CHAPTER II

DANCER TO GOD

(Eliot: THE MAN)

T.S. Eliot has been described as the poet of the modern century, who faithfully presented the disintegration that occurred in the modern era. However, Eliot has always attempted to absolve himself from this kind of labelling. In fact, on being hailed as the guru of the modern era on writing The Waste Land, for expressing the disillusionment of a generation by I.A. Richards, he dismissed it as an "illusion of being disillusioned". Nevertheless, though grappling with his own private questions and attempting to resolve them in his poetry, he has made us aware of some vital issues that we are faced with today. His poetry deals with dilemmas central to modern existence.

Eliot's life is marked by an inner quest, evident in his works. In an article, "The Success and Failure of T.S. Eliot", Steven Helming points out that, "a post-Calvinist distrust of anything presuming to

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human 'success' animates Eliot's entire corpus, producing an attachment to the fact, and the idea, of failure as a scourge of human ambition and aspiration." But in Eliot's biographies we read that Eliot did not entirely dismiss the desire to be successful. In fact after every great work he was consumed by the doubt whether he would be able to deliver again. The abandoning of one style for another is more likely to be a fervour for newer experiments for language, than a conscious pursuit of failure.

Even though extending the idea of Eliot deliberately moving towards failure in his poetic exercises, would be stretching the idea too far, Helming is right in the fact that the temporal world did not really matter to Eliot, or so he chose us to believe--"It seems to me that all of us, so far as we attach ourselves to created objects and surrender our wills to temporal ends, are eaten by the same worm."

Similarly the epigraph to Sweeney Agonistes, taken from St. John of the Cross reads, "Hence the soul cannot be possessed of divine union until it has divested itself of the love of created beings."

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3 Helming, T.S.Eliot, 56.
We see this constant dichotomy between the temporal and eternal, divine and human in the works of Eliot. To him the divine is not to be discovered within the human but beyond it. Hence the temporal world is constantly resisted. Lyndall Gordon glimpses in Eliot's preoccupations with the spiritual world, an aspiration for sainthood. In her book *Eliot's New Life*, she writes that Eliot's obsession with evil and sin, his musings on martyrdom all point to this end. "Though, he possessed, self-insight, strength of endurance and the readiness to recognise the reality of the unseen, he could not fulfil his aspirations," she writes, as he did not possess the "gift of vision". Nevertheless, she continues, his failure to attain sainthood made him all the greater as a poet.¹

Though Eliot did have religious inclinations even at an early age, one finds Gordon's idea a trifle far-fetched. It seems more likely that Eliot's was the dilemma of a man living in two worlds—on the one hand the public world of "prepared faces" and on the other, the world within the private door—giving him an opportunity to "escape" from the sordid world to a pure one. This conflict is not an unusual one. However, in

Eliot was an obsession with each world a negation of the other and the ideal world the more "Real" of the two. So much so that it became the impetus that spurred his actions. And throughout his life he was at pains to create some kind of an equilibrium between the two worlds.

There were people around Eliot who were aware that to him his inner experiences were more real than the world around him. Eliot's sister Ada, who according to Frank Morley, understood him the most, suspected this and over the years worried that Eliot would withdraw from human relationships and enter a shadow world of "dramatism", increasing tendencies towards "acting and inward mysticism".

What had brought about this clef? The answer would probably take us to Eliot's childhood. We could probably trace Eliot's obsession with the atemporal world with the inability of a sensitive child to adjust to the external world, who then invents his own world of dreams. However, it was not merely this fact as can be seen when we compare notes with other noted figures such as Henry, Adams and Ezra Pound, to whom the American society no longer offered a common consensus.

and who therefore turned to Europe, for what they believed would provide them with a more integrated vision. Mattheissen making a study of this exodus in his American Renaissance believes that it is the "harsh Calvinist heritage" which tended to increase the "self-consciousness and feeling of loneliness" in men of their intellectual temperament. Thus they felt alienated from their less sensitive compatriots and therefore turned towards the world of their ancestors thereby immersing themselves in a deeper tradition they hoped to overcome their loneliness and individualism.

However, even though Eliot turned away from his native country, he never really renounced it. In his final search for meaning he returns to the America of his childhood.

The Eliots were a distinguished Unitarian family of New England. Andrew Eliot, the first American ancestor, a Calvinist, had ventured to America from East Coker in 1670. He settled down in Massachusetts, as a town clerk. Moral fervour burnt high in the Eliot family. Their primary mission was to administer and to educate. The clergy was a chosen profession of many an ancestor of Eliot. Eliot was born on 26th September,

1888 at St. Louis. He was the youngest in a household
of people much older than him. Being the youngest he
was overprotected by the ladies of the house, his
mother and four elder sisters.

The Eliots' home was a typical Bostonian
household. Charlotte Stearns, Eliot's mother came from
a reputed New England family. She was a woman of strong
convictions and was a dominant presence in the
household. Eliot was greatly attached to her. The
atmosphere in the house was cool and civic; reserve and
restraint was preferred to gaiety. Sensitive to moral
issues, she directed her moral consciousness to her
children. Her ambition for her youngest son was born of
her own sense of failure-- she wrote poems but received
no marked recognition. She encouraged Eliot to read at
an early age. It was a touching gesture when many years
later, he arranged for the publication of her long poem
Savonarala. Eliot was not as close to his father,
Henry Ware Eliot. Henry W. Eliot, unlike his father,
who had joined the clergy, became a successful
businessman. He too was a man with unrealised dreams,
he had wanted to be a painter. But he continued to
sketch throughout the years. It is interesting to note
that he was fond of sketching cats; his son later
verbalised these sketches in his "Cat Poems". By the time Eliot was born he was the President of the Hydraulic Press Brick Company.

Apart from being taught to be cheerful, benevolent and to do his duty, another strong tenet of the Eliot family was to maintain a strict check against self-indulgence. Eliot admitted that this practice left him unable to enjoy even the harmless pleasures of life. For years he could not buy candy without feeling guilty.7 Right from childhood Eliot was surrounded by figures of perfection; there was the shadow of the exemplary grandfather W.G.Eliot and the literary heroes of his mother's poems. This moral obligation towards society was very much present in Eliot too.

The religion followed by W.G.Eliot was morally strict, very like a code of rules. Even as a child Eliot was made aware of what was, as he puts it, "done" and "not done"8 and very much conscious of the supremacy of the spirit over the body. In his mother's bedroom there hung an engraving of Theodosius and Saint Ambrose, illustrating the triumph of holy power over the temporal.

