CONCLUSION

The identification of the romantic elements in the preceding chapters should show clearly that romanticism constitutes a major component in the structure of Eliot's poetry. The Dantean and the French Symbolist strands which Eliot wove into the texture of his works, dovetailed harmoniously into the native romantic tradition without in the least appearing incongruous. Hence Musgrove, Kristian Smidt and G. M. Turnell asseverate that Eliot's place is in the English Romantic tradition. Stead confirms our view that his criticism too belongs to the same tradition; (and of course the classical tendencies inhering in his criticism have been taken cognisance of in the first two chapters). Nevertheless, it will be preposterous for the readers to believe that they can approach Eliot in the same manner as they do the Romantics. To assume that Eliot's romanticism is the same as that of the early nineteenth century or as that of Lawrence's or Hardy's or Yeats's, is equally naive. He may share with them the cardinal romantic tenet that a poet should penetrate to an abiding reality and explore its mysteries to "understand more
clearly what life means and what it is worth,” said that visible things which he looks upon as instruments with which to find this reality, possess a significance only inasmuch as they point to some omniscient and sustaining power.

The sustaining power for Wordsworth is a divine presence in Nature, for Shelley an ethereal beauty, for Yeats a unity of being symbolised by Byzantium, and for Eliot, the Christian God. Of course Eliot comes close to Wordsworth in his fleeting perception of “a still point”, a divine Presence, in the rose garden and on such occasions his poetic imagination overpowers his consciously held Christian dogmas. Moreover, the supra-reality of the Romantics which depends upon the intensity of poetic imagination is rather nebulous and even solipsistic. On the other hand, Eliot’s supra-reality which has its roots both in poetic imagination and the orthodox religion, takes a more solid and objective dimension. Further it must be noted that once the vision of supra-reality fades, the Romantics fall back into the consciousness of the pain of living. Wordsworth, being a solitary exception, speaks
of the beneficial influence of the vision of supra-reality. It has shaped, he claims, his moral and spiritual being.

Again Eliot comes close to Wordsworth. Like other Romantics, Eliot becomes aware of the evils of life after the disappearance of the moments of illumination. He does not raise a pathetic cri de coeur like Shelley and Keats, for he is saved from despair by his faith which is coloured by a puritan melancholy. He recognises that the vision of supra-reality gives the glimpse of the still point which he is going to attain, and indeed prepares the ground for it by strengthening his spiritual being. Thus his emphasis falls on a spiritual elevation, a religious progress towards Eternity, while Wordsworth's is on a moral life compounded with spiritualism but divorced from orthodox Christianity.

Eliot's approach to nature is through the urban setting as in his early poetry or through religion as in his later poetry, notably in Ash Wednesday and Four Quartets. Nature was the hub of the universe for the Romantics and it served as a standard of reference in their view and judgment of the world. But Eliot rejects this idea. He places his focus on the metropolitan world which he perhaps regards as representative of humanity like the Augustans. While the urban
world provides Eliot's poetry with the staple food. Nature constitutes its condiments, though in his later poetry Nature increasingly occupies a prominent portion with the proportionate diminution of the urban quantum. His urban senseability derives from the Augustans and the French Symbolists like Baudelaire and Laforgue but it leans more towards the latter. Further, what distinguishes Eliot from the neo-classical poets of the eighteenth century in the location of their setting in cities is that they were sensitive neither to environmental aqualor nor to the acute human predicament in, or spiritual desiccation of, the contemporary material and social set-up. Paradoxically Eliot like other modern writers, in his contemplation of the metropolitan life, follows "the same symbolic pattern" as the Romantics who in their dislike for the city considered it a desolate waste. 6

