Eliot's early poetry, as we have seen, is a presentation of the fragmented self, enclosed and insular within its alienated world. In his later poetry, we find him moving towards some kind of synthesis as he attempts to cohere the fragments to recapture the lost wholeness. The totality of the self has become an object of an inner quest. This quest often amounts to an almost religious enterprise. The theme of the plays written after conversion deal with the discovery of the religious vocation of the protagonists. To Eliot, wholeness entailed a complete surrender of the self to the divine. For this it is required that the protagonists perfect their will so as to conform completely to the will of God. This same move is noticed in Eliot's poetic personae too. They attempt to purify themselves by withdrawing from the world and turning to God. As described earlier, this
turning-point of Eliot may be viewed as a step towards "Self-developement", what Jung terms as "individuation". Jung describes this process as an impulse towards growth. It is an emerging of the self.¹

Even though written after conversion, Eliot's later poems reveal the hard struggle of the persona towards this recovery. Eliot's conversion was merely a step leading towards it. We shall begin by briefly examining the causes that might have spurred Eliot in joining the Church.

After The Waste Land, Eliot had been hailed as the iconoclast of the twentieth century. Little did the critics realise that the profound scepticism apparent in the poem was itself marked by an equally deep yearning for faith.

For a man so acutely aware of disconnections (I can connect/ nothing with nothing....) and haunted by the Bradleyan concept of the unity of Absolute, a turn towards some form of synthesis was inevitable. By his studies in psychoanalysis Eliot had arrived at a form of religion or mythology of the self which had tried to transform the privatisation of religion and attempted to give some collective meaning. However, it

was not enough. In a world bereft of shared meanings and a common consensus, Eliot realised that only when we find our common roots in some meaningful dimension of reality can we forge a meaningful society. Eliot found this in the Church. He turned to Christianity to discover a renewed public meaning. Further, as described in an essay on Lancelot Andrewes, he saw the principles of the Anglo-Catholic Church as derived from broadly European traditions and expressive of the finest spirit of English culture. It served as a continuation of a historical and ritualistic tradition that was so important to him. Further, this ritualistic tradition also provided him with an objective correlative for faith.

Thus, even though external, the church did nevertheless provide some form of a connection in the ensuing series of disconnections that modern civilisation had wrought— a link between the past and the present in its tradition; the self and the Absolute in prayer, wherein the self is in communion with the Divine and the self and society-- the Church is a community with a shared ideal.

However writers such as Lyndall Gordon chose to see a more personal motive behind the act—"All his adult life he has been haunted by a sense of guilt—most frequently, judging by his poems, "sexual guilt". She quotes Eliot from his essay, "Baudelaire", "the recognition of sin is a New Life."\(^3\) According to Gordon, Eliot accepted the morality of damnation and could not save himself without help. And help he sought in the church.

However, behind this personal motive too is discerned the same yearning towards synthesis, as revealed in our above analysis. Guilt is born of conflict between the will and the execution of it. Eliot's sexual guilt reveals the cleft between "body" and "spirit", which was the inherent influence of his puritanical background. We notice in Eliot the constant attempt to transform the base and instinctual into the elevated and ethereal. Eliot's joining the church was a measure towards this transformation.

However, it seems questionable whether Eliot could achieve an integration by distancing the "sense" from the "spirit".

Critics tend to divide Eliot's works into two parts—before and after conversion as though there was a chasm dividing them. F.O. Matthiessen complains of this tendency among critics—"I am puzzled by the two most prevalent false approaches to him, by those critics who welcomed the poet of The Waste Land as a modern prophet for having voiced our disillusion and now damn him because he moves towards faith, as well as by those more traditionally faithful souls, largely academic, who deplored his earlier work as dangerously radical, and now welcome him with hosannas." There is ample evidence of this fact in Eliot's poetry. Even in his early poetry we find Eliot's repeated attempts to withdraw from the contaminating touch of the world into his solitary journeys—the desert of "St. Narcissus", the mountains of rock in The Waste Land and the dead cactus land of "The Hollow Men"; there lurked a fear that the material world would impinge upon the wholeness of the self.

Though the religious struggle is not apparent anymore, the stance to withdraw continues into his mature poetry. There is a tendency to withdraw in the

face of experience, though not without a backward glance over the shoulder as in "La Figlia Che Piange".

If one should divide Eliot's works into phases, it would be more appropriate to categorise it as his early works, wherein we find the personae who sought to escape from a corrupt civilisation, wanting to recapture a lost unity; his poetry of crisis, wherein the personae must choose between the two worlds, for the material world impinges upon his pure world, thereby leading to a fragmentation of his two worlds—the interior and exterior; and the third wherein through "hints" and "guesses" he arrives at his vision, only to realise that it is only by integrating the world that he has left behind, can he come anywhere close to the world of the unity of self. This realisation is the final synthesis.

To critics who found a break rather than a continuity, the contents of his later poetry appear tenuous. Even critics such as Hugh Kenner and Bergonzi, who are otherwise some of his most ardent admirers, agree that the language in the later poetry reveal a loss of vigour and the transitions and juxtapositions are less abrupt and startling. Bergonzi believes that the poems are rhythmically less interesting than his
previous poetry—and read like summaries of experience rather than enactments of it. The grotesque and bizarre details disappear.5 Herbert Read writes that after "The Hollow Men" Eliot's poetry becomes for the most part moralistic.® "However, Spender does not agree with this and believes that the peculiar tension of the Four Quartets is due to the poet's refusal to be moralistic, while at the same time remaining Christian. He now recognises that religion is more important than the poetry 'which does not matter.'7

Whatever the reproach of the critics, Eliot was merely following the interior journey he had begun with his initiation into poetry. So acute was the pressure of the world encroaching on his private consciousness that it all but nearly swallowed up his flimsy vision in his early poetry. But the key word is "withdrawal". There is a consistent attempt to retreat and withdraw into seclusion. We have only to turn to his poems, "Silence" and "The Death of St. Narcissus" to learn of his underground phase of religious searching as early as 1910. Walking in Boston, one day

he saw the streets suddenly shrink and divide, time fell away and he was enfolded in a great silence. He wrote a poem he never published, in 1910 called "Silence". This was probably his first experience of the moment of unity, when space and time dissolved to reveal, what in Bradleyan terms was the "immediate experience"— an experience he writes about in the Quartets. The memory of his bliss remained with him and continued to haunt him throughout his life, reminding him that there was an area of experience beyond the normal existence of life.

In "The Death of St. Narcissus" and "The Death of St. Sebastian" we see the images of self-absorption and self-disgust of a martyr. In "The Death of St. Narcissus" we have the image of the martyr who welcomes the arrows of his assailants. We have here the first mention of the "dancer to God"—

So he became a dancer to God

Because his flesh was in love with the burning arrows ...

The pain is felt as ecstasy. Pain and suffering has always been looked upon as an experience

"Gordon, Early Years 81."
of purgation by Eliot. The idea is reiterated nearly thirty years later in "Little Gidding"—

... restored by that refining fire

Where you must move in measure, like a dancer.

The mortification of the flesh is the purgation that Eliot believed the self must undergo in order to attain Divine proximity. This belief remained with Eliot to the end. He believed that the will has to be made perfect in order to make it conform completely to the will of God. Through this union alone can the self attain a complete unity. In his essay F.H. Bradley Eliot quotes the philosopher:

How can the human-divine ideal ever be my will? the answer is, your will it never can be as the will of your private self, so that your private self should become wholly good. To that self you must die, and by faith be made one with that ideal. You must resolve to give up your will, as the mere will of
this and that man, and you must out your whole self, your entire will, into the will of the divine. That must be your one self, as it is your true self; that you must hold to both with thought and will, and all other you must renounce.'

Eliot draws our attention to distinction between the individual as himself and no more and the individual in communion with God. To Eliot it is the subjugation of the individual to the divine that brings about this union. However, this entails a sacrifice, a self-surrender. In *Four Quartets* Eliot deals with this self-sacrifice. The physical self-surrender of St. Narcissus is transmuted to a psychological one.

The transformation of the will is a gradual and laboured process but its movement can be discerned in the imperceptible changes in the imagery of Eliot's poetry. For instance in "The Death of St. Narcissus"—

Come under the shadow of this grey rock ....

changes in *The Wasteland* (1922) to

Come under the shadow of this red rock . .

This image is again transformed in *Ash-Wednesday* (1930)—

In the last desert between the last blue rocks.

The colour change from grey and red to blue is significant. Blue (blue of Mary's colour) is a spiritual colour. Further it is accompanied by "the last desert" changing into the "garden"— the spiritual aridity giving way to a spiritual richness.

A debatable question is whether Eliot's sense of the mystical moment came to him as a "Christian experience". Eliese Knapp Hay tends to believe that he had received the "early biblical sense of epiphany" as a "cosmic event", even before becoming a Christian. According to her Eliot's poetic development presents the case of someone who began his mature work rejecting metaphysical systems and received theologies while seeking within perceptual experience itself the primary "facts" of experience. And in this she compares him to Heidegger and Derrida. Hay's view as far as Eliot's

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mystical experience is considered is probably true, Eliot's epiphanic experience do not appear to be "theocentric" as Lyndall Gordon's account of the experience recounted in the poem "Silence" shows. However, it would not be true to say that Eliot rejected metaphysical systems and received theologies, for his studies in Harvard show his avid perusal of metaphysical systems and theologies, though not Christian, ranging from sacred texts of Hinduism and Buddhism to the books of mystics of the Middle ages—"St. John of The Cross" and "Dame Julian". Hay was reiterating G. Wilson Knight's argument that it would be dangerous to read the Quartets as "Christian poems" for they "are quite as near, or nearer, the undoctrinal meditations of Thus Spake Zarathustra". Knight continues that Eliot's most assured religious lines, those on "light" in The Rock are fruits of a general religious apprehension, independent of dogma. Knight too believes that the "paradisal intimations" of "Burnt Norton" are expressed through images of flowers, bird-song and children, without doctrinal implications. He also mentions the "wonderful lyric" in "East Coker", referring to the passage on "the wounded surgeon . . .," which Knights feels "offers a universe
so riddled with negations and agonies that we must go to the anti-Christian polemics of Nietzsche."

Though difficult to be labelled as "Christian poems", Knight's claim to view the Four Quartets as anti-Christian appears a trifle farfetched. What he sees as "negation and agonies" is Eliot's presentation of the self undergoing "the Dark Night of the Soul", a purgation before its union with the Divine.

R.W. Flint tends to agree with Knight that Eliot's epiphanies are secular in nature. He adds that Eliot has strained to keep his "private resolutions within secular reach". He illustrates from the Four Quartets wherein "the mystical speculations, tenuous as they may seem, are deeply embedded in social and psychological observation". Even though Eliot's constant complaint against modern literature had been that it "repudiates or is wholly ignorant of our most fundamental and important beliefs", he also writes-- "What I want is a literature which should be

14Eliot, Selected Prose 100.
unconsciously rather than deliberately and defiantly Christian." This goes to show that by "our most fundamental and important beliefs", Eliot had not meant overtly Christian beliefs in the religious sense, but Christian values, in a broader sense of the term.