7 Gordon, Early Years 8.
8 Gordon, Early Years 11.
Unitarianism rose in the eighteenth century in opposition to the old Puritanic conviction of man's innate sinfulness. It believed in the nobility of man and the idea of a benevolent God. It rejected the Puritan's doctrine of damnation. Unitarianism failed to provide answers to the more sensitive mind. Its optimistic notions of progress did not question the unpleasant changes that were taking place in the American scene.

That it provided for Eliot too facile an explanation on conflicts of human existence and God, is apparent from the fact that he rejected it for Anglo-Catholicism, which in fact propounded doctrines quite contrary to that of Unitarianism, believing in sin and damnation. Born in a family where the 'clergy' was the chosen profession of most of his family members, these had always been aspects that strongly influenced Eliot. Even while at the age of six, he remembers discussing the existence of God with his Irish nurse, Annie Dunne. She used to sometimes take him to the Catholic Church where she went to pray. Even though Eliot rejected Unitarianism, he nevertheless adhered to the duties of a good Unitarian, foremost amongst which was that of a good educator.
Situated by the Mississippi, St. Louis was changing into the focal point in America's evolving business structure. It was not an isolated town and under the influence of various forces had developed a culture of its own. The Germans, who had come in 1830s brought with their intellectualism and music.

However primarily, the town was a business centre with a flourishing trade. It was gradually turning into an urban city. With this change there came the inevitable crisis of the traditional ruling class. Authority changed hands from the genteel descendants of the Puritans, the class Eliot and before him, Henry Adams belonged to, to the new power of the business class. The ideals of the genteel class were displaced by the profit ruled motive of the business class. A journalist, Lincoln Steffens exposed the scandals of St. Louis in his book, The Shame of the Cities showing how elections had been rigged and public treasuries looted. The older generation was disillusioned and the younger generation got their first taste of modern society and politics.

What effect this might have had on the young T.S.Eliot's mind, knowing his family occupied a prominent place in the city, we do not know. However,
the stance he later adopted was always anti-commercial. Perhaps it also triggered a feeling of being estranged from a country which provided no living tradition. As mentioned earlier, this was shared by many a contemporary American of the time—Ezra Pound, Paul Elmer Moore and Irving Babbitt. They realised that this was a society being created by industrialists and bankers. As a result they sought for an order beyond the American way of life some of them turning to England.

However, more than St. Louis it was Boston that greatly disturbed Eliot. The Boston of Eliot's time was no more the old Boston that had led American society at large, secure in its Puritan conscience and intellectuality. This was a society in decline. The genteel class had given way to mediocre men who were (embellished) with only money and cultivated manners. John J. Chapman, a contemporary critic, commented on the American mind, "indifferent to truth, to love, and to religion". The new age was that of "hollow phrases and delicacy and exaggeration solicitudes and coddled sensibilities. . . ."

Henry Adams had written, ". . . . Boston cankers our hearts. I feel it in me . . . I recognise

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5 Gordon, Early Years 17.
the strange disease".  

The genteel ruling class was challenged by the invasion of immigrants who were only aware of profit and money. According to Santayana the source of the cultural deadness lay in the Brahmins' gentility. According to Eliot this society was "refined beyond the point of civilisation". To him it appeared as though the Bostonians had walled their dead souls in affected manners and petty pretensions. Later while at Oxford Eliot conveyed his dread at the prospect of returning to this society in a letter to Aiken detesting the thought of "the people whom one fights against and who absorb one all the same", for though the society repelled Eliot, he was not immune to its influences. He took in its self-consciousness and rigid manners. The blight of Boston, Eliot perceived was its passivity, its lack of vigour. He recalled his impressions of the Bostonians in several poems -"Cousin Nancy", "Miss Helen Slingby", "Cousin Harriet". It was in Boston that he first glimpsed his waste land. The first three "Preludes" were originally titled "Preludes in Roxbury". This was a slum area in Boston. The well-to-do society as well as the squalor and the slum

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10 Gordon, Early Years 17.
11 Gordon, Early Years 17.
12 Gordon, Early Years 18.
both repulsed him. We find the presence of both these milieu in his early poems— the squalor in "Preludes" and the affected mannerisms of the well-to-do in "Portrait of a Lady".

The image of the urban city that occupies such a prominent place in Eliot's poetry was first witnessed in these American cities by Eliot. The city is the same everywhere defined by loneliness and squalor. In his early poetry squalor becomes synonymous to temporal life. The smells and sights of the city are graphically pictured in these early poems.

Wrapped within his claustrophobic surroundings Eliot sought to escape it. These experiences probably had much to do with the poetic stance he adopted in his early poems—of the personae ever on the fringe of society, ironically examining the world and himself, aware that he was a victim to it. The ironical stance was also reinforced by his discovery of the nineteenth century French poets, especially Laforgue.

In addition to the constricting surroundings, there was Eliot's interior solitude. Being the last child of elderly parents, his childhood was rather lonesome, his sisters and brothers were much older than
him. Further, having suffered from a congenital double hernia, his mother constantly kept him under her protective care. He was not allowed to play strenuous sports due to it.

The pressing circumstances of the age he was born in—the rapidly changing American society, wherein moral values were being replaced by commercial ones coupled with his own reticent nature impelled him to turn away from the external world and find some meaning beyond it.

He was also encouraged by his Harvard teachers, Irving Babbit, who blamed the breakdown of social integrity on Christianity. While at Harvard, Eliot took a course on Indic Philosophy and Indian Philosophy where he read the Bhagavad Gita, Pancha-Tantra and the Jataka. Eliot later described the Bhagavad Gita as the greatest philosophical poem after the Divine Comedy. We find its influence in his later poetry especially in "The Dry Salvages" of Four Quartets, 1941. That he should still remember the essence of the sacred books after thirty years, goes to show that his venture into it had been serious. In his radio talks of 1946 on "The Unity of European Culture" Eliot recalled-- "Long ago I studied the ancient Indian

14 Eliot, Selected Essays 248.
Languages and while I was chiefly interested at that time in Philosophy, I read a little poetry too; and I know that my own poetry shows the influence of Indian thought and sensibility." In certain schools of Hinduism as well as Buddhism the material world is looked upon as "Maya" or illusory. Both subscribe to the need to transcend the world, to beware of the snares of "Maya" and practise self-conquest— the need to keep a check on oneself. Corresponding to this, there is a similar strain in Eliot— he strongly believed in the illusory nature of the world and man's temporal existence. This made him live in dual planes— the temporal and eternal, the real and unreal. Similarly we have the constant suggestion of dual selves— the false and the real in his works. In The Cocktail Party Edwards tells Celia—

The self that can say "I want this— or want that"—

The self that wills— he is a feeble creature;

He has to come to terms in the end.