Eliot differs from the Romantics except Byron in his use of satire and irony which the Romantics banished from their poetic ambience. Eliot demonstrated in his poetry upto 1933 and also in his plays that satire and wit and even levity were not incompatible with romanticism but could co-exist with it. The juxtaposition of the sublime
with the commonplace, the grand with the sordid, is a device which the Romantics generally excluded from their consideration; but Eliot's use of it does not damage the romantic structure. The method of implication through quotation from older poets would never have been thought of by the Romantics or by neo-classicists, and in fact, it is a 'modern' device. Strangely enough this technique of quotation is a focal point in which Romanticism and classicism are fused together in Eliot. Its classical bias is discerned in the fact the quoted line which involves parallelism or contrast or even both in the context in which it occurs, helps Eliot to show that the past is relevant to the present and that he belongs to the same tradition as that poet from whom the line is quoted. But at the same time this device is a means for a romantic evocation of an atmosphere which almost generates a sense of nostalgia for a world that is irrevocably lost. In his works can be seen how the romantic tone of authentic self-confession can be overlaid with some degree of objectivity which may not be discerned in the poetry of Coleridge, Keats and Shelley. Eliot has convincingly showed that romanticism tempered by a judicious use of classicism limited to its minimal requirement, and strengthened by a Christian
metaphysics (which, in spite of his faith in the Original Sin, believes in redemption not only the 'blood of the Lamb' but through the personal experience of the realisation of timelessness) can fecundate richly a modern complex sensibility. He seems to have made his works, a monumental illustration of the fact that however much we may wish, it is impossible to keep at bay the romantic spirit, and that poetry itself in fact, will be wooden and dead if it is not animated by a free exploration of the personal self, a bold expedition of the subjective spirit to grasp the larger realities of life and religion in terms of personal joy and pain. The uniqueness of Eliot's romanticism lies in the demonstration of its resilient, eclectic nature, synthesising in its crucible Bradley and Bergson, Freud and Frazer, Jung and Weston, Confucian and Hindu philosophy, American and European literature and culture.

Dante deepens his romanticism by penetrating it with his Christian mystical and philosophical truths. Eliot could not have gone the way of a Blake with his gigantic prophetic visions or simple moral subtleties; nor could he have gone the way of a Yeats who discarded the orthodox
Christian tradition and married himself to a heroic tradition begotten by Homer. Eliot, with his typical mental make-up could have redeemed himself only through a discovery of his personal voice in the path paved by Virgil and Dante, and this path cohered with the English Romantic tradition. In fact he has enriched and extended the scope of the Romantic tradition that it may encompass and portray the deeper aspects of modern life such as the collapse of values, the breakdown of communication and "the spiritual death of the mass of mankind"; and at the same time he has disciplined it by the available quantum of classicism in our post-romantic age. Eliot not only affirms the truth that the West, after being thoroughly shaken by the romantic spirit could never again seek the safety of a provincial classicism of the eighteenth century. Irving Howe's observation that "Fitzgerald understood with his bones that romanticism is our fate" most probably meets with the concurrence of Eliot as he himself has been constrained to submit to its sway in his career as a poet and critic.

Modern criticism and poetic imagination, originating in Coleridge, nourished by French Symbolism and reinforced
by Dante have reorientated themselves at the hands of Eliot to meet the challenges of the fast changing patterns of the complexity and variety of the contemporary civilisation which enacts its articulate drama on the stage of the metropolis, seeking in the process, deeper and newer sources for their enrichment and enlargement. The artistic and critical sensibility operating in Eliot under the aegis of Romanticism, on account of their comprehensive and inclusive character, may hold exciting possibilities for further explorations by future generations of writers.

NOTES

1. Eliot "was none the less the heir to the poetic tradition of the romantics. To think of him as belonging to any line of descent other than that of the romantics is to take what he would describe himself as an 'elementary' view of the matter..." (Musgrove, T. S. Eliot and Walt Whitman, p. 35).

2. "He is steeped in the English heritage", though his debt to the literature of India cannot be brushed aside. (Kristian Smidt, Poetry and Belief in the Work of T. S. Eliot, p. 238.)


5. cf. C. M. Bowra in The Romantic Imagination (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1949), p. 9, says, "The Romantics wished to penetrate to an abiding reality, to explore its mysteries, and by this to understand more clearly what life means and what it is worth. They were convinced that though visible things are the instruments by which we find this reality, they are not everything and have indeed little significance unless they are related to some embracing and sustaining power."

6. Refer to Munroe K. Spears, Dionysus and the City, p. 99.
