seeing that it was to Bradley's philosophy that Eliot mainly applied
himself in the last years of his purely academic career.

Eliot's quest for knowledge is reflected in his poetry throughout. And in this
quest the nature of reality is a main objective. But it is mainly in the Four
Quartets that the nature of reality becomes a subject of sustained meditation.

The form of an object is its actuality, or enterlechy. And as form is the
principle of individuation, of realisation and of fulfilment, so pattern is the principle
of fulfilment in Eliot's poetic usage. 'Only by the form, the pattern /can words or
music reach. The stillness,' 3 Eliot speaks constantly of pattern, not only the
pattern of words, or pattern in art, but pattern in history pattern in the life of
individuals, etc. We shall have to consider this idea more closely, but it seems clear that what Eliot partly means by pattern is potentiality and vocation; a latent purpose in the lives of communities and individuals, as well as in the existence of objects, which demands to be realized. In fact, something akin to Aristotle’s form.

The form of animate object is what Aristotle calls its soul. As such the soul is an ordering principle of the matter of which the body is constituted. The soul of a human being is manifested in its activities, which in turn can give form to inanimate matter, stamping it with an idea. Eliot takes a similar view in the ninth Chorus of The Rock.

Eliot thinks we must ‘find meaning in final causes rather than in origins…. The final cause is the attraction towards’ God. He applies this particularly to our nations of sex, and it is obvious the much of the sexual imagery of his poetry is meant to convey the idea of the attraction towards God’ as the mover of all things, the end of all activity.

This leads us into the heart of the problem of time, which we must now consider, both as a general preoccupation of Eliot’s poetry and in its more specific connection with Begson’s philosophy.

The Four Quartets confirm the realization of the poet of Ash Wednesday that ‘time is always time’ in the usual conditions of earthly life, and
the first lines of Burnt Norton may to this extent be said to be an acceptance of Bergson’s theory of time: ‘all time is eternally present’. Indeed, Bergson’s whole theory of creative evolution seems to have helped to inspire the thought processes of the Four Quartets. Thus the idea of all life being characterized by movement, as opposed to rigidity and quiescence, is of basic importance.

Including Bergson’s duree, there are at least four conceptions of time in Eliot’s poetry. The analysis of the time concept, however, is no end in itself. The poet’s main purpose is apparently to find a solution to the problem of living. What constitutes the identity in time of a human being or a civilization? Has life any aim or purpose in time or outside of it?

Durie is not enough for salvation, for it is simply not final. There must be something beyond it from which time starts, towards which it moves or in relation to which it has meaning. In his search for the means of redeeming time the poet therefore finally repudiated Bergson and denied at least the completeness of his theories.

To Bradley as to the Vedantists time is an illusion and reality is timeless: Even Bergson’s duree is very similar to timelessness, since at least it is not quantitative or measurable. The scientific theories of Elinstein perhaps, as filtered through the explanations of whitehead, could also be used to support belief in an ultimate timeless reality, in which the infinite number of possible time systems were mere transient fabrics of thought.
More and more in Eliot’s later work the idea of timelessness is connected with the Christian revelation. Dr Staffan Bergsten, in his recent dissertation on Time and Eternity in Eliot’s Four Quartets, reminds us that Eliot’s conception of the state of bliss as timeless may be unbiblical, since the basic idea of the Bible would seem to be that of a termination of terrestrial history in time and a continuation of time in eternity. Eliot may have superimposed favourite philosophical ideas of his own on the Christian teaching. But in doing so he undoubtedly has the support of Christian as well as Hindu and Buddhist mystics. And on the basis of his own ‘small experiences’ and on knowledge derived from reading’ he has interpreted the central Christian doctrine of the Incarnation in a completely poetical, a completely modern and a profoundly reverent way as ‘the intersection of the timeless with time.’ Thus the Incarnation just as much as the Passion means Atonement and salvation. It is the redemption of all history.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1 Ishak , Fayek M. The Mystical Philosophy of T.S.Eliot
New Haven, Conn college Univ.Press. 1970.


4 ‘Dante’, SE , p. 274.