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With the obstinate, the tougher self; who does not speak,

Who never talks, who cannot argue;

And who in some men may be the guardian-

Similarly the idea of "Stillness" or tranquillity which had been a kind of personal goal for Eliot is also very much an Indian philosophical concept. It is referred as the state of a "Sthithapragyna" in the Bhagawad Gita— one who is not moved by pleasures or pain.

Annihilation of desire, freedom from attachments— these are all themes present in Eliot, common to both the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism. These themes are present not only in his middle poetry but also in his early. Beneath the graphic details of squalor and decay there lurks the all-consuming desire to escape these things.

Why had Eliot not persisted in his study of Indian philosophy? He explained in a lecture in Virginia— "Two years spent in the study of Sanskrit
under Charles Lanman and a year in the mazes of Patanjali's metaphysics under the guidance of James Woods, left me in a state of enlightened mystification." He would have been able to penetrate the difficulties, Eliot continued, only by "forgetting how to think and feel as an American or a European, which, for practical as well as sentimental reasons, I did not wish to do."

Nevertheless the Indian influence never quite left him. Further, it was not only the idea of renunciation that Eliot adopted from it, the reconciliation in the later poetry, (The Dry Salvages) has images of Krishna advising Arjuna in the battlefield, asking him not to turn away but resolutely pursue life.

We have, during the course of this work, attempted to show that this wish to escape from the external world is in fact an awareness of a split, as Jung believed, had occurred between the ego and self. We have further attempted to prove that his Theory of Impersonality too was an illustration of his awareness.

\[16\text{T.S.Eliot, After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (London: Faber and Faber, 1934) 41.}\]
The hiatus between his inner and outer and world was aggravated, as we have seen, by the social milieu of the time and his own introverted nature.

While at Harvard, apart from turning to Indian philosophy, he also read numerous books on mysticism, from some of which he even took down copious notes. According to Lyndall Gordon, this period was a turning point in his life when "he was circling in moments of agitation on the edge on a conversion." She comes to this conclusion from a group of intense religious poems Eliot wrote during this period. She espies the philosopher turned into a martyr or a saint in these poems. He longed for a divine revelation, something to transport him above the temporal order of dirt and decay.

Further, when he was twenty one he had an experience which he said many have had once or twice in their lifetimes and have been unable to put into words--- "You may call it communion with the divine or you may call it temporary crystallisation of the mind", he said. In June 1910 Eliot wrote an unpublished poem called "Silence". The year corresponds with that of the experience but we do not know if the

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17 Gordon, Early Years 58.
18 Eliot, Selected Essays 358.
The poem is a record of it. The poem is a description of the timeless moment—while walking through the Boston streets he suddenly saw them shrink and divide. Everything fell away and Eliot was enclosed in a "great silence". Many years later, just before his conversion in 1927, he had a similar vision at his father-in-law's funeral. Moments such as these find their way into his poetry, for instance the moment in the "Hyacinth Garden", and remained as reminders that there existed a world outside the temporal world of our experience, one perhaps more "real"; In another unpublished poem, "The First Debate Between Body and Soul" he calls upon the Absolute to rescue him from the physical senses.

Eliot's quest was, as one of the characters In The Confidential Clerk, Sir Claude Mulhammer voices it, "To find some unity between the two worlds--each a kind of make-believe." This synthesis is possible, Sir Claude continues, only to people "truly religious". Could this private quest have metamorphosed into the theme of synthesis that dominates his critical as well as poetic theories? If one traces the dominant theme--the redefinition of poetry--that it is simultaneously

19 Gordon, Early Years 15.
20 Gordon, Early Years 23.
an intellectual and emotional apprehension, his theory of the unified sensibility, of the continuity of tradition and the place of the individual in it, belief that the poet's mind is an integration of disparate experiences, his stress on the harmony of form and content—beneath all the multifarious ideas, one sees a single, unifying undercurrent— that of a search for integration.

Jung believes that man needs to recapture his lost sense of wholeness, he needs to re-establish the relation of the ego with the self to maintain a condition of psychic health. The inability to do so may reveal itself in various other ways. Eliot's inability to find a sense of wholeness in the modern circumstances, bereft of a fulfilling society or community, probably betrayed itself in these theories of integration and synthesis.

Steven Helming points out that, "the successive burdens Eliot lays upon writing—attaining "Impersonality", recovering "immediate experience", making "new wholes" out of "dissociated" experience, focusing the will—"involve aspirations beyond the merely verbal, so that writing becomes a model for the
other intellectual- imaginative- spiritual projects that concern him".  

Whereas in Eliot's critical theories we see the theme of synthesis, in his poetry we see a reversal. The tendency to fuse is replaced by an inclination to withhold. The view of life presented in his early poems is strangely incomplete. Spender finds "a picture of a man who for the purpose of making each poem a whole has separated part of himself from the whole". He also states that "In different periods Eliot's imagination dwells on different phases of experience, but in each work the view of life is partial".22

It is true that Eliot's poetry progresses in definite phases. In the first phase life is seen as a nightmare and the characters are inhabitants of this nightmarish world. The second phase acknowledges it as "the dream crossed twilight between birth and dying" [Ash-Wednesday] and takes the form of a temptation that the poet is trying to overcome-- "suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood" [Ash-Wednesday]. And the third phase is a resolution wherein the external and internal worlds meet and are accepted.

21 Helming, 60.
However one does not tend to agree with Spender. Eliot's stance was not a deliberate one. In the early poems the external world appeared monstrous, a world that would taint the purity within, hence that is how it was projected—sordid and ugly. In successive states the poetry is a record of the dramatisation of the struggle for harmony within himself.

We see this in the characters of the saint poems written around 1914. In the "Love Song of St. Sebastian", the speaker imagines the experience of self-flagellation and the strangulation of a woman. In the "Death of St. Narcissus" the saint welcomes the arrows of his assailants. Eliot is the central figure in these poems and he is both— the supplicant and the saint, tormentor and martyr. Gordon traces this new preoccupation to the saints figured in his mother's poetry and his own study of the lives of saints. Eliot had confessed to Virginia Woolf, some years later, that he had suffered a personal "upheaval" after writing "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and this year corresponds to the one referred to by Gordon—1914. This was also the year of his return to Harvard, after a year in Europe. Eliot had probably hoped to

escape the constricting surroundings of his home and his routine existence at Harvard. Ackroyd too traces the evidence of the upheaval in the intense poems referred to by Lyndall Gordon. He views them as "confused poems, often clumsily written in which the desire to formulate a statement is stronger than the ability to formulate that statement in a melodic or convincing way".24

Thus we can perhaps conjecture that the intense desire to dissolve the individual self into a "deeper communion", a unity with the divine, manifests itself, during the early years in the martyr poems and later transforms itself into the poetic and critical doctrines. Eliot similarly hoped to achieve a conception of unity when he joined the church in 1927. The probable reasons for this have been discussed in Chapter IV. However, to put it briefly most biographers choose to deal with it as a resolution to the conflict that tormented Eliot--the conflict between body and spirit. However from recordings of his conversations, it appears that what apparently terrified Eliot was not so much these choices as the state that left him unaware of these--a state of vacuity or languor. In other words what Baudelaire had characterised as the

24 Ackroyd, T.S.Eliot 52.
chief sin of modern man—"ennui". Eliot accused Industrialism for this sterility. In *The Idea of a Christian Society* Eliot formulated that Industrialism fostered a materialistic ideology which tended to create bodies of men and women detached from tradition, alienated from religion. In an interview in 1958 he reaffirmed that "the end of a purely materialistic civilisation with all its technical achievements and its mass amusements is—if of course there is no actual destruction by explosives—simply boredom."26

This was the experience of the flatness of life he had himself experienced in Boston—a society too refined to be called civilised, according to T.S.Eliot.