Thus he writes in "The Social Function of Poetry", "much has been said everywhere about the decline of religious belief; not so much notice has been taken of the decline of religious sensibility. The trouble of the modern age is not merely the inability to believe certain things which our forefathers believed, but the inability to feel towards God and man as they did." This closely resembles Jung's feeling of regret as he compares life in a modern civilisation to those in more primitive societies. "A sense of a wider meaning to one's existence is what raises man beyond mere getting and spending. If he lacks this sense, he is lost and miserable.

During the early years at Harvard and, on reading Four Quartets one suspects to the very end, Eliot's idea of God was defined by Bradley's concept of

15 Eliot, Selected Prose 106.
The Absolute. In his later poetry Christ is nowhere mentioned by name except in *The Rock* which was written solely for an ecclesiastical purpose. The experience that Eliot takes us to in *Four Quartets* goes beyond the "religious" into the "spiritual". This is not to say that Eliot did not go through the regular practices of Christianity. As Bergstein put it, Eliot emphasised the dogmatic side of Christianity. And probably, as Bergstein believes, it was due to his distrust of subjectivity. The theology of Catholic Church provided a spiritual order more impersonal than any literary doctrine.¹⁸

Eliot's nature craved for principles and order. Christianity provided him with a coherent form of both. Christianity also provided him with a moral and emotional discipline which was very important to him. He enumerated its importance in a series of letters he wrote to Paul Elmer More. He stated that Christianity reconciled him to human existence which otherwise seemed empty and distasteful, in this context he contrasted the sensual and ascetic life.¹⁹ For one instinctively drawn towards sensuality moral discipline

¹⁹Gordon, *Early Years* 62.
provided an inner check. He also wrote to his friends about the redeeming power of prayer. But in spite of the staunch Christian stand one cannot help wondering whether, to Eliot God was not more than a personal being. R.W. Flint suggests that Eliot's religion is not "consistently Biblical".20

Skaff believes that for Eliot religious experience was not a literal belief in Christian dogma but a more complex psychological state. According to Skaff he related modern man's desire to worship with the "same impulse in the depth of his psyche and the tissues of his body that prompted primitive man to beat his drum". For him, God or in Bradleyan terms, The Absolute was "a state of unity and comprehensiveness towards which the Universe tends". It does not resemble the Appearances of our world, since they are reconciled and transformed in its harmony.21 Thus God, for Eliot, becomes a metaphysical boundary which even mystical experience approaches but cannot attain. Skaff believes that by defining God as The Absolute, Eliot is able to retain his allegiance to scepticism.22

22Skaff 43.
Even though the idiom of modern psychology is different, Bradley's concepts connote the same kind of experience as Jung's terminology. Both believe in transcending the mere "individuality" or "ego" as Jung calls it. According to Bradley it is only when we achieve this transition that we can approach "immediate experience"-- the Unity of the Divine when all "appearances come together" and "lose their distinctive natures", thus bringing us close to the One Reality.23

Jung's "Unus Mundus", the time when "all that exists by itself is an unknown wholeness, when all things are possible and everything is equally real (and unreal) is a time of pre-birth. It is a time before the beginning of time, a world without history, without choices and opposites and conflicts. It is a world wherein matter and psyche have not been differentiated.24 This in many ways resemble Bradley's Absolute-- the complete union of all opposites. According to Jung this wholeness is a stage in the development of human consciousness as well as the development of each individual's consciousness.

We find the personae in the later poetry striving to reach this moment of union with the Divine.

Eliot's move towards faith is evident in the Ariel Poems, his first poems after his conversion in 1927. These were single poems to be published as illustrated pamphlets for Christmas. For the first time he was writing poems on an ostensibly religious subject. The theme was the journey of the magi. Eliot's poem is suitable to the modern day, wherein the sublime is difficult to imagine. As Eliot himself writes in his essay, "Dante", on describing the pageant in "Purgatorio"—"It belongs to the world of what I call the high dream, and the modern world seems capable only of the low dream."25 Eliot appears very much the man of his age in his laborious move towards faith. There is no quick welcoming but a slow surrender. The effort involved in the extinction of the constructed self is evident. Eliot is aware that Dante's visions are not for us—"we have forgotten that seeing visions- a practice now relegated to the aberrant and uneducated—was once a more significant, interesting, and disciplined kind of dreaming."26

25Eliot, Selected Essays 262.
26Eliot, Selected Essays 243.
The speaker of "The Journey of the Magi" is intent more on the journey than the event itself. Eventually when he does reach the scene of event all he can utter is, "it was (you may say) satisfactory". The poem begins with an abbreviated quotation from one of Lancelot Andrewes' sermons, "A Cold coming we had of it . . . ." The "summer palaces and the silken girls" haunt the speaker as he weathers the bitter cold and suffers the arduous journey, almost regretting it.

Eliot highlights the awakening by bringing a sharp contrast between the cocooned, secure, pleasure filled life of the past represented by summer, and the disturbed, uncertain present experience symbolised by the hard winter. The speaker is visibly moved by the experience but he cannot really participate in it. When he starts to dissect the implications of this "Birth", he is dismayed "Birth or Death?", he questions. He returns to the theme of The Waste Land, where he questions as to what distinguishes the "living from the dead". Here the enormity of the change or transformation that will occur after this birth makes the protagonist realise that "Death" and "Birth" are interchangeable terms; the event is as much one of "Birth" as of "Death" for this birth entails a death of
the old— of old habits and old ways of life, which the persona is aware would not be easy.

The poem is conversational in tone and for the first time we have a single spoken voice speaking on a particular event though the brilliant yoking of the disparate images is curiously lacking. As Ackroyd puts it "the lines no longer flash and gleam, they reach a conclusion." This at once led the critics to conclude that the Muse had abandoned Eliot. However only Matthiessen was perceptive enough to notice that Eliot had in fact made a deliberate change of style. F.O. Mattheissen points out that the most striking change in the texture of Eliot's verse is the abandonment of his early allegiance to Donne and the other metaphysicals and his attraction to the style of the seventeenth century master Lancelot Andrewes. Lyndall Gordon likewise points to the same. In his 1926 essay on Lancelot Andrewes Eliot points out the difference between the limitations of poets with "self-centred emotions" and the "austere holiness of Andrewes". He writes— "Donne had a trained mind; but without belittling the intensity or the profundity of

27 Peter Ackroyd, T.S. Eliot (Great Britain: Hamish and Hamilton Ltd., 1984) 164.
28 Gordon, New Life 27.
his experiences, we can suggest that this experience
was not perfectly controlled, and that he lacked
spiritual discipline . . . Donne is a "personality" in
a sense in which Andrewes is not: his sermons, one
feels, are a "means of self-expression". He is
constantly finding an objective which shall be adequate
to his feelings; Andrewes is wholly absorbed in the
object and therefore responds with the adequate
emotion. . . . Donne belonged to that class of persons
. . . who seek refuge in religion from the tumults of a
strong emotional temperament which can find no complete
satisfaction elsewhere."29 Eliot probably recognised
something of himself in Donne. Herbert Howarth suggests
that Eliot's judgements on other writers were
autobiographical in character.30 After his conversion
it was Lancelot Andrewes', "controlled, purely
contemplative emotion"-- rather than the forced fusion
of intellect and emotion of Donne, that he aspired
for. Eliot singled out three attributes of Lancelot
Andrewes-- "ordinance or arrangement and structure,
precision in the use of words and relevant
intensity."31

29Eliot, Selected Essays 345-6.
30Ackroyd, T.S.Eliot 175.
This could answer for the change in style in Eliot's later poetry. But certain images endure. For instance in "A Song for Simeon" we hear echoes of "Gerontion". As the old Jew Simeon awaits death, waiting for the messiah--

My life is light, waiting for the death wind,

we are led back to "Gerontion"-- "waiting for rain". Both men await death but one is engulfed by the feeling of damnation and the other, though awaiting salvation, is more aware of death that will follow in the wake of "Birth" than his salvation-- "Now at this birth season of decease" Eliot dwells on this theme in "Journey of Magi"-- the painful necessity of rebirth, which is itself a form of death--

I had seen birth and death

But had thought they were different.

Even characters with faith, such as Simeon cannot make a breakthrough to a vision, they do not participate in the experience of the Divine.

The image of the "word" is also repeated after "Gerontion". Eliot had taken this image from
Lancelot Andrewes' "Nativity Sermon" preached before James I: "The Word without a word; the eternal Word not able to speak a word . . . ." In "Gerontion" this image is described as--

The word within a word, unable to speak a word.

In "Simeon" Eliot changes it to--

. . . .the still unspeaking and unspoken word,

This image was later taken up in Four Quartets. We see Eliot once again exploring states of psyche with his imagery. The hyacinth flower is a symbol of the resurrected god of the fertility rites. In Eliot's poetry it is usually associated with a symbolic awakening or dawning of awareness usually spiritual in nature. For instance in "The Burial of the Dead" in The Waste Land. The scene in the hyacinth garden is the closest that the poem comes to a revelation. As also in "Portrait of a Lady" the only scene wherein we find the protagonists' self-centred nature pierced is when he is in the park with the "fragrance of hyacinth in the air". "Simeon" begins
with "Roman hyacinths blooming in bowls". Though both the poems, "A Journey of the Magi" and "Simeon" are meant to celebrate the birth of Christ, they deal more with the aftermath of the Birth—suffering and death. In fact with birth begins the process of death simultaneously. Eliot probably got the germ of his idea for "East Coker" from these poems: "In my beginning is my end."

What saves these poems from turning into Christian poetry and the poet from being circumscribed into a Christian poet is the superb interweaving of imagery partly Christian with partly private creations, each illuminating and strengthening the other. The poetry does not centre on the event but uses the event to trace other themes, often continued from his early poetry. "Animula" is a prayer for the soul at the hour of birth. It is based on Dante's doctrine of the soul. P.R. Heading believes that it is not merely a restatement of Dante's theory of the soul but a "clean statement of the psychology and philosophy basic to all of Eliot's major poetry". Heading writes that it assumes and defines the attitude towards the human soul, free will and individual responsibility implicit
in the poetry of both poets. The poem is based on Purgatorio XVI. Marco Lombardo answers Dante's questions on the freedom of the will and on the soul. Eliot quotes the speech-- "From the hands of Him who loves her before she is, the simple child that plays with weeping and laughter, the simple soul, that knows nothing except that comes from hands of a glad creator, she turns willingly to everything that delights her. First she tastes the flavour of a trifling good; then is beguiled and pursues it, if neither guide nor check withhold her . . . laws were needed as a curb; a ruler was needed, who should at least see afar the tower of the-true city." "

We thus see the wholeness of the self, present in the childhood fragment as one turns into an adult. The child is totally open to experiences, participating in its world, aware of the world of nature moving in and out of the world of make-believe and reality- the two worlds are not contradictory. But as it grows the duality of the world- the world of "is" and "seems", "appearance" and "reality" presses itself upon it--

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33 Eliot, Selected Essays 259-60.
The heavy burden of the growing soul
Perplexes and offends more day by day.

