CHAPTER VII

TECHNIQUE
Out of the slimy mud of words,
Out of the sleet and hail of
verbal imprecisions;
Approximate thoughts and feelings,
words that have taken the place
of thoughts and feelings,
There sprang the perfect order
of speech, and the beauty of
incantation.

T. S. Eliot, Choruses from "The Rock"

Technique in poetry refers to the methods adopted
by a poet to express his thoughts and emotions.
Just as a director of a film edits the film rolls
that were photographed in an irregular manner without
any order of sequence so as to create a single story
similarly, a poet has to struggle with words and
arrange them in a systematic manner in order to
produce a good poem. Though Wordsworth says that
'poetry is spontaneous overflow of powerful emotions,'
yet, he too adds that 'a poem consists of 'thoughts
recollected in tranquillity'. A poet has to take
great pains in composing a poem. The entire being
of the poet goes into the making of a great poem.

T. S. Eliot was a conscious artist who made
technical inventions to suit the demands of poetry
in modern age. His poetry cannot be categorized
under any particular heading, nor can his technique
be limited. For a scholar like Eliot who had a wide
knowledge of literature, and a keen ear for music in words, poetry was a challenging task. He made an extensive use of this knowledge to create a poetry that is multidimensional. Therefore, we find a variety in his employment of technical devices. He uses Shakespearean blank verse in 'Gerontion,' whereas the metre of 'The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock' and 'Portrait of a Lady' has an irregular rhyming metre again so that it meets the requirement of the language of poetry.

Images and symbols are themselves a part of poetic technique. But, they have already been explored from the archetypal approach in the earlier chapters of this thesis. In this chapter, I would like to relate some of the techniques employed by Eliot with the archetypal imagery and symbolism. Though it is a difficult task to categorize the technique of T.S.Eliot because he is a versatile artist, yet, an effort is made to throw light on some of the devices used by him in his poetry. These devices are - method of negation, metaphysical strain, use of epigraph, allusiveness and musical quality.
Method of Negation

A characteristic feature of Eliot's poetry is the use of negative words to express different emotional states. Eliot wrote in *The Sacred Wood* -

> The contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative aspect of the impulse toward the pursuit of beauty. But not all succeed as did Dante in expressing the complete scale from negative to positive. The negative is the more importunate.

Eliot's excellent employment of negative words in his images and symbols establishes him as a great artist who can express the complete scale from negative to positive like Dante. In 'The Love Song Of Jñ Alfred Prufrock,' the negative language is symbolic and is related to the archetype of escape. Consider these lines -

(a) Oh do not ask, What is it?  
    (Line , p.3)

(b) That is not it at all,  
    That is not what I meant,  
    at all.  
    (Line , p.6)
(c) No! I am not Prince Hamlet, 
nor was meant to be.

(Line p.7)

(d) I am no prophet -- and here's 
no great matter.

(Line 83, p.6)

In 'Gerontion' and 'The Hollow Men' the negative 
words perform the same function as cited above.

Let us examine these lines --

(i) I was neither at the hot 
gates 
Nor fought in the warm rain 
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh.

('Gerontion' Lines 3-5, p.2)

(ii) Eyes I dare not meet in dreams.

('The Hollow Men,' Line 9, p.57)

and,

Let me be no nearer 
In death's dream kingdom.

('The Hollow Men,' Line 29-30, p.57)

The employment of negative words is also seen in the 
archetypal images and symbols of death-in-life. These 
lines from The Waste Land, 'Agh -- Wednesday' and 'Burnt 
Norton' can be considered as examples --
(a) You cannot say, or guess, for
you know only
A heap of broken images,
where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no
Shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of
Water.

(The Waste Land,' Lines 2-24, p.38)

(b) Because these wings are no longer
wings to fly
But merely vans to beat the air.

('Ash - Wednesday,' Lines 34-35, p.6)

(c) ... neither daylight
Investing form with lucid stillness
....nor darkness to purify the soul
....not here
Not here the darkness, in this
twittering world.

('Burnt Norton,' Lines )

In these lines, we also notice that there are certain
words which have negative meaning like 'a heap of broken
images,' 'dead tree,' 'dry stone,' 'darkness' and
'twittering world.' The use of the words 'no longer'
creates a deep impact. To quote R.S. Sharma—

Words which have a negative meaning
and also contain semantic negation
are more useful in creating pathos
because they imply the loss of a
certain value ... The problem is solved
in Eliot's poetry by converting 'not'
into 'no longer.'

2. R.S. Sharma. T.S. Eliot's Poetry - The Language of
Pathos, New Directions In Eliot Studies,
ed. R.S. Pathak (Northern Book Centre, New Delhi 1999, p.23)
In 'Ash - Wednesday,' when Eliot talks about the wings that can 'no longer' fly, he creates a feeling of pathos. It speaks of a potential that is wasted. The picture of life that is left is of death-in-life.

In 'Dry Salvages,' Eliot once again presents the scene of waste. The lines are:

There is no end of it, the voiceless wailing,
No end to the withering of withered flowers.