Aniella Jaffe, a Jungian psychoanalyst, writes of the modern predicament, "Nowadays more and more people, especially those who live in large cities, suffer from a terrible emptiness and boredom, as if they are waiting for something that never arrives . . . again and again exhausted and disenchanted, they return

to the waste land of their lives". According to Jung, modern civilisation has brought about an encrusting of the impulses and messages coming from the centre which will have to be dissolved if we wish to lead more meaningful and wholesome lives.

It was this vacuity which was Eliot's terror. "I am one," Eliot wrote to Paul Elmer Moore, "whom this sense of the void tends to drive towards asceticism or sensuality". Action, right or wrong, was preferable to doing nothing— "At least we exist". Even sensuality was preferred to assuage the meaninglessness of life rather than to wallow in a state of languor. However he cautioned Moore, that for one instinctively drawn towards sensuality a severe discipline or asceticism was the only means of averting the "evil". It is interesting to note that even as early as in 1914 while at Harvard, when he was writing poems like "Love Song of St. Sebastian" and "St. Narcissus", he had also started on the epic of King Bolo and his great Black Queen, comic verses, mostly pornographic in content and even as late as 1927, after his conversion, he was still further expanding upon it.

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28 Gordon, Early Years 62.
29 Eliot, Selected Essays 380.
even sending his friends stanzas from this. So we see present in Eliot both the strains, that of the sensualist as well as that of the ascetic— the latter holding check over the former, considered by him as "evil". For Eliot the inability to feel, the state of numbness was the greatest torment, anything could compensate for that. Eliot probably believed that one could not be aware of salvation, unless one was conscious of damnation, probably like "Mistah Kurtz" in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness. In "Baudelaire" he had written, "the sense of evil implies the sense of good".30 Eliot too probably like Baudelaire, looked upon vacuity to be modern man's chief sin.

In "Gerontion", Eliot bemoans, "I have lost my passion . . . . " In "The Hollow Men", he cries out, "Remember us - if at all - not as lost, insolent souls, but only as the hollow men / stuffed men." Eliot's bitter rage against the age is clearly felt in these lines.

Despite growing up in the changing city of St. Louis, amid the squalor and dirt, educated in Boston, the culturally decadent city, memories of his New England days were happy. Reminiscences of his native town brought to mind the great Mississippi and

30 Eliot, Selected Essays 427.
the sail boats on the river and his secure childhood. "I am very well satisfied with having been born in St. Louis", Eliot said in an address to a St. Louis audience in 1953.31

Eliot's New England past never quite left him. Apart from the puritanical strain of restrain and control, which he carried with him throughout his life, he was haunted by the scenic beauty of Cape Ann, the rock pools, the sea anemones. He used to go sailing as a boy and the presence of the sea always instilled in him feelings of serenity and well-being. Lyndall Gordon claims that in his later life his memories of New England became the source of his poetry, he returned to them with a deep longing, for his perfect world was embodied in these memories. Eliot himself acknowledged that "in its sources, in its emotional springs" his poetry comes from America.32 Helen Gardner too believes that in his later poetry he returned to his past.

But there was another aspect to the New England background, one he did not feel for with much fervour-- the New England temperament. Eliot analysed it in a review of The Education of Henry Adams, which can also be read as a bit of self-analysis since both

32 Gordon, Early Years 2.
Adams and Eliot share the same Unitarian background. The refined type of American, Eliot says, has a strong puritanical conscience which lays upon him "the heavy burden of self-improvement". His native curiosity is balanced by a scepticism Eliot calls "the Boston doubt", it is not destructive but dissolvent. Eliot himself was a self-confessed sceptic and according to him this was quite an obstacle.

Eliot's innate scepticism tended to drive him into a subjective trap, which was hardly helped by the age he lived in. The modern times was lacking in a common system of beliefs, and Eliot being a sceptic, found it difficult to commit himself to any particular concept. In an essay on Bergson's philosophy Eliot wonders where reality is to be found, whether in the observer's consciousness or in the objective world outside. He also questions whether it is possible to know reality. In one of his seminars as a student he declares, "You can't understand me. To understand my point of view you have to believe it first". This comes close to pure subjectivity. The only way out of this subjective trap is through system and order. And

33 Gordon, Early Years 101.
34 Gordon, Early Years 101.
35 Gordon, Early Years 41.
36 Ackroyd 48.
to Eliot these were necessities, as he struggled with a notion of a vision he himself could not quite grasp. Not unlike the state of mind of his own literary persona, J.Alfred Prufrock. Eliot had said that Prufrock was in part a man of about forty and in part himself. There was much of Eliot in Prufrock, for instance the self-consciousness. Eliot, after his return from Paris made several attempts at inner and outer adjustments, even taking dancing lessons. The seer in both Prufrock and Eliot attempted to exert itself but was resisted. However, whereas in Prufrock it was his self-consciousness that was his fear, in Eliot the seer and sceptic warred.

In another unpublished poem undated but written after his return to Harvard from Paris, "O Little Voices. . . .", the self wonders if the babbling men and women of the world are real for they seem so secure while he is ill at ease. His philosophic self replies that what he sees are appearances not realities. In the IV Prelude for the first time the persona admits that he is moved by fancies that "are curled/around these images". Eliot chooses a most indefinite word "notion" to indicate his idea. "There

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37 Gordon, Early Years 45.
38 Gordon, Early Years 48.
lurks a notion of some infinitely gentle, infinitely suffering thing." Who or what Eliot is referring to as "infinitely suffering thing" is debatable. Many critics claim it is his brother. However the moment of realisation is brief. The next lines leave the persona back in the "revolving" world.