The unified world of childhood fragments as what
should and should not be done come into conflict--

... may and may not, desire and control
The pain of living...

Jung similarly believes that the childhood
self is not fragmented. He writes that images of
totality or wholeness can be observed in childhood. The
child may have a unitary self or basic psychosomatic
entity out of which the ego evolves.34

In a child nothing divides between what the
child thinks, feels and does— the three worlds are
united, unlike the schistic world of the adult.

In the poems "Animula" and "The Cultivation
of Christmas Trees" we get, vignettes of childhood. The
excitement and joy and the warm security the child
enjoys is captured beautifully in the two poems, though
not without a mention of "the pain of living" and
"fear"— "Because the beginning shall remind us of the

34Joseph Henderson, "Ancient myths and modern Man", Man and
His Symbols 168.
end. . . ." The poem echoes with a Wordsworthian resonance as the poet almost prays that these memories be preserved so that the reverence and the gaiety

May not be forgotten in later experience,

In the bored habituation, the fatigue, the tedium,
The awareness of death, the consciousness of failure"

Memories of childhood perhaps take Eliot back to his New England background and he is reminded of the

Pleasures in the wind, the sunlight
and the sea;

Critics such as Helen Gardner, point out that the images, presence of the sun and sea in his later poetry is the presence of his New England background. Eliot himself mentioned in August 1930 that after so many years in London, he had to go back to Massachusetts and Missouri for natural imagery.

It is significant that Eliot makes a turn to nature imagery in his later poems. He turns away from the squalor and decay of the urban world to the serene,

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36Gordon, Early Years 13.
though at times cruel, beauty of nature. In this imagery is recaptured the warmth and security, the wholeness of the childhood world that had fragmented as he grew older. We see Eliot return to this world in "Marina".

Marina's setting is Casco bay, Maine with its fir trees crowded with fog. Maine, in Eliot's youth, was the destination of his most ambitious sailing ventures. The voyager approaches the New England shore after the long ordeal of the sea and is "awakened" to a longed-for call that comes through the fog; but this time the call is for a spiritual journey pointing towards a new life. But the boat is broken, (the boat like Gerontion's house symbolises the body) --

Bowsprit cracked with ice and paint cracked with heat.

We get a hint of the transformation that is taking place within the speaker as he resolutely decides--

Living to live in a world of time beyond me, let me,

Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
could hear the voices of the girls, though he could never see them. But there was a door in the wall and a key. He would sometime secretly creep into the corridors of the deserted school. He remembered an ailanthus tree within it. The children's voices, the door, the tree—all reappear in his poetry. Significantly, as images associated with the revelatory moment.

Where his early personae are caught in the world of decay and death, only vaguely conscious of the presence of nature in the fragrance of certain spring flowers, the later personae are more aware of it, in fact they appear rooted in the world of nature.

Born out of memories of Eliot's past, "Marina" recollects the scenic beauty of New England as well as the sailing adventures of his youth. The sea always instilled in him a feeling of calm and well-being. No wonder then that it is one of those rare poems that end on a positive note. The spiritual home-coming is symbolised by a return to New England and to a nature imagery resonant with childhood memories.

The poem ends on a note of hope, awaiting the "new ships". As always Eliot dwells on temporal life as "Death". In contrast to the debilitated body, symbolised by the broken ship, he is lead to a new life in "a world of time beyond me". This voyage is finally taken in "East Coker".

"Marina" is suffused with a lyricism not present in Eliot's poetry since "La Figlia che Piange".

Not only did he pick the natural images from his New England days but memories of his childhood lurk in such images as--

Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet

which recurs in "Burnt Norton"--

Go said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,

Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.

Addressing the girls of the Mary Institute, in America, Eliot described the wall which divided his garden from the school-yard, next door. As a boy he
Ash-Wednesday begins on an opposite note. The spiritual journey is undertaken by rejecting all, even the images of his New England home. The poem was dedicated to Vivienne and is his farewell to her; though he later erased the dedication. According to Carl Wooton, Eliot has used the structure of the Mass as the objective-correlative for Ash-Wednesday. The Mass is essentially a sacrifice. It is offered by the "entire community of faithful Christians through the action of a priest". The action of the Mass involves the people first offering petitions to God and then receiving God's word; the people then offer themselves and their worldly possessions. The sacrifice is complete when they receive God himself in the Eucharist. Eliot has similarly portrayed the progress of a penitent attaining redemption through a total sacrifice. The arrangement of the six poems of the Ash-Wednesday seems to parallel the structure of the Mass. Wooton believes, the Mass to be the "objective-correlative" to Ash-Wednesday. Rituals were very important to Eliot. According to Stephen Spender the word "ritualistic ... best describes

Eliot's attitude to life. "Eliot believed that it is through rituals that the present maintains a relationship with the past. Spender writes that in Eliot's poetry up to Ash-Wednesday, Eliot saw the destruction of the past rituals and their replacement by rituals which were mockeries of them as the characteristic feature of modern life."

In the poem, through the ritual of Ash-Wednesday, he commemorates his conversion. Ash-Wednesday marks the first day of Lent, a period of forty days' penance and fasting, to commemorate the forty days Christ spent fasting in the wilderness where, tempted by Satan, Christ turned away from the world to God.

We see a similar move wherein the persona renounces all in pursuit of the Divine. The Divine had always had the supreme place in Eliot's thought. In "Religion and Literature" he writes, that the "whole of modern literature is corrupted by secularism, that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life: of something which I assume to be our primary concern". 41

41Eliot, Selected Essays 398.
We thus see a Bradleyan aspiration for a total merger of the self in the Divine. But before this step is taken, like Bradley, Eliot believes that the will has to be perfected. This entails a purging of the world of sense.

As mentioned earlier, in his student days at Harvard Eliot was greatly influenced by Buddhist and Indian philosophies. Both these philosophies emphasise renunciation as a means to attain the Divine path. They believe in a level of spiritual development wherein the individual self merges with a higher self; for this it is essential to learn to detach oneself from emotions and the senses; to learn not to desire pleasure over pain or strength over weakness but treat all positions equally. Such seemingly opposing feelings are considered illusory. They reflect a dualistic perception of being in the universe.

But this is not before one has reached a state of individuality and identity. It is believed that one cannot transcend the senses or emotions unless one is not actually in control of them, if one has not actually reached a stage of individuality.

The following concept has remarkable resemblance to Eliot's theory of Impersonality. "Poetry
is not a turning loose of emotion; it is not the expression of personality but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."\(^{42}\)

Thus true identity in spirituality, similar to what Eliot claims in arts, lies beyond the influence of emotions.

In *Ash-Wednesday* this is what the persona attempts-- to get beyond attachments. It marks a turning-point in Eliot's life as he enters the church renouncing the world, hoping for a union with the Divine. The poem was initially more personal than it appears in its published form. An earlier version of Part III had "my own shape", which Eliot altered to "the same shape"--\(^{43}\)

I turned and saw below

The same shape twisted on the banister.

The earliest sections of the poem published in December 1927 forecasts the vow of chastity that Eliot took. It was titled "Salutations". The poem is an interlocking of Biblical references, Dantesque imagery

\(^{43}\)Ackroyd 179.
as well as childhood memories. But what is peculiar to Eliot is the fact that despite passages reminiscent of Anglo-Catholic liturgy he has managed to convey his private vision. He evokes the tone of "religious verse" without any faith articulated or convictions expressed. As mentioned earlier he is able to create a devotional language out of his own preoccupations. In Eliot's own words Ash-Wednesday was an attempt to roughly apply the Vita Nuova to contemporary life. He explained that Dante's treatise was of great importance in the struggle to discipline feeling. In his essay on Dante Eliot explained how Dante had managed to transform a sexual experience of early childhood into an intellectual and spiritual reality by means of allegory. Could Eliot have been "sublimating" a similar experience into a religious intensity? To Eliot, who was always repulsed by sexual love, it had been a continuous effort in poetry, at least to sublimate it as Dante had done in his personal life and art.

Lyndall Gordon quotes A.V.C. Schmidt to indicate that Eliot, Ash-Wednesday is more of a love poem than a poem of penitence. She believed that

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44Ackroyd 179.
45Ackroyd 179.
Eliot's idea of love does not fit the usual categories of romantic and sexual love. Eliot wished to transform desire into something absolute and everlasting, always attempting to sublimate it into the ethereal. Gordon too gathers that Eliot turned to Dante to experience this exalted feeling that Dante achieved with Beatrice. Gordon identifies the lady with whom Eliot was attempting this impossible union: Emily Hale, Eliot's friend from his New England days. Ash-Wednesday was the spiritual-autobiography recording this experience. Gordon believes that Emily replaced Vivienne as Eliot's muse in Ash-Wednesday.47

Images from Eliot's early poetry recur in the poem, though with altered meanings. Central to the poem is the image of the stairs. This time it is a winding stairway. Whereas earlier the stairway usually symbolised a crisis of decision in an encounter between a man and a woman or a sudden state of awareness; in Ash-Wednesday it represents a journey towards a higher life. He may have also derived the image of the stairs from one of Lancelot Andrewes sermons of Repentance preached in Ash-Wednesday 1916: "Two turns are necessary to conversion, one that looks forward to God, 47Gordon, New Life 15.
one that looks back on to one's own past sins." At each turn of the stair Eliot encounters a temptation. The beginner who enters spiritual life must achieve total detachment from all things—sensual or spiritual, only then can he ascend to God. The souls in Dante's "Purgatorio" are turning as they move up the winding mount which leads to heaven, the state of blessedness and divine love; the turning stair in section III of Ash-Wednesday represents this conception of motion. Section III, published individually bore the title "Som de l Ecscalina" (Summit of the Stairway), Eliot probably meaning that the soul ascends and descends continually until it has acquired perfect habits, only then can it achieve union with God.

The New England images which in "Marina" had been indicative of a spiritual homecoming, is a hindrance to it in Ash-Wednesday--

The white sails still fly seaward, seaward flying

Unbroken wings

"Gordon, Early Years 131.
For a moment the poet is caught up in the memory of the "granite shore" and "the lost sea voices" but he is quick to realise that they are only "empty forms between the ivory gates". Desire of any kind is feared as distraction. The protagonist resolutely pushes aside each temptation. There is the corporeal side of love which has a hold over him, "a slotted window bellied like a fig's fruit"; there is lost love from which he turns away, "Blown hair is sweet; brown hair over the mouth blown/ Lilac and brown hair". Both "lilac" and "hair" are images in Eliot's poetry associated with the erotic— we are led to "Prufrock" written twenty years ago, to arms that are "white and bare/ But in the lamplight, downed with light brown hair". Lyndall Gordon identifies Emily Hale with the mention of "brown hair".