(Lines 80-8, p. 32)

In 'Ash - Wednesday,' the use of negative words presents the archetypal image of conflict between good and evil. The line is:

Who will not go away and cannot pray.

(Line 76, p. 65)

Eliot not only presents the world of despair, sorrow and futility by adopting the device of negative words, he also presents the positive state of purgation (archetype of dark night) and finally the state of bliss and wholeness. The lines from 'Ash - Wednesday' portray the state of transition where the penitent soul decides to turn his
back towards the material world –

Because I do not hope to turn again
Because I do not hope to know again
The infirm glory of the positive hour ...
Because I cannot drink
There, where trees flower, and springs flow, for there is nothing again.

(Lines 9–18, p. 62)

In 'Burnt Norton,' a similar state is seen in this line –

World not world, but that
which is not world.

(Line 47, p. 20)

The archetype of wholeness is presented in these lines of 'Burnt Norton' and 'East Coker'.

(a) ... Neither flesh nor fleshless,
Neither from nor towards, at
the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement ...
.... Neither movement from nor
towards,
Neither ascent nor decline.
Except for the point, the still
point,
There would be no dance, and
there is only the dance.

('Burnt Norton,' Lines 65–72, p. 9)
(b) In order to arrive at what you do not know you must go by a way which is the way of ignorance. In order to possess what you do not possess you must go by the way of dispossessing.

('East Coker,' Lines 40-44, p. 27)

Eliot uses double negation in 'Burnt Norton.' Since the ultimate state of bliss is beyond the limit of words everything has to be negated. To quote R.S. Sharma -

'It will be noticed that two important features of the language of this passage are negative correlatives and contradictory terms. The mystical state of blissful calm cannot be suggested by eliminating a single term, for both the contradictories have to be negated. 

All these illustrations prove the great skill of Eliot in expressing the different types of states through the technique of negation.

III.

Metaphysical Strain

In the book, On Poetry and Poets, Eliot wrote about Virgil -

3. Ibid., p. 29
Virgil’s style would not have been possible without a literature behind him, and without his having a very intimate knowledge of this literature.

Eliot’s remark on Virgil applies to his own poetry and style as well. The influence of French Symbolists like Laforgue, Baudelaire and Corbiere dominated his early poetry. Eliot was the first poet to detect a similarity between the French symbolists and the metaphysical poets of the seventeenth century like Donne and Marvell. The main features of the metaphysical school were - expression of novel thought, use of conceit, irony and wit, unification of sensibility, dramatic element, conversational tone, alliance of levity and seriousness, obscurity, variety and complexity. All these characteristics are found in Eliot’s poetry, specially in his early poetry.

A.N. Dwivedi remarks -

A characteristic conceit of Donne produces its startling effects by a rapid telescoping of associations drawn from a wide range of

4. T.S. Eliot, On Poetry And Poets. (Faber And Faber, London, [1967, p.63])
experience and reading, and the process effecting this kind of fusion is both cerebral and emotional. Eliot's imagery in his early poetry has the same condensation, and his method of packing it with varied associations is verily in the manner of the Metaphysicals. 5

Eliot's early poetry is dramatic in character. He indulges in deep analysis like the Metaphysical poets. Therefore, there is the psychological portraiture of dramatic characters. In his essay 'The Three Voices of Poetry,' Eliot tells us that the third voice of poetry is the voice of the poet when he attempts to create a dramatic character speaking in verse... One imaginary character addressing another imaginary character. 6

In 'The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock,' it is a psychological drama that is enacted in the mind of Prufrock. The visit to the 'room' is all imaginary. The situation in 'Portrait of a Lady is also an example of dramatic poetry where there are two characters - the lady and the yough. In 'Burbank with a Baedeker

6. T.S. Eliot on Poetry And Poets, p. 89
Bleistein with a Cigar,' there are four characters - Burbank, Bleistein, Princess Volupine and Ferdinand Klein. In all these poems, Eliot uses the dramatic technique to depict the rootless life of modern men and women. In the 'Sweeney' poems, we have debased and degraded life presented through characters like Apenack Sweeney, Doris, Mrs. Porter and Rachael nee Rabinovitch. This technique is employed even in Eliot's masterpiece. The Waste Land where we have small sketches of aimless and vulgar life of modern people. The picture of Madame Sosostris who has a 'wicked pack of cards,' the cheap talks in the bar between Lil and the barmaid, and, finally the scene of mechanical physical relationship between the typist and the clerk depict the mastery of Eliot in handling the dramatic device. However, the later poetry of Eliot is non-dramatic specially his Four Quartets.