With the loss of past traditions and customs the pursuit of meaning had turned into a private concept. It was something to be derived within the individual. Further, the engulfing material world posed a threat to man's inner world. Jung shows us how this happens. According to him it is the nature of the ego to be attracted to desires and distracted by the material world; therefore, M.-L. von Franz, a Jungian psychoanalyst, points out that the development of the right inner attitude of the ego to the self is of primary importance. Comparing primitive societies with the modern, he writes that this relationship is far more disturbed in us by our modern ways of thinking and behaving. The primitive people live directly from "the inner centre, but we, with our uprooted consciousness, are so entangled with external, completely foreign natures that it is very difficult for the messages of the self to get through to us. Our conscious mind
continually creates the illusion of a clearly shaped outer world that blocks off many other perceptions. Yet through our unconscious nature we are inexplicably connected to our psychic and physical environment."

Hence we notice the yawning gulf between our inner and outer worlds that the material world has brought about. To people with introverted natures, who are more introspective and sensitive to issues, this gulf can reach to serious proportions.

In June, 1913 Eliot bought Bradley's Appearance and Reality. He immediately experienced a kinship with Bradley. Bradley was battling with the same questions as himself—was reality subjective or objective? Bradley admitted his perplexity but without Eliot's sense of defeat. Bradley insisted that there was a link between the two worlds. We live in a world of appearances which partake of the Absolute without containing or representing it. The Absolute holds together thought and Reality, Will and feeling, in a sublime whole. This Absolute can only be approached from the perspective of a number of "finite centres"—not dissimilar to "the self" or "soul". And though finite truth is conditional it is only through such

experiences and appearances, that we can begin to have any knowledge of the Absolute. Bradley also admitted that common knowledge could not apprehend the two worlds, comprehension of the unity was possible only from the religious point of view. As mentioned earlier this idea was echoed by Eliot many ears later in The Confidential Clerk, where Sir Claude tells Colby that only a person truly religious can unite the two worlds.

For a man exceedingly conscious of his roots and sensitive to his surroundings, the absence of a deep-rooted tradition and what he called the immaturity of the average American,40 was too stifling an atmosphere to reside in much longer. Eliot's strove to escape it. He was awarded the Sheldon Fellowship to Germany. This time he did not return. The war interrupted Eliot's stay in Germany and he moved to England to spend the year at Merton College, Oxford to study Aristotle under Harold Jaechim. Many see this move as a call to order and tradition. As much as Eliot was sceptical towards it, he needed such tradition just as he needed discipline to keep a check on himself. In many moments in his life Eliot had followed the call for order. In 1911 he returned to Harvard to study

philosophy, as he told Aiken. Ackroyd analyses that the only way out for Eliot from the subjective trap he was imprisoned in was through the idea of system and order. And that is why he embraced it so desperately.

In his thesis Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley, he declared "All significant truths are private truths." Conrad Aiken recalls the period when Eliot had begun writing at Harvard in Ushant he described his "brilliantly analytical and destructive thesis in epistemology . . . that magnificent vision, into, the apparent chaos which blazed and swarmed and roared beyond the neat walls of Eden". It was a vision, Aiken continues, from which Eliot was gradually to retreat into "the security of conformity"—a miracle of transformation but also a surrender, "perhaps the saddest" that he knew.

However, Eliot did achieve a similar vision of chaos in his early poetry. Eliot's move to England was as much a quest for adventure as for order--the daring dream of the philosopher to turn into a poet.

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41 Gordon, Early Years 43.  
42 Ackroyd 49.  
44 Ackroyd 70.
Probably Eliot's first act of impulse was his decision to marry Vivienne Haighwood. 1914 was a crucial year for Eliot. He met two persons who changed the course of his life. In September 1914 Eliot called upon Pound with his "Prufrock". Pound was immediately struck by Eliot's grasp of an extant milieu and an extant state of comprehension.\textsuperscript{45} He encouraged Eliot and persuaded him to remain in England and pursue a poetic career. Pound introduced Eliot to the intellectual elite\textsuperscript{1} of London, Wyndham Lewis, H.D.Aldington and the Bloomsbury group. He persuaded Eliot to return to the social satire of Prufrock and helped Eliot out in every way, with financial assistance as well as literary advice.

Eliot was twenty-six when he confessed to Aiken that he was ready for women to fall in love but complain about his virginity and shyness. It was probably at about this time, when Eliot was very much the fresh emigrant, bored with England and in a state of religious torpidity, that Eliot met Vivienne Haighwood. About a year after his marriage, Eliot wrote that both religious and sexual passion are a means of "escape" into feeling. Eliot had probably looked upon Vivienne as a stimulant to the apathetic state of his

\textsuperscript{45} Gordon, Early Years 45.
soul. He had earlier complained to Aiken that Oxford appeared very dull—"I don't like to be dead". Whatever the reason for the alliance or misalliance, Eliot's first act of impulse ended in disaster. We see the regret manifest itself as, in later life, he discourses on how some choices are irrevocable and lead to misery. Eliot had been beset by sexual dilemmas even while at Harvard. And though he had been aware of sexual longings while he was at Paris he confessed to Aiken that his own inhibitions prevented him from acting upon them. He writes in a letter to Aiken, "one walks about the street with one's desires, and one's refinement rises up like a wall whenever opportunity approaches". Eliot might have seen Vivienne as a revelation of sexual and emotional life. Aldous Huxley believed their relationship to be almost entirely a "sexual nexus".

Eliot had probably taught himself to keep his emotions in check even in his personal life. He had had a lonely childhood. Eliot remembers himself as a "priggish little boy". A childhood companion

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48 Ackroyd 63.  
49 Ackroyd 22.
described him as "diffident and retiring", a small boy who played by himself.\textsuperscript{50}

Herbert Read detected that from the beginning there was a withholding of emotion, a refusal to reveal the inner man. Read attributed this emotional reserve to "the puritanical background" in his childhood.\textsuperscript{51} Conrad Aiken, too noticed the same detachment. Eliot's friendship seemed to have cycled in movements of involvement and withdrawal, as though he didn't want anybody to come too close.\textsuperscript{52} Among his associates one of his nicknames was "the undertaker".\textsuperscript{53}

No doubt, this reserve was also a kind of defence, an instinct for self-preservation, which was very strong in Eliot, as though there lurked a fear of the emotional risk involved in revealing oneself. Or was he zealously guarding a religious experience from the contaminating touches of the world? To put it in Eliotian terms was it Prufrock's fear lest one should say "That is not what I meant at all./ That is not it, at all"; or was the "Rats, coat, crowskin, crossed

\textsuperscript{50} Ackroyd 22.
\textsuperscript{52} Ackroyd 136.
\textsuperscript{53} Ackroyd 135.
stones" a deliberate disguise beneath which the interior self lived its secret lives.