There are a number of Christian Symbols. The juniper tree, for instance— under which Elijah is said to have prayed to God when Jezebel threatened to kill him. Eliot repeats the Christian symbol of the "Word"—

Speech without word and

Word of no speech

He is probably referring to the condition of the world which is such that the "Word" cannot be spoken.
The purgation of the persona continues as the desert evolves into the garden. The "withered apple seed" spitting from the mouth are the mundane desires being cast-off by purgation. But as temptation of past life continue to disturb him he prays to the lady--"Teach us to be still".

The Lady is described in detail-- "veiled", in a "white gown", "lovely" and "good"-- whose goodness saves the speaker. In Section II where the first reference to the Lady is made, she is made out more as "a beautiful lady, full of goodness". Sex impulses are sublimated into a religious devotion--

The single rose
Is now the Garden
Where all loves end
Terminate torment
Of love satisfied

But in the IV-Section, where the second reference is made we see the lady "Going in white and blue, in Mary's colour". There is a divine aura about her "white light folded, sheathed about her, folded". This section makes a reference to the "Purgatario",
wherein Dante reaches the summit of the Mount of Purgatory, enters Paradise and has a glimpse of Beatrice. In the V and VI section we find the protagonist praying to the Lady—"Blessed Sister, holy mother". She is now raised to the stature of a spiritual figure— a Saint or the Virgin Mary; and even beyond this, to the spirit of Nature—"Sister, Mother / And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea...."

The lady emerges as an archetypal image embodying within her the figure of the beloved, wife, mother, sister, Nature and Virgin Mary. Eliot beseeches this spirit "suffer us not to be separated". In "Marina" Eliot turned to childhood imagery; in Ash-Wednesday, though he turns away, struggling against the memories of his boyhood, ultimately seeking wholeness, he is led once again to his childhood—to the figure of the lady who embodies all the maternal figures of protection and security—mother, sister. However, he does manage to save it from turning into nostalgia by transmuting the personal into a universal Presence—

spirit of the river, spirit of the sea...
Through Catholic imagery he has managed to explore his own preoccupations, not only in poetry but also spiritual life. As F.R.Leavis puts it, "The spiritual and the poetic explorations are one . . . Poetic technique for Eliot here is a technique for sincerity". According to Tate Eliot has "hit upon the only method now available of using the conventional religious image in poetry. He has reduced it from symbol to image, from abstraction to the plane of sensation".

Eliot has used two contrasting styles in the poem. One, through a quiet clearness suggesting vision and the other, through its laboured cadences expressing the agony of the battle within himself. As B.Rajan writes, "Not all of us can share Eliot's faith, but all of us can accept the poetry because nearly every line of it was written while looking into the eyes of the demon". But the poem moves towards a vision. This time there is hope. It is a positive poem. Groping his

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way, learning lessons on self-surrender, the persona
does manage to utter "our peace in His Will" in the
final section.

Ash-Wednesday may be read as a poem of penitence or love transmuted, but the main theme
towards which Ash-Wednesday moves is self surrender. What Eliot had begun as a poetic device is in Ash-Wednesday translated into a spiritual medium in the quest to experience the Absolute. This psychological surrendering of the ego, the individual self, Eliot believes, takes one to the doorway of the experience referred to in the previous chapter. It had eluded his protagonists, it was up to him to make an effort towards it. The "I" of Ash-Wednesday is not a constructed protagonist but veritably the consciousness of the poet.

Spender has a similar view. According to him in Ash-Wednesday "the "I" is no longer aesthetic, nor conditioned by the state of civilisation . . . this conscious self is personal, though divested of most of the attributes we call personality. It is the self naked in the presence or absence of God. It is the very centre of the poet's own consciousness, where he crosses over from being involved with the world through
fear and ambition, contempt, literature and society to his faith in the Church." 53

We see the struggle between the claims of the ego and the self in *Ash-Wednesday*. We could read this development as a process of, what Jung defined as individuation, mentioned earlier-- a turn inwards to achieve new and more integrated patterns dictated by the self.

The protagonist comes out of the psychological isolation of the early poetry and achieves a semblance of "shared meaning" under the canopy of the Church, but is yet to come to a state of complete psychological surrender as he is still wary of dissolving the boundaries of the self and opening himself out to the Divine will.

(II)

The quest for the totality of self, undertaken by his protagonists, is resumed by Eliot himself in *Four Quartets*. For the first time, in *Four

Quartets Eliot has dispensed with the trappings of a borrowed voice to deal with issues in the bare, issues he has been wrestling with throughout his life—on the personal as well as the poetic front. Four Quartets could well be taken as the resolution to his hitherto poetry—-the attempted union of the fragmented self. In this venture to confront reality he has taken himself and in the process the reader closer to the threshold of a meaningful existence. As F.R. Leavis put it, "...the preoccupation is with establishing from among the illusions, evanesces and unrealities of life in time an apprehension of an assured reality—-a reality that, though necessarily apprehended in time, is not of it . . . ."

The pursuit of this quest led him to his studies on mysticism at Harvard from where he veered on to Bradley. Though he abandoned philosophy for poetry, the issues that had absorbed him in his philosophical studies surface in his poetry: the "unreal" (appearance) and the "real"; the "temporal" and "eternal"; so much so that these ideas have burgeoned into a pattern of images that emerge in every poem. In his early poetry, driven by the Bradleyan concept of

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54 F.R. Leavis, T.S. Eliot ed. Hugh Kenner 11.
defining Reality as a fusion, a "whole" beyond rupture, Eliot had deliberately attempted to yoke disparate materials together into poetry; what emerged was brilliant poetry but nevertheless the union, at times appeared forced. But in Four Quartets Eliot comes closest to touching the experience of the "Absolute". The synthesis in the Quartets is not external or deliberate but organic.

The poem synthesises aspects of his personal life—his past, his present, his artistic preoccupations and his lifelong quests, which, rather than circumscribing it to the "religious" world could more aptly be described as the "spiritual". In Eliot's own words, as told to Anne Ridler, in the Quartets he wove unrelated strands of his existence "in an emotional whole".55 What is noteworthy is the fact that Eliot has been able to perceive the extraordinary in the ordinary events of life and managed to create poetry in the form of scripture without relating it to religious beliefs.

In Four Quartets the external does not repulse the speaker. There is no presence of an inviolable self that he is attempting to protect.

55Gordon, New Life 100.
against the evil material world. Hence the aversion which is embodied in the sordid imagery too is not present in the poems. Neither does the external world take the form of a temptation the speaker is trying to overcome. There is no struggle to 'turn away' from the world.

In *Four Quartets* the speaker is more confident of himself. He is aware that the vision he is struggling with is no chimera, it exists and that he will be able to capture it. The poems are his labour towards this moment.

The very aspect the poem deals with is that of reality. R.P. Blackmur feels that "Eliot's poetry may be a spiritual exercise of great scope".56 He writes ". . . . to us Mr. Eliot must be of our time less because he seems to spring from it than because he imposes upon us a deep reminder of a part of our heritage which we have lost except for the stereotypes of spiritual manners . . . refreshed, re-embodied, his poems become actual for us."57

Thus if as Frye says the ego expresses only the genuine and mundane, we can say that in *Four

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57Blackmur 131.
Quartets it is the self asserting itself, confronting us with vital issues on the nature of existence—

And what you thought you came for
Is only a shell, a husk of meaning

And yet the Quartets does not divorce the mundane but incorporates it within its quest-- the peasants in East Coker, the New England fishermen, the travellers in the tube, all have a unique place in the poem.

Each of the Quartets is titled after a name of a place related in some way to the speaker. But unlike in Ash-Wednesday the poet does not struggle to keep away memories. The places are not viewed as distractions or hindrances in the quest for wholeness, the poet knows that only through experiences embedded in them can he reach the union.

Burnt Norton is a Gloucestershire manor near which Eliot stayed. It is not so much the manor but its garden-- the rose-garden that takes the central scene in the poem. Eliot had visited it with his friend from the New England days, Emily Hale. East Coker, in Somerset is where his ancestors lived until they emigrated to New England in the late seventeenth
century. The Dry Salvages is a group of rocks off Cape Ann. Sailing was his favourite sport and as a boy he would spend many hours wandering on the sea shore. The sea left a lasting impression on his poetry. Little Gidding was the seat of a religious community which Nicholas Ferrar established. It was a shrine for the devout Anglican. As the titles indicate the quest for a totality of self brings the speaker to a return to the past— to the memories of his boyhood days in New England and beyond that to his roots— the England of his ancestors. However, as always with Eliot, this was not so much a return to the past as a coalescence of the past into his present, as images from the poet’s past weave and intertwave with those of the present.

The Four Quartets style varies from that of the early poetry. Though there is the odd line picked from the mystics of the middle ages or the references to Dante, there is no plethora of allusions. The poet is quite comfortable to speak in his own voice. Though critics vary on this point, Hugh Kenner feels that the poem implies a voice but not that of the poet speaking, nor does it "agitare a desert silence"; it is audible only in the reader's mind. He believes that a reader
takes possession of an Eliot poem, or suffers it to take possession of him.\textsuperscript{58}

Julia Reibetanz disagrees with this. According to her Eliot wished to commune with the reader, "to speak in the tones and attitude of intimate conversation. . . [In] no other single poem of Eliot's", she says, "do we get so great a sense of the poet speaking directly to us as he might face-to-face."\textsuperscript{59} According to Spender by being someone who calls himself "I", the poet makes the poem into a shared experience of the writer and the reader. The "I" expresses that which is unique in him and that which as an isolated consciousness, he shares with the reader.\textsuperscript{60}

Northrop Frye too feels that in the later poetry the "I" of the speaker of the poem, is a persona of the poet himself, though in the earlier work the narrators are created characters speaking with the poet's voice but not for him. One does tend to agree with Frye for the experiences enumerated in the poem appear to be personal experiences, as Eliot himself admitted. In the \textit{Four Quartets} he was "seeking verbal

\textsuperscript{60}Spender, Eliot 163.
equivalents for small experiences he had had, and for knowledge derived from reading". By knowledge derived from reading Eliot was making a reference to books he had read while at Harvard— the Upanishads, The Divine Comedy, Samson Agonistes and the mystics of the late Middle Ages, St. John of the Cross and Dame Julian of Norwich. Eliot had felt the loss of an integrated tradition and social integrity in America and Europe, even in his student years. His influential teacher Irving Babbit had counselled him to turn to India and the Orient for better religions and philosophies.

The Four Quartets symbolise not only a passage home, to New England, but also a symbolic homecoming. In the early poetry we find the protagonist vacillating between the desire to experience the material world and the desire to resist it. The persona in the Quartets is more definite of his ground, the chimerical "other world" which the earlier personae groped towards in the mist of belief and disbelief is no more.

This does not however imply the view that the Four Quartets is a deviation from the pattern of

Eliot's early poetry, rather it can be looked upon as a continuation, approaching a reconciliation.

The dominant theme that binds the various strands in *Four Quartets* is that of Time. Eliot's preoccupation with "time" can be discerned even in his early student poetry. In *[A Lyric]*—

> If space and time, as sages say,  
> Are things that cannot be,  
> ...........................................  
> The flowers I sent thee when the dew  
> Was trembling in the vine  
> Were withered ere the wild bee flew  
> To suck the eglantine.