Closely related to dramatic element is the conversational style in Eliot's poetry. Eliot had admitted that some poetry is meant to be sung. Most poetry, in modern times, is meant to be spoken. The age in which Eliot wrote was one where direct speech was preferred. Thus we have Prufrock expressing -

7. Ibid. p. 32
Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread
out against the sky

(Lines -2, p.3)

In 'Preludes,' the direct speech is presented in
this line -

Wipe your hand across your
mouth, and laugh

(Line 52, p. 3)

The early poems are full of conversational rhythm.
Wit and irony play an important role in the
metaphysical poetry. F.O. Matthiessen remarks -

Similarities between Eliot's
technical devices and those of
Donne have been often observed -
...especially, the flash of wit
which results from the shock of
such unexpected contrasts. 8

8. F.O. Matthiessen. The Achievement Of T.S. Eliot
Williamson also explains the nature of wit and irony in the metaphysical poetry which also resembles the Laforgian method—a method that was adopted by T.S. Eliot. To quote Williamson—

This method may be summarized as the assumption of an ironic mask or attitude, mock-heroic in effect and wit, expressing a mixed mood, often by dramatic means. It indulges in self-mockery or ridicules serious feeling, it represents mixed reactions to things, the subjective mocked by the objective, the discrepancy between appearance and reality.9

The title of 'The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock' is ironic. We know it well that Prufrock is never able to sing his love song. The mock-heroic tone is perceptible in these lines from this poem—

In the room the women come
and go
Talking of Michaelangelo.

(Lines , p.4)

and,

To say I am Lazarus, come from the dead, come back to tell you all, I shall tell you all

(Lines 94-95, p. 6)

Self-mockery is seen in these lines

Do I dare
Disturb the universe?

(Lines 45-46, p. 5)

and,

Shall I part my hair behind?
Do I dare to eat a peach?

(Line 3, p. 7)

Use of metaphysical conceit is also seen in this line —

I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.

(Line 5, p.5)

Alliance of levity and seriousness is a recurrent feature in Eliot's poetry which produces irony. Note this line for instance —

Though I have seen my head (grown slightly bald) brought in upon a platter,
I am no prophet — and here's no great matter.

(Lines 82-83, p. 6)

In 'Gerontion,' the contrast is presented in this expression —

The word within a word, unable to speak a word,
Swaddled with darkness, in the juvenescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger.
... To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk
Among whispers by Mr. Silvero
With caressing hands.
By Hakagawa, bowing among the Titans.

(Lines 8-26, pp. 2-22)

To quote F.R. Leavis —

In Gerontion the contrast is developed, the emotional intensities evoked by the reference to the Sacrament are contrasted with the stale cosmopolitan depravity evoked by the names and by the suggested incidents and associations 'Among whispers' may be pointed to as a characteristic transition. They are first the whispers of religious awe then, in the new context, they become clandestine and sinister, the whispers of intrigue.

The device of contrast is employed skilfully in *The Waste Land*. The opening lines of 'The Burial Of The Dead,' reflect it clearly -

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers.

(Lines 7-10, p. 37)

Here Eliot has placed two contrasting archetypal images alternatively, that is, the images of rebirth and death-in-life. We have archetypal images of rebirth in 'breeding lilacs out of the dead land' and 'stirring dull roots with spring rain.' The archetypal images of death-in-life is expressed in 'Winter kept us warm, covering earth in forgetful snow' and 'little life with dried tubers.'

Another contrast is seen in the different garden scenes in 'The Burial Of The Dead.' We have the archetypal imagery of life and rebirth in the scene in the Lyacinth garden and the garden scene between Tristan and Iseolde in Cornwall. But immediately after this archetypal image of life we have the archetypal
image of death-in-life when Tristan dies waiting for Isolde's ship. The garden scene of Marie, in 'Hofgarten,' is a public park, as artificial and loveless as her life.

Similarly, the contrast is expressed in 'A Game Of Chess' where the opening lines of the poem - 'The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne' reminds us of Cleopatra, the beautiful Egyptian Queen. But this scene is followed by a description of the artificially decorated room of a modern lady where there are 'strange synthetic perfumes.' Again a juxtaposition of opposing archetypal images of life and death-in-life are seen.

Unified sensibility was another special feature of metaphysical poetry where there was fusion of thought and emotion. Eliot's poetry achieves greatness by adopting this device of the metaphysical poets. To quote Maxwell -

So when the poet experiences thought with the impact of the sensuously perceived, his impulse is to communicate this in sensuous terms... The essence of this quality is the ability to feel thought, to experience it as just as much reality as 'the noise of the typewriter, or the smell of cooking'... Perhaps for the
very reason that they saw
all belief and coherence
crumble around them, the
metaphysical poets offer the
most deliberately sought
unification of sensibility.

This unification of sensibility is presented
efficiently in 'Whispers of Immortality.' Eliot
describes thought aptly in these lines -

He knew that thought clings
round dead limbs
Tightening its lusts and
luxuries.

(Lines 7-8, p. 32)

Donne is described in this poem as one who 'knew the
anguish of the marrow' which is associated with thought.
The experience of thought is expressed in sensuous terms.
Webster too is presented in this poem as one who suffered
spiritual anguish like Donne. The carnal world is presented
through Grishkin. Thus, both the material and spiritual
aspects are shown in this poem.

Unification of sensibility is closely related

to the archetype of wholeness in the imagery of these
lines in 'Burnt Norton' -

Garlic and Sapphires in the mud
Clot the bedded axle - tree.
The trilling wire in the blood
sings below inveterate scars
And reconciles forgotten wars.