Whatever the reason, Eliot took great pains to guard himself, going to such length as to even impersonate a nautical persona. His friends who visited him at his residence in Burleigh mansions were told to ask for a "Captain Eliot" and then to knock at the door three times. The theatrical streak was very much present in Eliot. Aiken, who knew him from his Harvard days wrote, "There is something of the actor in Tom, and some of the clown too. For all his liturgical appearances . . . he was capable of real buffoonery. V.S.Pritchett described him as "a company of actors inside one suit, each twitting the other." Edward Wilson in a letter to John Dos Passos refers to Eliot as an actor, "He gives you the creeps a little at first because he is such a completely artificial, or , rather, self-invented character . . . but he has done such a perfect job with himself that you end up by admiring him". And he refers to Eliot as "the most highly refined and attended and chiselled human being" he had ever encountered.  

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54 Ackroyd 136.  
55 Gordon, Early Years 32.  
56 Ackroyd 118.  
57 Ackroyd 199.
Even as a student at Harvard Eliot cultivated images of himself. His earliest was that of Jules Laforgue. Eliot noticed that Laforgue's polish, his dandyism, the formality and perfection of dress and manners corresponded with these elements in himself. He coupled this with the defeatist persona of Laforgue— the social outcast, ever on the fringe of society. This persona is present in many of Eliot's poems. There was Prufrock, a perfection of the Laforguean image, self-conscious and ineffectual. Through this persona Eliot learnt to confess his personal despair at the same time shielding himself by using various voices playing against one another.

Later in England he cultivated the image of the upper middle class English gentleman as a bank-clerk at the Lloyd's bank and the publisher at Faber and Gwyer and then the smiling public man. His friends also speak of another aspect of "old Possum" (Pound's nickname for Eliot), lover of practical jokes, writer of numerous anonymous comic masterpieces to journals, even singer of bawdy ballads. Auden claims that "in Eliot there was a lot of the conscientious churchwarden but also much of a twelve year old
Eliot's formality of dress, stilted speech, the rolled extra-large black umbrella accentuated as accessories of disguise. He was as a man observing himself from outside, arranging and rearranging himself as an actor might. Everything was deliberate and purposeful. The "real man" eluded all.

Leonard Woolf claimed that he and Virginia had "something to do with changing Tom, with loosening up the pomposity and priggishness which constricted him, with thawing out the essential warmth of his nature". Earlier his visit to Paris as a student and later his stay in London may have contributed to the loosening up of the inhibitions but they never wiped them out. Eliot could not turn to the world with spontaneity or warmth. And it cannot be denied that if one is looking for the warmth or vigour of life in his poetry one will be disappointed for unlike W.B.Yeats, Eliot never glorifies life.

Many critics mistook this admittedly incomplete view for Eliot's coldness. Virginia Woolf writes in her diary that Eliot was conscious of these accusations and they were a sore point for him— "the

59 Bergonzi, T.S. Eliot 71.
critics say I am learned and cold, the truth is I am neither". Virginia Woolf does seem to discern at times a man different from the one he posed to be. In her diary she writes "the odd thing about Eliot is that his eyes are lively and youthful when the cast of his face and the shape of his sentence are formal and heavy, rather like a sculpted face, no upper lip, formidable, powerful pale, then those hazel eyes seeming to escape from the rest of him."  

She also writes that he was capable of violent emotions. Eliot himself admitted that he was drawn towards the sensual and needed to keep a check on himself. Emily Hale, too spoke of him "a man of extremes, a man of undoubted faults and highest virtues". All this gives the impression of a man not so much "numb" to life as too conscious of it. He was constantly labouring at self-restraint to distance himself from the temporal, for central to his philosophy was the consciousness of the meaninglessness of life. This view presented itself in his innate scepticism and his ironic stance in his poetical works, and made him look at life as though it was a mere spectacle or drama. For instance in his plays the

60 Bergonzi, T.S. Eliot 71.
61 Bergonzi, T.S. Eliot 70.
62 Gordon, New Life 19.
ordinary human world is presented as one of paltry illusion. It is enacted like a charade. The significance of life is sought beyond the mundane world. Eliot's ironic stance was probably a self-protective guard against the mire of the world, for in his realm of the ideal and the pure he could not include the temporal world. He found it difficult to conceive a union of the two worlds. Eliot had always believed that in order to arrive at the love of God one must divest oneself of the love of created beings.

We therefore see Eliot keeping his emotions in check even in his personal life. "Some people say", he wrote to Aiken in July 1914, "that pain is necessary, (They learn in suffering" etc.), others that happiness is. Both besides the point, I think: what is necessary is a certain kind (could one but catch it!) of tranquillity, and sometimes pain does bring it. . . ."63

In Eliot we frequently find the notion of discovering oneself through pain; even elevating one's state of consciousness through the experience of pain, as though, as expressed in the quoted letter above, pain helps to transmute personal experiences into something impersonal. "All art is an attempt to

metamorphosise private failures and disappointments," writes Eliot. He believed that even Shakespeare was "occupied with the struggle-- which alone constitutes life for a poet . . . ." According to Eliot the poet's suffering brought him an understanding of human life and thus served as material for art. But to become poetry the personal suffering had to be transformed into the universal as Eliot puts it-- "The more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates."

This welcoming of pain again speaks of the attempt to reach beyond the material world to the state of a tranquillity-- a detachment. Later in his life Eliot is seen to differentiate between the three states-- attachment, detachment and

. . . . Growing between them indifference which resembles the others as death resembles life, being between two lives- unflowering, between the live and the dead nettle:

['Little Gidding']

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64 Eliot, Selected Essays 18.
Living in a material world and constantly trying to transcend it speaks of a feeling of void that probably pervaded Eliot's thought. Just as he was perpetually attempting to rise beyond the individual self in his poetry, in his personal life too, he tries his best to go beyond the external personality to reach his inner self.