The poem written in 1905 proves that even before his introduction to Bradley, to Eliot, Time had meant a psychological phenomenon rather than a linear pattern of past, present and future. Bradleyan idealism helped give an authenticity and structure to what he already innately believed in. "Reality" as "immediate experience" reconciles and thus eliminates all linear time schemes in its unity; therefore past and future are ideas formulated in the present. As mentioned in the previous chapter Eliot interprets
"reality" as the "Bradleyan Absolute" and accordingly believes that it is the "Absolute" that gives meaning to the flux that we experience around us.

This idea makes its appearance in various forms in the writings of Eliot. It emerges as his idea on tradition in one of his famous essays "Tradition and Individual Talent": "The historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence. The historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional."

The past is recalled and re-lived in the present. It is this relationship between the past and present that lends meaning to either. Similarly Eliot's theory of Impersonality. Eliot believes that it is, what Jung calls the self that gives meaning to personality, without which it is a mere "husk".

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Personality is the superficial exterior which has to be surrendered for the personae to reach a higher state of awareness. The quest for this moment of vision is what Eliot's protagonists strive for.

Eloise Knapp Hay chooses to name the "experience" as an epiphany. As she does not view them as theophanies she prefers to define them as "a complete emotional and intellectual complex in an instant of time" and does not go beyond describing it as "the union of opposites." "... we find that his epiphanal moments are indeed images of great psychological complexity. ..." Hay continues. Eliot in the Quartets defines the "moment of experience" in terms of a union of opposites, as "the point of intersection of the timeless/ with time . . .""  

Morris Weitz on the other hand, in the article, "T.S. Eliot: Time as a Mode of Salvation" puts forth what he calls Eliot's doctrine of immanence. He claims that this doctrine was already worked out in Eliot's first poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" and takes it to be the point of unity between his early and later poetry. Weitz divides time into

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two parts in the Prufrock poem—"true time" and "false time". False time has to do with those experience that get nowhere, like the aimless streets of Prufrock's wanderings; "true time", he claims, is time that encompasses significant experiences--those having purpose and direction . . ." Weitz believes that Eliot, even while writing "The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock" believed that the eternal or timeless was imminent in the false time of flux. He cited the example of the last stanza to prove his point.65

Weitz appears a trifle too hasty in conjoining the two "times" in Eliot's poem written as early as 1917. This reconciliation between the two times does not take place until the late 1930s, wherein in the Four Quartets we see this union for the first time. "True Time" has eluded Eliot's early protagonists, they are at a loss as to where or how they can come to it. The only thing they are sure of in the early poems is— that in order to achieve it they will have to transcend the banal world of ordinary existence. Narcissus turned away, "under the shadow" of "the grey rocks", the pilgrim of The Waste Land went to

the far-off mountains, the convert of Ash-Wednesday turned away to the desert. Prufrock himself, with an inkling of a "true" life looked away towards the sea to the "sea-girls" (an antithetical picture to that of human affections). But "human voices" impinge upon him and the experience is lost. The immanence of "true time" in "false time" has not been realised or else there would not be the yawning gap between what the protagonists associates with the two worlds.

Thus the unity between the early and later works is not this doctrine of immanence. In fact, even in poems written after the conversion the gap is yet unbridged. In "Marina", the protagonist, awakened to the call of a journey for a perfect life, once again turns to the sea; the ethereal imagery of "Prufrock" is transformed to that of the more concrete images of sea shores and granite islands that beckon the protagonist but nevertheless, they take him away from the time-bound land.

Living to live in a world of time beyond me, let me
Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.

[Marina]
The first visible change is seen in *Ash-Wednesday*. Here the granite shore and the "white sails" are seen as "empty forms". The persona no longer pursues them. And in *The Dry Salvages* comes the realisation---"the sea is all about us," the impulse to turn away from human contact is reversed in the *Quartets* as the persona turns to the time-bound land. For the first time we witness the union of land and sea:

The sea is the land's edge also, the granite
Into which it reaches, the beaches where it tosses
Its hint of earlier and other creation.

*The Dry Salvages*

this is not a superficial merger; the sea leaves its presence on the landscape---

The salt is on the briar rose
The fog is in the fir trees.

*The Dry Salvages*
Thus Weitz's said doctrine of immanence is first realised in the **Quartets**—this awareness brings about the epiphanic moment in Eliot's poetry. Herein is the true "union of opposites", a poet with a truly unified sensibility; for as Hay claims, "I do not think Eliot could have invented this counterpoint between his early and late masterpieces unless he had lived it and made it true."86

The **Quartets** were written during the most difficult years of Eliot's life. He was battling with feelings of guilt on leaving his mentally ill wife, Vivienne and gnawed by regret for lost choices on his meeting Emily Hale, his old love from New England. His inner disturbances were reflected on the external world, torn apart by war. As with *The Waste Land*, when his inner strife was transformed into poetry so too with the **Four Quartets**, through inner and outer chaos was born poetry.

Faced by the void of a shared religious faith or metaphysical belief, Eliot had to turn to the most fundamental shared experience—that of existence itself. The **Quartets** is composed of such daily mundane instances of living as travelling in the tube. By

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detaching images from the patterns of routine existence, by constructing them as moments of illumination, "timeless moments"—Eliot startles us into recognition of the strangeness lurking in what we have always taken for granted. As Eliot himself had said that in the Quartets he was "seeking verbal equivalents for small experiences ..." Unlike his other poems, in Four Quartets he sought to create a world of "You and I", a world of shared meaning wherein the reader could participate in the experience.

Only in the form of a symbol can the finite mind conceive the Infinite. Eliot attempts to translate the "Absolute" in the form of a symbolic experience. The various themes are woven around this image to form a kind of mandala.

Jung describes the symbol as an expression of an unknown truth. According to him symbols have the quality of images that unite conscious and unconscious life where disparate sets of opposites exist. The symbol reveals a potential for unification and integration. They express the primordial images of the collective unconscious.

^Smidt 155.
As in the early poetry, in the later too we see Eliot begin the process of integration through the symbol.

However, whereas in the earlier poetry the symbol is used more often than not as a poetic device through which the primordial images of the collective unconscious are revealed, in the later poetry the poems are centred around particular symbols.

The symbol of the sea provides Eliot with an appropriate objective correlative for eternity and a host of other themes surrounding it. The "timeless" or "Absolute" in *Four Quartets* is symbolised in two images-- the "still point" and the "sea"-- both images include the antithetical elements, the former-- motion and stillness and the latter flux and eternity.

Eliot associates a number of symbols with the image of the "sea". In its wide expanse, the sea envelopes all time-- past, present and future and could stand for eternity. On other hand in its shapelessness and continuity it could represent the collective consciousness. He juxtaposes the image of the sea with that of the river-- "The river is within us, the sea is all about us." The river represents personal time or individual consciousness. Unlike the sea, it has been
tamed to a certain extent—the civilisation of men; however, "implacable,/ keeping his seasons and rages.
...", it floods out breaking its bonds, it reminds man of what lies beneath the veneer of civilisation—"the primitive terror"—that which men choose to forget. R.W. Flint refers to the river as "Freud's Id". The river continues into the sea, just as the individual consciousness is derived from the collective consciousness and is continuous within it.

The sea as impersonal time objectifies and intensifies our experiences as we turn into observers watching our familiar past surface forth transmogrified into unfamiliar symbols—"the broken lobster pot", "the broken oar". The "tolling bells" of the sea "measures time not our time", but time that existed before us and that shall continue after us. As our present hurtles into our past, we are being led to our destruction and death—the inevitable character of time. The "anxious worried women" in Eliot's poem are aware of this, as lying awake they try to "unweave, unwind, unravel/ and piece together the past and the future", trying to make some pattern out of their lives.

Eliot represents life through the symbol of a voyage at sea, as perilous as that of the New England fishermen and "unpatterned"—a void leading to death. To see us through this endless voyage Eliot offers the message of Krishna to Arjuna, a message of renunciation and equanimity—"consider the future/ and the past with an equal mind". He further speaks of "desireless action"—"do not think of the fruit of action". The Gita advocates a state of equanimity as the only means to attain peace in life. We once again come across the familiar idea, that is reiterated very often in Eliot—that to reach one's true identity it is necessary to get beyond emotions. Equanimity, the Gita professes, is possible only by shedding illusions or Maya; this is explained as identification with mind, emotions and body. However, the Gita advocates, this process of spiritual development has to be worked out not by turning away from the world, but by living within it. The only means of attaining equanimity within life is by renouncing the fruit of action.

The annunciation of death can be transformed to the Annunciation of rebirth if we accept not the temporal, but God as the ultimate, for "Time the destroyer is time the preserver/ Like the river with
its cargo of dead Negroes, cows and chicken coops'. This is illustrated with the image of the rock, a multifaceted image. It lies in the sea as a "monument" on a calm day, at times a "sea mark", but in a storm, always something to be wary of—something it always was—"a 'rock', perilous to the voyager.

The "rock" is a recurrent image in Eliot's early and later poetry—"Come under the shadow of this red rock." (The Waste Land) Cleanth Brooks points out to Eliot's method of indirection employed even in his avowedly Christian poetry. Brooks believes this strategy is enjoined upon him by "the nature of his vision and the nature of the audience to which that vision is to be mediated". With Christian symbols having been darkened and distorted, the task for both the Christian and the non-Christian poets is not only to find new symbols for the central experiences but to reconstitute the old symbols, reclaiming them, reducing them in context which will force us once again to confront their Christian meanings," he writes. How far Eliot can be called a Christian poet or his poetry, Christian poetry, it is doubtful to say, but he did "reclaim" the symbols, Christian, non-Christian alike.

and, resurrected them to yield a world of meaning-- for instance biblical symbols such as "Word", "rock", and "yew trees".

In the symbol of the "rock" we have the reconciliation of the changing and changeless-- the "immovable", "still" God in the midst of the ever moving tides. However, whereas the image of The Waste Land is that of one who shelters, the refuge, the image in "The Dry Salvages" is the figure of God in the modern day, reduced to a mere monument.

The "rock" also has nuances of the "primitive terror" lying beyond "the assurance/ of recorded history"-- the primitive consciousness lurking beneath aeons of civilisation, concealed but always present. Eliot's study of anthropology had given him a picture of the self that was well knit within its physical, psychic and spiritual aspects. As seen in the previous chapter, he also believed the self to be a continuous process containing within it the collective fantasies, and the collective potential of the whole human race. Eliot puts this idea in poetry in "The Dry Salvages"--

. . . Encouraged by superficial notions of evolution,

Which becomes, in the popular mind, a means of disowning the past.
the past experience revived in the meaning
Is not the experience of one life only
But of many generations . . .

We see the Quartets moving towards a resolution as Eliot attempts to unite the disparate fragments of the inner and outer world, embed the alienated self in a meaningful life of the community and integrate the present with history. As the poem advances the various ends fall into a perfect pattern. This reconciliation is reflected in the imagery.