(Lines 49-53, p. 8)

To quote Robert Crawford -

For Eliot, beginnings and ends
were always closely bound
together, though knowledge of
their connecting pattern might
emerge only much later... At
the age of ten, Eliot celebrated
twice in a childhood magazine
the betrothal of Miss End and
Mr. Front. Clearly he was
amused by this meeting of
opposites, and the change of
name, which would ensue...
This preoccupation with bringing
together apparent contraries
lasted throughout Eliot's life. 2

The metaphysical style enabled Eliot to establish
a harmony between the 'apparent contraries.'

IV

Use of Epigraph

A remarkable feature of Eliot's poetry is the
inscription of an epigraph. Most of Eliot's early

2. Robert Crawford. The Savage And The City In The Work
poetry exhibits this trait. The epigraph serves an important purpose in Eliot’s poetry. It builds the atmosphere for the main poem. Williamson comments –

The epigraph is never to be ignored in Eliot for while it is not an essential part of the poem, it conveys hints of the significance or even genesis of the poem. Together with the title, it prepares the reader for the experience of the poem. Thus the first rule in reading one of Eliot’s poems is to consider the possibilities suggested by the title and epigraph. 13

‘The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock’ has the epigraph from Dante’s Inferno. It immediately strikes the anti romantic note as is evident from the words spoken by Count Guido de Montefeltro. It is a scene of conflict, fear and shame, Guido is called upon to reveal himself. Here the epigraph serves as a contrast to the poem’s title which suggests a romantic note. It also reveals the character of Prufrock.

In 'Portrait Of A Lady' the epigraph is from Marlowe's The Jew Of Malta. It sets the background. The friar accuses the Jew of sin and tries to blackmail him. The Jew in return advertises his sins but still hides some facts. So, it is a scene of double deception. Here too the young and the lady are deceiving each other. The epigraph is symbolic and is related to the archetype of betrayal.

Commenting on Eliot's style, Ronald Bush writes -

... in the suggestive fragments of the Epigraph to Burbank, assembled from several sources, we are given only a tissue of allusions to the eternal Venice. We may speculate that Eliot intended to make the poem a Jamesian weighing of American idealism against European realism. 4

It is interesting to study the epigraph in Burbank with a Baedeker Bleistein with a Cigar. The lines are -

Tra- la- la- la- la- la- laire-nil
nisi divinum stabile est caetera
fumus - the gondola stopped,
the old palace was there, how
charming its grey and pink -
goats and monkeys, with such
hair too! - so the Countess
passed on until she came through
the little park, where Niobe
presented her with a cabinet,
and so departed.

This epigraph is composed of diverse sources. But, they all relate to Venice. The first words, 'Tra- la-
la- la- la- la- laire' which is a version of the opening line of the poem 'Sur les Lagunes (On The Lagoons)' from a group of poems entitled 'Variations su le Carnaval de Venise (Variations On The Carnival of Venice) by Théophile Gautier (1872). 'The Carnival of Venice' is a popular traditional tune, it reminds Gautier, at the close of the poem of -

'The city joyous, free and light
Of Canaletto's day,'

a detail to which Eliot may be alluding in line 9.

These words tell us of the ancient glory of Venice and its joyous life where famous painters like Canaletto flourished.

The next words of the epigraph are - 'nil nise divinum stabile est, caetera fumus.' They are the words inscribed in a painting of the martyrdom of St. Sebastion by Mantegna (43 - 506) in the Cad'oro Venice. Mantegno was Eliot's favourite artist... 6. The meaning of these words is that only the divine is permanent while everything else is subject to decay or is as unsubstantial as smoke. The hint is clear Venice may have been a city of life, famous for its sculpture, painting and architecture, but it has lost its glory.

The next lines of the epigraph describe a scene - 'the gondola stopped, the old palace was there, how charming its grey and pink.' Southam gives the source to Henry James's The Aspern Papers. There James narrates the experience of an American visitor to Venice. This visitor has an American woman as companion. They visit a Venetian palace in a gondola (boat). The 'grey and pink' colours of the palace fascinate the American. Once again the charm of Venetian architecture is presented. The words that follow, 'goats

6. Ibid.
and monkeys' again serve to contrast the present Venice
with its past fame. These words are an explosive
outburst by Othello... the animals he swears by are those
traditionally associated with rankness and lust. 7
The next words, 'with such hair too,' are taken from
Robert Browning's 'A Tocatta of Galuppi's.' Galuppi
was a Venetian composer. He was associated with Venice
as a city of youth and love, of great traditions and
prosperity. 8 But, there is a painful realization
by Browning that it is no longer a beautiful city. So he
talks about those who once enjoyed beauty and riches
'Dear dead women, with such hair, too.' 9 These words
also speak about the moral degradation of Venice.