But Vivienne, after the initial excitement of their marriage found it increasingly difficult to adjust with him. We see her unfulfilled needs for a warmer relationship in these earnest requests to her brother-in-law, Henry Eliot—"...and be personal, you must be personal, or else it's no good. Nothing's any good."66 And in a letter to Sydney Schiff—"...it is very encouraging to have spontaneous expression of feeling like yours and I am really grateful."67

However briefly, Vivienne did liberate him emotionally—Eliot wrote to Aiken "...I am having a wonderful time. I have lived through material for a score of long poems, in the last six months..." But conjugal happiness was short lived. Vivienne, Eliot discovered was addicted to drugs, though through no fault of her own. She suffered from neuralgia and for

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Eliot his marriage gradually turned into a purgatorial fire he believed he had to endure in order to be purified. Life imitated art, as Eliot lived the life of his martyr-saints. In later life Eliot described this marriage as a Dostevsky novel written by Middleton Murray.69 "Vivienne ruined Tom as a man but made him a poet", said Therasa Eliot.70 Vivienne's frenzied energy and her abandon were in complete reversal to Eliot's passivity and restrain. And the intensity of her nature was such that it threatened to engulf him. Vivienne is said to have written to Jack Hutchins, "As to Tom's mind, I am his mind".71 After a year with Vivienne, Eliot said he had undergone "the most awful nightmare of anxiety that the mind of man could conceive".72 In a private paper written in the sixties, Eliot reminiscences upon his marriage with Vivienne—"To her the marriage brought no happiness . . . to me, it brought the state of mind out of which came The Waste Land."73

Eventually he did put an end to his marriage. In 1932 after his return from America he never went back

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69 Ackroyd 204.
70 Gordon, New Life 56.
71 Ackroyd 150.
72 Gordon, New Life 56.
to her and took up apartments elsewhere. But the decision tormented him and throughout his life he was stricken by guilt and remorse. And in his writings there emerges an image of a man who believes that he has committed a crime which leads him to guilt and feelings of worthlessness. Vivienne was put in an asylum in 1938 and in 1948 she passed away.

Marriage had not assuaged Eliot's sexual anxieties, rather it had aggravated them, "Ode" a poem supposedly written on his honeymoon is about a couples' disastrous wedding night. In another prose poem written in 1915, "Hysteria", the "I" feels that he is being engorged by a woman. Inspite of his marriage the image of the woman had not changed in his poetry. Eliot was disturbed and disgusted by female sexuality. The pervasive note in his early poems until Ash Wednesday is one where the sexual act is seen as unclean. To Eliot the woman posed a threat to the world of spirit. In his early letters to Aiken one can note his sexual impulse towards woman wrestle in an unequal struggle with his own need for self-possession or self preservation and control. Eliot's view of woman was partly fashioned by his own inhibited disposition and partly by his Unitarian background. T.S.Matthews in
Great Tom writes that "the pitiless lurking savage and the circumspect rigidly conformist puritan, these two mutually hostile sides of his nature must have begun their lifelong warfare in his childhood."\(^7^4\)

Surrounded by women who supported and nurtured him in his childhood—mother, sisters and nurse, his inability to cope with female sexuality might also have arisen from his difficulty to accept their sexual nature. Added to this was his inhibited nature behind which lurked the fear of ridicule and the Unitarian background which taught him that sex is sin. This notion never quite left him. Sex remained a "coupling of animals"\(^7^5\) and the "woman" became a symbol of the sensual. They were looked upon as unclean creatures. The sordid imagery with which women are associated in his poems confirm this view. His early poems written in 1911 in Paris carry nuances of female sexuality. In one of the poems (which later became the third Prelude) the woman's consciousness is invaded by sordid images. She is depicted as an unclean creature—

You curled the papers from your hair,
or clasped the yellow soles of feet
In the palm of both soiled hand.

\(^7^4\) Matthews, Great Tom 80.
\(^7^5\) Eliot, Selected Essays 274.
Eliot's habit of fortifying himself against the material world left him numb to its experiences. All experiences that gave pleasure were waived aside as temptation. None of Eliot's poems present us with a real woman, all of his woman personae are abstractions, whether the streetwalkers or the automatic typist girl or the 'lady of silences.'

Distorted images of Vivienne figure in his poetry. Eliot manages to transform, probably very personal instances, into poetry. In the second section of *The Waste Land*, "A Game of Chess", we are presented with portraits of women right from Cleopatra to the modern day Lil. It deals with the relationship between man and woman. In one of the sections of this scene we are presented with a couple entrapped in a meaningless marriage. They speak but do not communicate, instead of intimacy, they share an isolation from one another. The husband shuns the proximity of his wife and refuses to answer her anxious questions:


Pound had applauded the marital scene in *The Waste Land* calling it "photography".
Eliot, as mentioned before was preoccupied with suffering. He read a divine pattern that gave even damnation a meaning. The idea gave a significance to his sufferings. This aspect throws light on Eliot's persistent martyr complex, seen in his early poems and in real life, perceived in his endurance of his nightmarish marriage with Vivienne.

Eliot's unhappy marriage probably accentuated his feeling of fragmentariness—the external scene that fostered it, was emphasised by his personal problems. In 1927 Eliot joined the Anglican Church. His conversion was not looked upon with approval by a world increasingly anti-religious.

Eliot turns to orthodox religion when most of his contemporaries chose political ideologies as solutions to the cultural despair. However Eliot felt that one could not expect "continuity and coherence" in politics "unless there is an underlying political philosophy: not of a party but of a nation..." Eliot found this continuity and coherence in the Church.

Eliot had confessed that it was the disintegrating elements working within modern society that had led him to the awareness of an emptiness at

76 Eliot, Christian Society 40.
the core of life. This knowledge had driven him to the last resort, Christianity. Christianity had reconciled him to human existence which otherwise seemed meaningless. Christianity also fulfilled Eliot's need for order and coherence that he failed to find in any other system of belief or in any organisation. It provided him with an "objective-correlative" for wholeness.

One is in doubt whether to view the church as the much needed sanatorium in the presence of the malaise that ails the modern world or as a sanctuary, an escape from confrontation. Eliot had been continuously criticised on his conversion. After The Waste Land Eliot's poetry had been admired for its divorce from beliefs (a view advertised by I.A. Richards). His entrance to the church disappointed the coterie of followers that had gathered around him during this period.

Eliot was thirty-nine when he joined the church. According to Jung, in the second half of life the ego gradually gives way to the self. It is a process wherein the individuals evolve uniquely to fulfil the spiritual propensities common to all humanity. This may require, Jung believes, a withdrawal
from one's early identities and a search for new paths, which may even be in opposition to one's previous position in life. It is a "conscious coming-to-terms with one's own inner centre . . ."77 From the material, the individuals turn away to more spiritual ways of living. Jung terms this developmental process, the process of individuation. If Eliot's conversion, is interpreted as a process of individuation, it could hardly be called an escape— a confrontation would be more appropriate.

We constantly see the effort to keep the material at bay and to live his life in his own terms. This is best illustrated in Emily Hale's letter to a friend—

Tom's wife died last winter very suddenly. I supposed he would then feel free to marry me as I believe he always intended to do. But such proves not to be the case . . . he loves me . . . I believe that wholly . . . but apparently not in the way usual to men less gifted, that is with complete love through a

married relationship. I have not completely given up hope that he may yet recover from this abnormal reaction to me.\textsuperscript{76}

Though many critics have looked upon Eliot's second phase as a repudiation of the world, Lyndall Gordon views it differently. According to her it is a turn back to the serenity of the memory of Emily Hale. Eliot's career circled so that the sources of his own life become the source of all life.\textsuperscript{79}

Eliot had known Emily Hale from his undergraduate days at Harvard. Their mutual interest in drama had brought them together. She came from a similar background to his Unitarian Bostonian. Eliot's marriage to Vivienne in England had probably come as a shock to her but after his separation from his wife, Emily resumed her friendship with him in 1927. This time also corresponds with the composition of \textit{Ash Wednesday}.