The motif of the sea is a rich image of great psychological complexity in the poetry of T.S.Eliot. R.W.Flint points out that there are few conceits hidden allusion or cross references in Eliot's sea poetry. It stands by itself in direct lyric and dramatic self-sufficiency. The metaphor is so massive and prolonged that it becomes psychological allegory of the most effective sort. 70

The imagery of the sea is once again a revocation to Eliot's New England days. But here the conflict presented in his middle poetry is resolved. In

"Marina", images of his boyhood, symbolised a spiritual homecoming, whereas the same images in Ash-Wednesday were looked upon as distractions. According to Maxwell, Eliot's unsuccessful attempt to forsake the memories of his childhood, reflect his religious struggles and his Puritan tendency to demand rational proof for mystical revelation. But in his later poetry the memories of the New England days do not disturb him.

Further in the Quartets is present the attempt to blend the two tradition to which he was the heir--that of English ancestry and of his American life. Thus we see Eliot moving towards a reconcilement of the conflicts found in his early poetry. We see him return to them seeking in them the objective-correlative for the primordial wholeness.

The second image of eternity is the "still point of the turning world". The still point is an extension of time into movement. Eliot takes up an image he had used in "Triumphant March". He constructs the symbol around the contrast between time as mere continuum and the paradoxical Christian view that man lives "in and out of time", though immersed in flux, he can penetrate into the eternal by apprehending timeless

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existence within time and above it. It is the point of reconciliation, where the contradictory pattern of the world is resolved.

The dance along the artery

The circulation of the lymph

Are figured in the drift of stars

The same law that governs our bodies rules the celestial stars. The pattern of the particular continues in the pattern of the universal--both ruled by the same principles--our pulse beat, the seasons, the pathway of the stars follow the same pattern. Thus is the whole universe bound together, the mundane and the celestial, in the dialectics of "the still point".

The qualities of the "still point" is elucidated through inference. It is an image reconciling the two contradictory images of movement and flux and stillness or eternity. It suggests within it the stillness of eternity as well as the contrast of the fevered moments of the temporal world. It is the paradoxical symbol of the wheel whose centre remains motionless whatever the velocity of the rim.

Maxwell in The Poetry of T.S. Eliot quotes Philip Wheelwright who expands on the symbol of the
"wheel". According to Wheelwright a familiar development of the theme is presented in medieval and renaissance iconography in the image of the wheel of Fortune, which whirls men ceaselessly upward toward prosperity and downward to misery, but always at the centre of the wheel's movement is the axle tree. Wheelwright writes, "Although the visible axle tree turns ... there is an axis at the centre ... which "reconciles" the contradictions of the surrounding motion."

Maxwell also quotes Bishop Taylor on the image of the "still point". According to Taylor, "... a wise man is placed in a variety of chances, like the ... centre of a wheel [which] in the midst of all the circumvolutions and changes of posture, [is] without violence or change, save that it turns gently in compliance with its changed parts, and is indifferent which part is up, and which part is down." This comes close to Krishna's message of equanimity to Arjuna, referred to in "The Dry Salvages".

We see here a transmutation of Eliot's theory of Impersonality, wherein one has to reach beyond the influence of the superficial, exterior personality to attain one's true identity. It is reminiscent of the
"detachment" that Buddhism and Hinduism advocate, as well as Eliot's yearnings for "tranquillity" as expressed to Aiken. [refer to Ch II p. 125]

Wheelwright sums up the image as the focus at which all temporal action and movement are concentrated and resolved as the ultimate point of human aspiration. However Maxwell chooses to name the point more specifically as "God".72

Matthiessen is not as direct as Maxwell and prefers to call "the still point"— "a notion of a mathematically pure point (as Philip Wheelwright has called it), Eliot's poetic equivalent in our cosmology for Dante's 'unmoved mover'".73

Eliot himself had pointed to a more meaningful existence if we "accustomed ourselves to find meaning in final cause rather than in origins". He had defined the "final cause" as "attraction towards God".74

Skaff believes that to Eliot God, was synonymous with the Absolute; God therefore became for him an undefinable whole, a "metaphysical boundary" which could be reached only through "immediate

72Maxwell 173.
73Matthiessen 95.
74Eliot, Selected Essays 274.
experience" or the experience of a "timeless unity". The various interpretations point to the same end—that the "still point", symbolises the "timeless moment"—the experience of experiencing God. In the poem it is presented as a collection of contrasting images—"Neither flesh nor fleshless; / Neither from nor towards;" Eliot here is attempting to translate something which by definition is ineffable, into words. He therefore uses the process of "indirection", as mentioned earlier. Cleanth Brooks comments that Eliot would have learnt this technique from the French Symbolists. However, whereas they and Eliot himself in his early poetry, used it as a poetic device, in the Four Quartets Eliot uses it in his attempt to translate the indescribable experience. Brooks quotes R.G.Collingwod, "The reason why description, so far from helping expression, actually damages it, is that description generalises; to describe a thing is to call it a thing of such and such a kind, to bring it under an exception, to classify it." 

The "still point" is thus the point of the static axle, situated at the centre of the moving wheel. The perpetually moving circumference of the

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75Skaff 38.
76Cleanth Brooks, The Hidden God 71.
wheel is the temporal order. The idea of the repetitive cycle of the wheel is a recurrent theme in Eliot's poems. It is mentioned in "The Rock":

O perpetual revolution of configured stars,
O perpetual recurrence of determined seasons,
O world of spring and autumn, birth and dying!
O the endless cycle . . . .

The pattern of temporal life is imprisoned within this rotating motion of the wheel. This movement is inferred by "the circulation of lymph" in our bodies and the revolution of the celestial stars. This cyclic motion is the theme of the Second Quartet—"East Coker"—"In my beginning is my end". Eliot represents birth and decay within this cycle—

Old stone to new building, old timber to new fires,
Old fires to ashes, and ashes to the earth
Which is already flesh, fur and faeces,
Bone of man and beast, cornstalk and leaf.

Unless we are aware of a higher purpose in life, the cycles of birth and death remain meaningless
repetitive cycles of motion. Eliot had presented this image as early as 1917 in "Preludes"--

Wipe your hands—across your mouth, and laugh;
The worlds revolve like ancient women
Gathering fuel in vacant lots.

The quotidian world of daily living gathers significance only when the consciousness of eternity is integrated into the temporal. Only this awareness can liberate one from the meaningless cycles of birth and death.

Eliot similarly claims for an integrated view of the body and spirit. The repetitive cycle includes the story of man's life on earth—"birth copulation and death". Eliot takes us back into history into seventeenth century England of his ancestors where accompanied to "the weak pipe and the little drum" the peasants, man and woman are conjoined in a conjugal union.

The abortive gestures of Eliot's earlier personae changed to the meaningful symbol of the dance. However, whereas Sweeney and the other protagonists demonstrate a cleft between the will and the body, unaware of the gestures they perform—
peasants, though performing the meaningful act of the dance, are yet unaware of the meaning behind it. They dance in their communal ring around the still bon-fire. The rhythm of the drum takes us down history to the time of the primitive dance, in similar circles. The endless rotations remind him of the futility of this dance, ephemeral as the rest, existing in temporal time and leading to death.

Round and round the fire
Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,

Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons
The time of the seasons and the constellations

The time of the coupling of man and woman
And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.
Eating and drinking. Dung and death.

Unless fulfilled by a higher love, to Eliot the relationship between a man and a woman is no better than between animals. Eliot consistently attempted to relate the sexual with the spiritual. He wanted to transmute the moments of sexual love to a vision of
divine love, like Dante. In his essay on Dante, Eliot writes "the love of man and woman (or for that matter of man and man) is only explained and made reasonable by a higher love, or else is simply the coupling of animals." 77

Eliot fulfils his aim in the fourth section of *Ash-Wednesday* wherein the "lady" is imbued with divine aura. According to Lyndall Gordon Eliot similarly attempted the same in his personal life. She believes he desired to exalt his relationship with Emily Hale to these proportions and therefore never married her—"From his earliest juvenilia, he showed a distrust of sensuality, a belief that love was too delicate to be enjoyed." 78 In one of his unpublished essays of 1935 he had written—"I mean the turning away of the soul from desire...of drugged pleasures of power or of happiness, I mean "love" in the sense in which love is the opposite of what we ordinarily mean by "love" (the desire to possess and dominate or the desire to be dominated)." 79

Desire to Eliot, like emotions, was something to be transcended to reach to love. Unlike the personae of the *The Waste Land* and the early poems, fragmented

77 T.S. Eliot, Selected Essays 274.
souls, driven by desire and oblivious to love, the speaker of *Four Quartets* is aware of it, however he finds the presence of desire, a hindrance to his experience. He believes desire, denigrates love and constantly attempts to purge himself of it. We are a witness to the fragmentation that persists within the speaker. Not till the final sections do we see this reconciled.

In "Burnt Norton" this conflict is taken up. Here Eliot associates the idea of "love" and "desire" to the movement of the "wheel". He takes "love" to be the "still point"— the axle of the wheel, "unmoving", meaning untranscended by time; whereas "desire", he relegates to the temporal—

Desire itself is movement

Not in itself desirable;

Love is itself unmoving,

Only the cause and end of movement.

[Burnt Norton]

"Desire", is chained to the temporal, it waxes and wanes, it is ever changing and therefore, untrue.

Death is the only inevitable end of temporal things: "...that which is living can only die". [Burnt Norton]. But the atemporal transcends time
. . . After the Kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still

At the still point of the turning world.

[Burnt Norton]

According to Eliot one can transcend the ever changing temporal time, if we move into the point of "intersection of the timeless". Through this experience of eternity, one would have conquered time as perhaps Thomas Becket did through his martyrdom. Eliot describes the birth of Christ in similar terms—

A moment not out of time, but in time, in what we call history: transecting, bisecting the world of time, a moment in time but not like a moment of time,

[The Rock, 1934]

Art is one certain point of intersection with the timeless. Similar to Keats celebrating the Grecian Urn and Yeats celebrating Byzantine art Eliot gives the instance of the Chinese jar—"as the Chinese jar still Moves perpetually in its stillness". The jar
represents Classic art, it epitomises the achievements of the Chinese civilisation. In reaching this perfect, form and pattern the jar has verily touched eternity itself.

Eliot gives another instance of this perfection in pattern and form in "the word" made perfect against the perpetual decay of language. His early personae were locked within their ego, with no individuality, repeating other's lines. In their meaningless chatter words lost their meanings. However in *Four Quartets* words are unable to carry the weight of meaning that the speaker attempts to attach to them.

Words strain,

..............................
Under the tension, slip slide, and perish
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.