Lastly, there is reference to Niobe, a Greek
mythical character and countess. They are mentioned
in John Marston's play 'Entertainment of Alice, Dowager
Countess of Lerby.' Niobe, in the Greek myth, was a
proud woman who boasted that her children were better than
children of Zeus and Leto. She wanted that all should
worship her as a Goddess instead of Zeus and Leto. In

7. Ibid. p. 49.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
Marston's play, she withdraws in favour of the Countess. It is very unusual for her to do so. Eliot uses this story to indicate that no one can retain their glorious rank. The variety of the sources in the epigraph only serve to reveal the complicated life of modern age. They also speak of the greatness of Venice in the past and also reveal its present decayed condition. The city's present life represents the death-in-life archetype. The association with past heights provide an antithesis to the present fall.

No where do we find such a brilliant use of an epigraph as we find in 'Burbank with A Baedekar' Bleistein With A Cigar?

Another significant epigraph is used in 'Gerontion.' The lines are -

Thou Last nor youth nor age
But as it were an after dinner sleep
Dreaming of both.

The words of the epigraph are closely associated with archetype of death-in-life. The words are taken from Shakespear's Measure For Measure. Here Claudio, the youth, is sentenced to death and the Duke addresses him in these words. Since the youth is sentenced to death he has nothing
left - neither youth, nor age, or years to live. He is living but, as if in a dream. His condition represents the archetype of death-in-life.

The atmosphere is evoked. The poem introduces an old man who is blind. Youth has left him and he has hardly some years left to live. Even The Waste Land has Sibyl's words, I want to die as an appropriate epigraph. Sibyl's death-wish sets the tone of the poem. She desires to die and get rid of worldly pain where her prophetic powers have declined. Here death is more attractive than life. This technique of employing an epigraph is a recurrent feature in Eliot's early poetry. Of course, there are some poems where no epigraph is used. But they are the minor poems. All the important poems in Eliot's poetry till 'The Hollow Men' are remarkable because of this usage. The epigraph is symbolic and is closely associated with some archetype or the other. In the Sweeney group of poems, the epigraph is related to archetype of betrayal. In 'Mr. Apollinax,' the epigraph is associated with archetype of wholeness. This Greek epigraph is from Lucian's Zephyrus and Antiochus. The meaning of the words is - 'What novelty! By Hercules, what paradoxes! What an inventive man!' 20.

However, Eliot's later poetry discontinues this technique. Only 'Marina' and 'Burnt Norton' contain epigraphs which are related to archetypal rebirth and archetypal wholeness. Thus, we see that the epigraphs are associated with the dominant archetypal in the poems.

V

Allusiveness

The dominant feature of Eliot's technique is the use of allusions. Dorathi Chandra quotes Edmund Wilson's remark in this respect:

> He has always, furthermore, been addicted to prefacing his poems with quotations and echoing passages from other poets. 2

The allusions are from different sources. We find mythological allusions, biblical allusions, literary allusions, allusions from anthropology and different religions.

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The mythological allusions are in abundance. The Sweeney group of poems refer to the Agamemnon and Clytemnestra myth, the Philomela myth, to Ariadne and Theseus myth, the Orion myth and Nausicaa and Odysseus myth. These allusions are associated with the archetype of betrayal.

In 'Mr. Apollinax' there is reference to Priapus and Proteus. In 'La Figlia Che Piange' the allusion is from Virgil's Aeneid. In 'Burbank with A Baedeker Bleistein with A Cigar' the mythological allusion is seen in the epigraph where Eliot refers to Niobe. Again Eliot alludes to Hercules in these lines—

Slowly the God Hercules
Had left him, that had loved
him well.

(Lines 7-8, p. 24)

The Waste Land contains several mythological allusions. The story of Philomela is repeated in these lines—

The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
so rudely forced.

(Lines 99- 00, 40)

Eliot refers to Diana in these lines—

The sound of horns and motors...

(Line 97, p.43)
The protagonist Tiresias is another important mythological figure who plays a leading role in *The Waste Land*. Eliot uses him as a unifying consciousness. Through him Eliot creates a picture of wholeness.

In 'Little Gidding,' Eliot refers to the mythical story of Hercules and his wife Deianira in these lines -

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Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power can not remove.
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(Lines 20-22, 44)

This mythical story is symbolic. It tells us that man invites trouble due to his own folly and desires. Just as Deianira wove a shirt for her husband Hercules and innocently dipped it in the blood of Nessus (the enemy of Hercules, who gave a wrong advice on his death-bed to Deianira that if she did so, her husband would remain faithful to her) and made Hercules wear it, and thus caused tremendous pain to her husband, similarly man is responsible for his suffering. Hercules was unable to remove this shirt which started burning his body. The agony was so severe that the warrior chose to immolate his body
on a pyre so as to end the bodily pain.

Eliot uses this mythical story to convey a deep thought. He gives this story another interpretation too which is deeper. He says that God has himself devised torment for men in order to save them. Comforts only make men dull. Pain and torment are trials of God which make men perfect.