Lyndall Gordon believes that Emily Hale replaced Vivienne as Eliot's muse in the second phase of Eliot's poetry, that she was his inspiration for \textit{Four Quartets}. Gordon traces her as the beloved woman in \textit{La Figlia}, the Hyacinth girl in \textit{The Waste Land}, the

\textsuperscript{78} Gordon, \textit{New Life} 170.  
\textsuperscript{79} Gordon, \textit{New Life} 273.
lady of silences in *Ash Wednesday*, the silent companion in the rose-garden in *Four Quartets*.\(^8^0\)

There was a significant change in Eliot's symbol of the woman after his conversion. She was no more realistic than the ones figured in his earlier poetry. However, whereas the former had been symbols of sensuality, the new image was its opposite extreme, pure, untainted, virginal—"the lady of silences", dressed in white and blue. These were figures of women sanctified by Christianity.

Gordon believes that if Vivienne was a mirror to Eliot's darker side, Emily Hale was the symbol of his purer self, the untainted soul.\(^8^1\)

Eliot once confessed to Mary Trevelyan that he had been in love with a woman for a great many years. But like the personae of his own poems he found himself unable to fulfil the promise of love. He viewed his failure as the impoverished state of his soul, "physical exhaustion was a sign of a profounder spiritual depletion."\(^8^2\)

Similar to the personae in his early poems the inability to love is taken as a measure for the state of one's soul. The early personae are imprisoned

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\(^8^0\) Gordon, *New Life* 16.
\(^8^1\) Gordon, *New Life* 16.
in their insular selves, unable to respond to others. In *The Cocktail Party* Edward describes this isolation, which he associates with hell-

There was a door

And I could not open it. I could not touch the handle.

Why could I not walk out of my prison?

What is hell? Hell is oneself,

Hell is alone, the other figures in it

Mere projections. There is nothing to escape from

And nothing to escape to. One is always alone.

Edward, realises that the inability to relate is one of his curses, but he cannot do anything to save himself from the situation. This remains the bane of Eliot's protagonist and perhaps of Eliot himself.

For Eliot it is his own dream that becomes his bondage. For, to him the idea of love was not a union of the body and spirit, but exclusively spiritual. As mentioned earlier, the corporeal weighed him down to the material world and the material was always shunned. Eliot conveys this idea in *The Cocktail Party*; when Celia is grateful for the memory of the love she shares with Edward, she says--
We find this idea of the sublimation of love into a pure state recur frequently in Eliot's poetry. In the same scene we find Celia-- unsure of her self, imploring to Reilly--

... if that is all meaningless, I want to be cured of a craving for something I cannot find

Reilly, in turn, answers--

If that is what you wish,

I can reconcile you to the human condition. . . .

It is this reconciliation that Eliot finds hard to come by. Eliot cherished Emily Hale, almost as a Beatrice figure. She came to stand as an embodiment of the pure world of the spirit; who inspired him to spiritual heights, but to consummate this love with marriage Eliot believed would be to tarnish the dream.

However, reconciliation did come. It came in the form of his relationship with Valerie. Eliot married Valerie Fletcher, his secretary, at the age of sixty-eight. For the first time perhaps, the
capacity to love \textit{kindled} in his heart a surge which seemed to overwhelm, all the gnawing of guilt he had ever suffered. Robert Giroux claims that "the most striking aspect of his friendship with Eliot was the contrast between the rather sad and lonely aura that seemed to hover about him in the earlier periods and the happiness he radiated in the later one". To Eliot himself, the last eight years of his life was paradise. "I am the luckiest man in the world," he told Richard Giroux. "Love reciprocated is always rejuvenating," he told an interviewer in 1958. "Before my marriage I was getting older—now I feel younger at 70 than I did at 60... An experience like mine makes all the more difference because of its contrast with the past."

His friends noticed the sharp change in Eliot's appearance. He was more friendly and jaunty and the look of illness had disappeared. Finally it was love, that released him from his life of misery and isolation. Eliot married ten years after Vivienne's death. Many believe that these years were a period of penitence.

"The words mean what they say, but some have a further meaning / For you and me only," Eliot writes.

\begin{flushright}
83 Bergonzi 180.
84 Ackroyd 321.
85 Gordon, \textit{New Life} 255.
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in the dedication to his wife in *The Elder Statesman*. It is then significant that similar to the dramatist, the dramatic personae too should learn to love for the first time—"I am only a beginner in the practise of loving", says Lord Claverton to his daughter. He confesses that he has shed his external self—his mask of pretensions—

I've been freed the self that pretends to be someone;
And in becoming no one, I begin to live.
It is worth dying to find out what life is.

Eliot's final drama deals with love— the healing power that a loving relationship possess. For the first time in Eliot's works we find the admission of a faith in human relationship. In the final act, Charles declaring his love to Monica says—

So that now we are conscious of a new person

Who is you and me together.

This statement closely resembles Martin Buber's concept of relationships. Buber had put forth that in an intimate relationship "I" and "you" appear to
influence each other, they enter into one another and influence each other from within so that the "I" and "you" becomes a new person, a "we". Through this creation of a "we" one achieves a unity, a fusion of the fragmentary selves through human relationships.

Eliot finally makes a breakthrough from his prison of isolation by turning to a fulfilling relationship. This relationship releases him, it liberates him from years of emotional sterility that had imprisoned him.

Was the marriage a break in Eliot's pattern of religious life or a consummation of it? The answer most probably is the latter, for religion begins with love not denial. Eliot's "void" was replaced by a capacity to love.

The (ingenious) of Eliot lies in the fact that out of the suffering of his difficult and divided nature he could create poetry. His central vision was that of the "void"; he managed to create order and coherence through his poetry within the chaos and meaningless of the century. Eliot's life as well as his literary career was a pursuit of a solution to the modern problem faced in his own life. He himself had

admitted "... I did write from personal experience." 87

Given the modern circumstances to what extent modern man can achieve wholeness of self is debatable. However, there remains one aspect which can liberate him from his isolation—human relationships. Through relationships, through love, he can rise above his narrow self and achieve meaning. We see Eliot, the poet achieve this in the community in Little Gidding in *Four Quartets*, we see the same in his personal life.