But when every phrase and sentence is right, in its perfect place, "the complete consort dancing together"— the "word" has attained to "the Word in the desert"— a language that has the permanence of scripture.
Spender comments that the Four Quartets at its most superficial level is the poet discussing with himself his craft and the difficulty of the medium of words. Spender views it as the task to make it new as well as preserve the integrity of the poet's language.80 This is seen in the dialogue with the "ghost"—

Since one concern was speech, and speech impelled us
To purify the dialect of the tribe
And urge the mind to aftersight foresight,

[Little Gidding]

Apart from the perfection of the jar and the precision of words reaching to the still point of eternity, Eliot gives two instances of timeless moment as experienced by him. In the garden at Burnt Norton, after the draught of nearly twenty years, since he experienced the mystical moment in 1910, he once again had a fleeting glimpse of this experience. In his earlier poetry there are instances where the protagonist is at the threshold of a similar epiphanic experience. The images associated with this experience have usually been water, light or flowers. This ecstasy

80Spender, Eliot 163.
is quite different from the masochistic ecstasy of the "dancer" in the St. Narcissus poem. The protagonist in The Waste Land comes close to such an experience as he watches enraptured, the girl stepping out of the garden with arms full of hyacinths. However even as he is subject to the ethereal experience the scene collapses, silence enfolds him and he once again returns to the futility of the waste land.

However in "Burnt Norton", as the speaker walks towards an empty pool of dry concrete, in the rose-garden, it seems to fill with water out of sunlight and a lotus rises out of the pool as the surface glitters with light. But here too the moment passes and a cloud shuts out the sun, the pool is empty once more. The speaker is still to make the complete psychological surrender necessary to reach a higher state of consciousness. Though he has had a glimpse of the vision, he is unable to retain it. The sceptic's voice within him takes the form of the bird, mocking at him--

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

In a similar voice to that uttered many years ago in "Prufrock"—"human voices wake us, and we
drown", the speaker remarks "to be conscious is not to be in time". The conflict between the human and divine, temporal and eternal continues.

The rose-garden is a recurrent image in Eliot's poetry. We have the first mention of a "garden" in "Portrait of a Lady", 1917. The protagonist mistakes his "self-centredness" for "self-possession" and is smugly confident within it. However, sitting in a park as he hears a "street-piano" he recollects the "smell of hyacinths" flitting across the garden and for the first time his insulated self is aware of the existence of the "other". But the self is so habituated to isolation that he is confused by these thoughts and wonders—"Are these ideas right or wrong?" The temporal moment in the garden brings an awareness of other existences, besides his own and in this awareness, the persona discovers himself for the first time. This moment of oneness is a glimpse of Reality itself.

A scene from one of Eliot's plays, The Confidential Clerk reveals why "the moment in the garden" can turn into a revelatory moment, as it did for a brief moment in "Burnt Norton"; or throw us back upon our emptiness, as it did in The Waste Land.
Lucasta consoles Colby on his facing the fact that he would never be a good musician--

But it's only the outer world that you've lost:
You've still got your inner world—a world that's more real.

.................
You have your secret garden; to which you can retire
And lock the gate behind you.

But Colby answers that his garden seems unreal--

Colby.

.................
...They seem so unrelated.
I turn the key, and walk through the gate,
And there I am....... alone, in my "garden".
Alone, that's the thing. That's why it's not real.

.........................
It's simply the fact of being alone there
That makes it unreal.

The modern society has isolated the individual from all claims to a sense of relatedness,
so much so that the movement from "I" to "we" is a stupendous task. And yet through this shift alone do we attain a true sense of identity. The moment in the garden is bereft of meaning unless it leads to the feeling of oneness— which the persona of "Burnt Norton" had experienced briefly but which had eluded the protagonist of The Waste Land.

The second instance experienced by Eliot as the "timeless moment" is placed in the first part of "Little Gidding". Like the instance in the rose garden, here too, it is a natural scene that sparks a supernatural revelation. However the tentative apprehension of the vision in "Burnt Norton" is transformed to a more confident one. The speaker is visibly over-awed and does not stop to analyse. The vision is figured in images of flashes of light—

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,
........................................
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but Pentecostal fire

[Burnt Norton]
The scene is a description of "mid-winter spring". The image comprises paradoxes—"the short day is brightest, with frost and fire". This light is a revelation, brilliant in its intensity, unlike the fleeting experience in the rose garden. Like the "rain" of The Waste Land "stirring the dull roots it stirs the dumb spirit into an awakening". The metaphysical ideas are woven into the imagery—"in windless cold that is the hearts heat". This spring time is not in "time's covenant" just as the "transitory blossom" is "not in the scheme of generation". The scene is a revelation of a life beyond death.

C.K Stead remarks that in the opening twenty lines of "Little Gidding" "we have almost the only point in the poem at which a perfect balance is achieved between the rightful claims of flesh and spirit". 81

Whereas these two scenes are associated with revelation through union, the Four Quartets also deal with renunciation and sacrifice which the poet believes is a necessary step towards the realisation of this vision. What is essentially necessary is self-surrender. An ability to be conscious of ourselves

and others. We fail to realise that our identity emerges through our relationship with others. We define ourselves through the complex set of relations that bind us to nature, to society, and to the culture of which we are a part. However, this is realised only by the surrender of one's sense of self. The philosopher, Thomas Nagel in his book *Equality and Partiality* believes that all individuals contain within themselves two standpoints, the personal and impersonal; from the personal standpoint, the individual looks out for him or herself, for his or her own interests. But from the impersonal standpoint he or she empathises with, even identifies with, the needs and desires of others.82

"Without the impersonal standpoint there would be no morality, only the clash, compromise, and occasional convergence of individual perspectives. It is because a human being does not apply his own point of view that each of us is susceptible to the claims of others through private and public morality".

It is the possession of the impersonal point of view that distinguishes the self from the ego. The ego is entrapped within its egocentricity, alienated

The speaker of *Four Quartets* is aware of this and struggles hard against the claims of the ego. In *Four Quartets* "humility" has been described as "the only virtue we can hope to acquire". "Humility" is nothing but "self-annihilation", self- surrender, when the "impersonal" view point is brought into focus. Frye writes that humility is the opposite of pride— traditionally the essence of sin. Pride is life centred in the ego, according to Frye.83 Eliot himself had claimed humility to be the most difficult of the Christian virtues. We thus see the speaker reaching towards more integrated states of awareness in *Four Quartets*.

As in the early poetry Eliot projects states of psyche on the imagery. In *Four Quartets*, unlike the early poetry where natural imagery served as contrasts to squalid images, we see fresh natural images of great beauty. Eliot embodies his epiphanic moments too in natural images— most of them reminiscence of his childhood memories— the children's voices, the garden, the door. The temporal experiences of the garden and the winter morning reveal most poignantly the ultimately real.

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The war between the temporal and the atemporal continues in the first three Quartets. In Ash-Wednesday the persona had prayed:

Suffer us not to mock ourselves with falsehood

Teach us to care and not to care

Teach us to sit still

In the first three Quartets the speaker continues in the same vein, as he attempts to empty "the sensual with deprivation / cleaning affection from the temporal", disciplining the "general mess of imprecision of feeling" and the "undisciplined squads of emotion". Eliot believed that only through the total subjugation of the sense to the spirit can meaning be once again revived to the world of sense. Eliot takes us through two movements, one is withdrawal and the second, surrender. Dwelling on the temporal one can never hope to reach the Absolute for, Eliot believes it is filled with fancies and empty of meaning. Eliot takes the image from "Preludes", "Tumid apathy and no concentration / men and bits of paper whirled by the cold wind". The "whirled" is again a repetition of the cyclic motion of the "wheels", recalling also an image from "Gerontion"--
De Bailhache, Fresca, Mrs. Cammel, whirled
Beyond the circuit of the shuddering Bear
In fractured atoms.

Living merely on the temporal zone will hurtle one to dissolution. However, whirled on the circumference of the wheel, enslaved by the endless repetition of time, we can still reach the "stillness" of the "still point" if we rid ourselves of the dross of the temporal. This entails a—

... destitution of all property,
Desiccation of the world of sense,
Evacuation of the world of fancy,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;

[Burnt Norton]

The self has to be led away from obsession with the external world and a selfish concern for the individual self. This is a necessity for the "rebirth" that the poet envisages.

Eliot regrets that humanity's mastery over the material world does not bring any acute awareness of the spiritual-- the ultimately real. He criticises
the Renaissance individualist approach. He believes this knowledge has ignored the "essential aspect of reality." Solution lies not in the scientific exploration of our physical world or accumulation of knowledge as idealised by the Renaissance but through a return to the beginning-- through consciousness of our intuitive being to turn to the eternal truth. Knowledge which should have led to the amalgamation of the material and spiritual has instead led to the opposition of the two and thus resulted in the isolation of the individual from a rooted centre. He therefore resolves that one should put aside the advice and empty promises of our elders--

Do not let me hear
Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,

The only wisdom we can hope to acquire
Is the wisdom of humility: humility is endless

[East Coker]

With the disappearance of illusions comes the surrender-- the second path.
This is the one way, and the other
Is the same, not in movement
But abstention from movement;

[Burnt Norton]

This surrender leads to "a waiting". Eliot introduces the concept of darkness as a means of purifying the self, taking the idea from "the dark night of the soul" of St. John of the Cross. Eliot plays upon the word dark-- "O dark dark dark"-- he introduces the cry of the blind Samson, whose blindness is his purgatory but he is unaware of it. For Eliot, the darkness holds a promise of truth and enlightenment.

Eliot distinguishes between two sorts of darkness-- the engulfing darkness of the temporal world, symbolised in the image of the darkness in tube trains and the "vacancy" of the "eminent men of letters"--

They all go into the dark,
The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant
The word "vacant" recalls "the stuffed men", of "The Hollow Men", with a shadow falling between their "action" and "motive". With mention of the "Distinguished civil servants, chairman of many committees" Eliot draws the poem out of the confines of a specifically religious or spiritual pursuit but gives it a relevance to contemporary life and culture. This has always been the redeeming power of his poetry. Eliot manages to lift his poetry from the pursuit of personal preoccupations (which it essentially is) and makes it meaningful and relevant to the present world-crisis.

In the present eclipse of such powerful sources of information as the "Almanach de Gotha", "The Stock Exchange Gazette" and the "Directory of Directors", Eliot questions the validity of civilisation itself, if it should all end in "the silent funeral /Nobody's funeral, for there is none to bury."

This "darkness" of death is contrasted with the redeeming darkness, the "night of the soul". This is a conscious stripping of the identity's props, knowledge and emotions—of identity itself. It is a state of vacancy—very different from the previous
state— not "hollow" but "empty", a state of complete passivity— a state of quiet non-entity so that God may act upon it as His will. 'Ash-Wednesday's prayer is reiterated— "Our peace in His will".

Eliot's drastic attempts at transformation in "St. Sebastian" and "St. Narcissus" is mellowed to a quite "waiting" in Four Quartets. The poet has faith that "the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing". The poet has to undergo the spiritual purgation before he can hope for the perfect union of the soul with God.

As mentioned earlier, in his essay on Bradley, Eliot had quoted from the philosopher wherein he explains that for the human-divine ideal to become the will of the private self, the private self will have to "die".84

This self-surrender can be extended to his idea of Impersonality. Eliot believes that the individual egocentric self has to be transcended if man wishes to live a meaningful life. The emphasis in todays individualistic societies is not on this higher self but the personality, engrossed in self-gratification. One needs to go beyond this petty

self to be conscious of one's true identity, which for Eliot is the experience of the Absolute.