The biblical allusions are also numerous. In 'The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock,' Eliot refers to John the Baptist and Lazarus. The intention is to compare Prufrock with both hero archetypes and thus lighten the contrast. In stead of yielding to the lustful, meaningless life offered by Salome, St. John preferred to die and thus attain birth by entering God's kingdom. He had super human courage. Lazarus too had deep faith in Christ which made him surrender to Christ's call. This devotion of Lazarus helps him in rising out of death-in-life. But, Prufrock is a coward. He neither has the courage to resist the animal urges, nor has the belief in God which can save him.
In 'Gerontion,' Eliot refers to Christ.
In 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service,' he again refer
to Christ's baptism. In The WasteLand, he speaks about
Christ's agony in the garden. 'Ash - Wednesday' presents
Virgin Mary, while Christ's birth and the visit of the
three magis is the dominant theme in 'Journey of the Magi.'
'East Coker' speaks of Christ in the Symbolic language -
as 'the wounded surgeon.' The reference to Adam's curse
in this poem reminds us of the original Sin and Man's fall.

Literary allusions are another characteristic
Prufrock,' Eliot alludes to Marvell's To His Coy Mistress
in these lines -

To have squeezed the universe
into a ball
To roll it toward some overwhelming
question.

(Lines 92-98, p.6)

The reference to Prince Hamlet brings us to Shakespeare's
Hamlet. In 'Portrait Of A Lady,' Eliot uses lines from
Christopher Marlowe's The Jew Of Malta as an epigraph.
He also refers to Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet. In
'Burbank With A Baedekar Bleistein With A Cigar' these
lines remind us of Shakespeare's *Antony And Cleopatra*:

... Her shuttered barge
Burned on the water all the day

(Lines 11-12, p. 24)

In *The Waste Land*, Eliot refers to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* in these lines:

Those are pearls that were his eyes.

(Line 48, p. 38)

and,

While I was fishing in the
dull canal
On a winter evening round
behind the gashouse
Musing on the king my father's
death before him.

(Lines 189-192, p. 43)

The title 'A Game Of Chess' is taken from Middleton's

'Women Beware Women.' Echoes of the dirge in Webster's

*White Devil* can be heard in these lines:

Oh keep the Dog for hence, that's
friend to men,
Or with his nails he' ll dig it
up again!

(Lines 74-75, p. 39)

The reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost* can be seen in
this line:
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene.

(Line 98, p. 40)

Dante's influence is to be noticed everywhere. The stair imagery in 'Ash-Wednesday,' the 'eyes' in 'The Hollow Men' and the concept of 'Sin is belovely' in 'Little Gidding' reminds us of Dante again and again.


Eliot also refers to Buddha's *The Fire Sermon* in these lines:

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Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest
burning
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(Lines 308-311, p. 46)
He also quotes from Brihadaranyaka Upanishad when he gives the message of the thunder - Datta, Dayadhvam and Dasyata. In 'The Dry Salvages,' Eliot refers to Krishna's message in The Gita.

These are just a few examples to show how Eliot made use of his vast scholastic learning to enrich his poetry. However, several critics have regarded it as a fault in Eliot's technique. They feel that these allusions have made his poetry difficult and obscure. But, it should not be forgotten that Eliot was not writing for the masses. He expected his reader to take some trouble while reading his work.

Commenting on the use of allusions by Eliot, R.S. Pathak remarks aptly:

Although Eliot has drawn upon diverse sources, his allusions are almost always reworked into the poetic structure and fully assimilated to the main stream of the poetic process. 22

VI

Musical Quality

Eliot had a deep interest in music. A letter written to T.S. Eliot by his eldest sister Ada Eliot Sheffield in 1943 reveals that it was an inborn quality.

To quote from this letter:

... When you were a tiny boy, learning to talk, you used to sound the rhythm of sentences without shaping words — the ups and downs of the thing you were trying to say. I used to answer you in kind, saying nothing yet conversing with you as we sat side by side on the stairs at 2635 Locust street. And now you think the rhythm before the words in a new poem! 23

Even Eliot wrote the same in his essay 'The Music of Poetry':

... I know that a poem, or a passage of a poem, may tend to realize itself as a particular rhythm before it reaches expression in words, and that this rhythm may bring to birth the idea and the image. 24

This musical quality is seen in Eliot’s Poems (1920) where he adopts the quatrains form. The poem that came in this collection are — ‘Burbank With A Baedeker’, ‘Bleistein With A Cigar’, ‘Sweeney Erect’, ‘Whispers of Immortality’, ‘Mr. Eliot’s Sunday Morning Service’


and 'Sweeney Among The Nightingales'. In these poems, the rhyme pattern is exactly alike. The last word of the second line rhymes with the last word of the fourth line. Consider a few examples:

(a) Pipit gate upright in her chair, some distance from where I was sitting; Views of the Oxford Colleges Lay on the table, with the knitting. ('A Cooking Egg,' Lines 1-4, p. 26)

(b) (The lengthened shadow of a man Is history, said Emerson Who had not seen the silhouette of Sweeney straddled in the sun.) ('Sweeney Erect,' Lines 25-28, p. 26)

(c) Klein. Who clipped the lion's wings And fêle'd his own and pared his laws? Thought Burbank, meditating on Time's ruins, and the seven laws. ('Burbank With A Baedeker; Schleiner With A Cigare,' Lines 29-32, p. 24)

Though Williamson remarks, "The singing lyric has not proved to be Eliot's strength; the freer forms have given him more haunting expression," yet, a close analysis reveals that even the lyrical quality in Eliot leaves a deep impact on the reader. If one considers the lyrical intensity in the concluding lines of 'The Love song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' I am sure most of the readers will admit that they are

Unforgettable. The relevant lines are being quoted for illustrating my points:

I grow old ... I grow old ...
I shall wear the bottoms of my trousers rolled.

Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?

I shall wear white flannel trousers, and walk upon the beach.
I have heard the mermaids singing, each to each.

... I have seen them riding seawards on the waves
Combining the white ha’d of the waves blown back
When the wind blows the water white and black

(Lines 119 - 127, p.7)

Though heavy notes in the first line are created by the use of pauses, yet, the next line with its defiance dispels the weariness. This is a complet where 'old' rhymes with 'rolled'. The repetition of the expression 'I grow old' gives it the desired lyrical quality.

The tercet with its mock—heroic tone further changes the mood. Here, the words 'Peach', 'beach' and 'each' rhyme with each other. The next tercet with its submarine imagery relaxes the mood. Here, the rhyme pattern again varies. The last two lines rhyme with each other. Though the rhyme pattern is irregular, yet, a lyrical tone is created.

I would like to quote another remarkable lyric piece from this poem which has a special soft melody:
And the afternoon, the evening
sleeps so peacefully!
Smoothed by long fingers,
Asleep ... tired ... or it malingers.

(Lines 75 - 77, p. 5)

'Portrait of A Lady' has disturbed musical notes.

Consider these lines:

(a) Among the windings of the violins
And the ariettes
of cracked cornets
Inside my brain a dulltom-tom
begins
Absurdly hammering a prelude of
its own,
Capricious monostone.

(Line 29 - 34, p. 9)

(b) The voice returns like the
insistent out-of-tune
of a broken violin on an
August afternoon

(Lines 55 - 56, p.9)

A special musical note is heard in these lines from
'Airsposody on A Windy Night' —

(a) Every street lamp that I pass
beats like a fatalistic drum.

(Lines 8-9, p.14)

(b) The street lamp sputtered,
The street lamp muttered

(Lines 14 - 15, p. 14)

The Waste Land too contains a few lyrical lines.

They are:

But sound of water over a rock
Where the hermit — thrush sings
In the pine trees
Drip drop drip drop drop drop drop drop drop

(Lines 356 - 358, p. 48)
Eliot also employs the device of repetition of words to create music in his poetry.

To quote R.S. Pathak:

In Eliot's poetry repetition operates at different levels. At times the recurrent words, images and phrases serve as motifs. Sometimes the repeated word or phrase conveys an altogether different meaning ... This tendency to repeat gives a liturgical rhythm to his verse ... The repetition of words imparts intensity and a predominant mood and unity of tone. It also fulfills a structural purpose by providing a continuity through apparently different contexts. 26

The repetition of words occurs in many poems. In 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock,' the word 'time' occurs eleven times in just twenty-six lines. The expression 'Do I dare' occurs thrice, the words 'have known them' are repeated thrice in two consecutive lines, the perturbing question 'how should I presume?' occurs thrice, the expression 'That is not what I meant, at all' is repeated twice and so is the line 'And would it have been worth it, after all' repeated twice. In 'La Figlia Che Piangue,' the line that is repeated is "Weave, weave the sunlight in your hair." In 'A Cooking Egg,' the emphasis is on the phrase 'I shall not want' which forms the first line of four quatrains. In 'Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service' the line that is

repeated consecutively is 'In the beginning was the word,' In *The Waste Land*, the repetition is seen in the use of the line 'Unseal City/ Under the brown fog' twice. The word 'nothing' occurs five times in these lines:

Nothing again nothing
Do
You know nothing? Do you see
nothing? Do you remember
Nothing?

( Lines 120 - 123, pp. 40 - 41)

Again an example of word repetition is seen in these lines:

Twit twit twit
Jug jug jug jug jug jug

( Lines 203 - 204, p. 43)

The most interesting use of word repetition is seen in the description of the journey through the desert in 'What The Thunder Said,' The word 'water' is juxtaposed with 'rock' to heighten the agony of the quester. The word 'water' occurs eleven times, while the word 'rock' is used nine times in this famous passage. In 'The Hollow Men,' Eliot repeats the words 'eyes' six times, the phrase 'Falls the Shadow' thrice, the line 'This is the way the world ends' thrice and the line 'For Thine is the kingdom' twice. 'Ash Wednesday' repeats the phrase 'Because I do not hope to turn again' thrice, the line 'At the ... turning of the stair' also thrice and the word 'Word' is used twelve times.
This technique if word repetition occurs even in the
Four Quartets. The opening lines of 'Burnt Norton'
lay emphasis on time and we find Eliot using this word
seven times. The lines are:

Time present and time past
And both present perhaps in
time future.
And time future contained in time
past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.

(Lines 1 - 5, p. 117)

Another pattern that is adopted by Eliot in
Four Quartets is the division of the poem into five
movements. Each movement has its own music. This device
was also used in The Waste Land which has five parts;
in 'The Hollow Men' too where there are five sections.
The change is seen in 'Ash - Wednesday' where there are
six sections.

Helen Gardner talks about this musical
musical quality of Eliot in her book The Art of
T.S. Eliot. She comments:

Sweeney goes back to what Mr. Eliot
has called 'the essential of
percussion and rhythm.' In the
concluding chapter of The use of
Poetry, Mr. Eliot said: 'Poetry begins,
I dare say, with a savage beating of
the drum in a jungle.' The drum beat of
Sweeney which finds a lyric counterpart in
the jazz staccato of
the chorus songs, is the base on which
Mr. Eliot has built his new style.
In Sweeney he is the innovator,
reiterating, as many innovators have
to do, to the primitive elements of
his art; in The Family Reunion and
Four Quartets he is the developer, exploiting and elaborating the musical possibilities of his metre. 27

In order to present the primitive stage and the savage, rather crude sort of music, Eliot prefers plain statements which are often flavourless. Consider these lines from "Sweeney Agonistes":

Sweeney: Yes I'd eat you!
   In a nice little, white little,
   Soft little, tender little,
   Juicy little, right little,
   missionary stew.

   (Lines 204-206, p. 80)

Here the stress on the word 'little' is laid by repeating it six times.

The typist-clerk scene in The Waste Land is also a bold presentation of aimless and mechanical modern urban life which is also crude. Colloquial rhythm is seen in these lines from The Waste Land:

   If you don't like it you can get on with it, I said,
   Others can pick and choose if you can't.

   (Lines 153-154, p. 41)

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The sound of the 'antique drum' is heard in 'East Coker.'
The dance imagery as well as the musical imagery present
the scene effectively. Consider the lines:

On a Summer midnight, you
can hear the music
Of the weak pipe and the little
drum
And see them dancing around
the bonfire
The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie
... Holding each other by the
hand or the arm
Which betokeneth concorde. Round
and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or
joined in circles,
Rustically solemn or in rustic
laughter.

(Lines 26-30, 33-36, pp. 123-24)

Here Eliot uses old spellings of certain words:
'daunsinge,' 'matrimonie,' 'betokeneth' and 'concorde.'
The metrical pattern is also traditional. There are
many lines of five stresses though the norm is of four
stress lines. Sometimes it even extends to six-stresses.
However, there is no rhyme in these lines.

Another characteristic feature of Eliot's
 technique is the use of free-verse. Though 'free verse'
is regarded by some writers like Shapiro and Beum as
'umetered.' Yet, according to A.C. Partridge free verse
is free only in "its eclectic use of established techniques. It employs sporadically most of the devices of metrical poetry, such as assonance and alliteration, and more rarely rhyme; it may indulge in spells of regular metre."

Eliot himself remarked in 'Reflections on Vers libre'; "There is no escape from metre; there is only mastery."

Thus, we see that even in 'The Love Song Of J. Alfred Prufrock,' though Eliot used free verse, yet, the conventional iambic pentameter can be traced behind it.

To quote A.C. Partridge again:
The practitioner of free verse inevitably resorts to what Donne taught poetic libertarians - dislocation of thought and syntax, to create the illusion of a rhythm that resembles natural speech.

Eliot used free verse to expand his manner of presentation of experience. He used language as a "plastic passive medium

upon which he imposes his artistic conception." The musical effect is created in free verse by the use of prose rhythm. Pound had also laid emphasis on rhythm and had advised modern poets to pay attention to rhythmical enjambment.

I.A. Richards has said:

If it were desired to label in three words the most characteristic feature of Mr. Eliot's technique, this might be done by calling his poetry a 'music of ideas.' The ideas are of all kinds: abstract and concrete, general and particular; and, like the musician's phrases, they are arranged, not that they may tell us something, but that their effects in us may combine into a coherent whole of feeling and attitude and produce a peculiar liberation of the will... 32

VII

Conclusion

These technical devices adopted by Eliot show us that Eliot strove hard to present the temporal and eternal


aspects of art in both oblique and direct language. How desperately he struggled for right words becomes clear from his lines in 'Burnt Norton':

... Words strain, 
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden, 
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish, 
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place, 
Will not stay still.

(Lines 180-184, p. 121)

He also tried to create a balance between tradition and individual talent. Therefore, Conrad Aiken pays him a tribute in these words:

Mr. T.S. Eliot is one of the most individual of contemporary poets, and at the same time, anomalously, one of the most 'traditional' ... He is more than most poets, conscious of his roots. 33

Stephen Spender also remarks:

Eliot writes poetry out of opposed forces within himself, out of a

perpetually maintained struggle
of consciousness and unconsciousness.
It is a balance of forces, not a
victory of one over the other. 34

These remarks and the analysis of the various techniques
used by Eliot reveal that Eliot is a great master. He
has the exceptional ability to use a variety of techniques
and create a balance too. This is that remarkable feature
about Eliot which made him experiment with words and create
a new style of his own. Eliot's greatness can be estimated
from this fact that though several critics have written on
different aspects of his technique, yet, there are some
dimensions which remain unexplored.

34. Stephen Spender. *Eliot,* (Collins Sons And Co.