The soul has to undergo further tests for the purgation to be complete. This time it is the "wounded surgeon"—Christ who inflicts the wound but the motive is only to cure us—"to be rested, our sickness must grow worse". The image of the Compassionate healer is very different from the image of Christ in a poem of 1920—"Gerontion"—

In the juvenescence of the year

Came Christ the tiger

........................

The tiger springs in the new year. Us he devours

Unlike the Christ of "Gerontion"—fierce and destructive, this image is that of the healer, though, the healing itself involves pain as He purges the soul of its sensual desire. What is required is a state of complete egolessness, a complete surrender—

You are not here to verify,

Instruct yourself, or inform curiosity Or
Or carry report. You are here to kneel
Where prayer has been valid.

[Little Gidding]

Suffering is the basis of the cure. As fever is cured by cooling the body, the burning of desire can be cured by the shrivelling of the senses, by penance. The purgation changes from a physical to a "mental" purgation— "the fever sings in mental wires" recalls the line from "Burnt Norton"— "The trilling wire in the blood". As with St. Narcissus, purgation assumes the experience of ecstasy--

... I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires
Of which the flame is roses, and the smoke is briars

In The Waste Land, "fire" symbolised lust. In "The Fire Sermon" we have connotations of the Eastern and Western representatives of asceticism— St. Augustine's cry— "O Lord Thou pluckest me out/ O Lord Thou pluckest" is an imploring to save him from the sensual temptation that assails him. These temptations have been associated with "fire" which burns the soul. The lines "Burning, burning, burning burning" are taken
from Buddha's Fire Sermon. Penance or asceticism was one of the main tenants of Buddhism. The image of the fire is changed from that of temptation to that of a purgation in Four Quartets. It is associated with "purgatorial fire" symbolised by the bomber, God given, therefore accepted and finally in "Little Gidding" with the Holy Ghost symbolised by the "dark dove" who takes one from purgatory to paradise.

According to Lyndall Gordon "war, as a historical event, was peripheral to its private moral meaning, as the first world war had been peripheral to the private waste land". Gordon believed that Eliot saw the curative possibilities of purgatorial fire in the bombs. She quotes from the manuscript:85

Fire without and fire within
Purge the unidentified sin . . . .

To a man to whom sin was a reality, purgation could only have been a necessity. Salvation or damnation lies in the choice between the fire of destructive lust and the fire of Divine love. Only the refining fire of purgatory can redeem one from the seething of the fire of desire.

85 Gordon, New Life 129.
The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre--
To be redeemed from fire by fire.

Sexual pangs take the form of embraces by the
devil to Eliot. He needs to conquer them. In "Little Gidding" he questions-- "Who then devised the torment? love". Love is the cause of this suffering-- by love here, he means the burning of lust

Love is the unfamiliar Name
Behind the hands that wove
The intolerable shirt of flame
Which human power cannot remove.

The two choices that is for us to choose is stated as-- the "fire" of desire and the "fire" of Divine love--

The only hope, or else despair
Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre--

Salvation or damnation lies in the choice between the fire of Divine love and the fire of lust-- both destroy; but whereas one leads to death, the other to a
resurrection. One has to sacrifice the impurities, and by impurities the poet refers to physical sense, in the refining fire in order to be transformed and reach the Divine—"restored by that refining fire/ where you must move in measure, like a dancer". The purgatorial flames of the "dove" changed to the still point of "Burnt Norton" around which the dance takes place--and this time not the dance of the body but that of the spirit.

Except for the point, the still point,
There will be no dance, and there is only the dance.

The "dancer to God", dancing on the "hot sand" like Yeats' dancer become one with the dance, has danced his way from agony to ecstasy. He has crossed the whirls of the wheel into 'the still point', purged of the dross of the sense and sensual. Eliot had put forth this idea of the union of the 'imperfect' and the 'Ever Perfect' in "The Rock", 1934--

Out of the formless stone, when the artist unites himself with stone,
Spring always new forms of life, from the soul of
man that is joined to the soul of stone;

Out of the sea of sound the life of music,

Out of this union between the human and divine emerges a pattern of meaning in the meaninglessness of banal existence.

The stuttering, fragmentary rhythms are replaced by a more fluid rhythm with the growing confidence of the speaker as he moves towards the moment of vision.

Eliot's implied question in the Four Quartets is—how to rescue ordinary life from its worthless banality. What meaning lies behind the endless whirls of the wheel of Time? Eliot's answer is "by the inclusion of the timeless in time". But the answer--to cross temporality into the "still point" seems beyond the reach of ordinary mortals. The sacrifice it entails can only be meant for the saints of his own poems. We find no promise of reconciliation here as was hinted at in the epiphanic moments in the "rose-garden" and the "mid-winter spring".
Four Quartets would have been a poem on ascetic self-denial, lofty poetry but not reaching beyond that. However, Eliot rescues it in the final act. The saviour is "Love, the unfamiliar name", once again.

...not less of love but expanding
Of love beyond desire, and so liberation
From the future as well as the past.

In these three lines in part three of "Little Gidding" lies the central meaning of Four Quartets. The poem does not end with withdrawal but its opposite—"an expansion". Withdrawal is a necessity to get beyond the petty attachments to our self and material things—what Eliot refers to in "The Dry Salvages"—"the unattached devotion which might pass for devotionless". This is love in its highest form; when it is untainted by attachments or desires love takes the form of a liberation instead of bondage. Eliot gives a concrete instance of this—

Thus, love of a country
Begins as attachment to our own field of action
And comes to find that action of little importance
Though never indifferent.

[Little Gidding]

Just as subjective personality is to be expanded into objective self, love has to be expanded beyond the confines of the self. With this "detachment in love" the self's relationship with others is transformed—"transfigured in another pattern."

It is finally through love that Eliot is reconciled with sin—

Sin is Behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.

The acceptance of sin is a necessary step to the Absolute—this is Eliot's true reconciliation with himself; in Jungian terms it could be called "the deliverance of the shadow". According to Gordon as Yeats used "the foul rag and bone shop of the heart" Eliot used sin to spur new poetry. But to Eliot sin went beyond the portals of art. In April

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87 Gordon, New Life 131.
1933 he was to have said that only when we are awakened spiritually are we capable of real Good, but the danger is that, at the same time, we "become first capable of Evil." In April 1936 Eliot asked P.E. More, if he could recommend a good treatise on Original Sin. In fact all his works from the mid-thirties to the mid-forties are preoccupied with private sin, the acute sense of which came to the surface during his prolonged struggle to be free of Vivienne. From his biography we learn that the sense of sin and guilt he suffered came through the contemplation of the choices he had made, this involved Vivienne and his guilt that he was to be implicated in her mental disturbance.

This guilt took the form of ugly and macabre scenes in his poetry and drama as seen in Sweeney Agonistes and Harry's guilt in The Family Reunion. Eliot's protagonists suffer from a "sense of sin"—as Celia confesses to Harcourt-Reilly in The Cocktail Party. Eliot himself was drawn towards the experience of pain and suffering. It was probably a means to assuage the strong sense of sin that he suffered from. This deep sense of sin was also probably inherited from

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88 Gordon, New Life 52.
89 Gordon, New Life 52.
his puritanical heritage and had led to the deep cleft between "sense" and "spirit" in his poetry.

In *Four Quartets* after undergoing the trial of the refining fire comes the knowledge—"Sin is behovely/ All shall be well." The later lines are drawn from Dame Julian of Norwich. The acceptance of sin is an epiphanic moment in Eliot's poetry, extending to his life. The very knowledge that sin is a necessary corollary to grace is to be "graced" itself. And in this act of accepting sin, he is awakened to self-knowledge. Jung writes on the acceptance of the "shadow"—"The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognising the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is an essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore as a rule, meets with considerable resistance. Indeed, self-knowledge as a psychotherapeutic measure frequently requires much painstaking work extending over a long period."\(^{90}\)

In Eliot perhaps the long warring ascetic and the sensualist are finally reconciled. Thus with this

\(^{90}\)Jung, "Principal Archetypes"—*The Modern Tradition* 653.
knowledge comes an acceptance not only of oneself but all humanity. Gordon wonders if Eliot had been waiting for some yield from his life, that did not come in the end, to complete "Little Gidding". She believed Eliot was aspiring for sainthood and making drastic attempts at transformation. However with this surrender and acceptance, it was the closest that Eliot could have come to sainthood, a supreme act of humility, only found in the life of saints.

We do not know whether this reconciliation brought a change in Eliot's personal life, but we do see him surprise the world by entering into wedlock at the ripe age of sixty-eight. In a poem dedicated to his wife, Valerie, we have the following lines—

No peevish winter wind shall chill
No sullen tropic sun shall wither
The roses in the rose-garden which is ours and ours only

Eliot had finally attained the rose-garden. And he had found it through a meaningful relationship, through love.

As always is with Eliot's poetry, in the last Quartet, he returns to contemporary time-- the war

91 Gordon, New Life 133.
torn England— "United in the strife which divided them." He turns to the small community at Little Gidding which had once given refuge to Charles I, a "broken King" after his defeat at the battle of Naseby. This feeling of community expands to a universal brotherhood—

These men, and those who opposed them
And those whom they opposed

Are folded in a single party.
Whatever we inherit from the fortunate
We have taken from the defeated.

The final part of "Little Gidding" is a collection of contrasting images, merging into one. Union "within" appears to be translated into a union "without"—

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning

[Little Gidding]

The "death-in-life" and "life-in-death" of The Waste Land is repatterned as "birth-in-death" and "death-in-birth" in Four Quartets: "the moment of the rose and the moment of the yew tree / Are of equal
duration". "Time" is rescued from temporality by transforming it into history for "history is a pattern/the timeless moments." Thus at "the moment in the secluded chapel of "Little Gidding", the present moment of war in England is transfigured into history.

In the final part of "Little Gidding" we have together with the images of England the final return to his home, New England:

At the source of the longest river
The voice of the hidden waterfall
And the children in the apple-tree
Not known, because not looked for
But heard, half-heard, in the stillness
Between two waves of the sea.

The final realisation is what he had already intuited in "hints and guesses"— in the experience in the rose-garden and the experience of the "zero summer" in mid-winter spring; that the eternal pierces the familiar facades of our lives. These moments are "not known, because not looked for" but they exist. Eliot associates these moments not with vision but sound—the voice of the hidden waterfall, the "children" heard in the apple tree, the stillness "heard, half heard"
between the waves of the sea. In the final image of the waves and the sea— he turns full circle— back to his beginnings, to his childhood of New England. We see him return to the image of the sea; within the flux of the waves, he discovers the stillness of silence. He recaptures, the experience of the moment of wholeness, he knew as a child; it is a state shorn of all complexities and conflicts— "A condition of complete simplicity"— a time of humility and a surrender which takes one to a state of a total fusion. The image presented is that of a coexistence of two opposing sensations— "the fire" and "the rose", the divine love and the fire of desire fused into one flame. The collocation of the two is a recollection of "The Fire Sermon" in The Waste Land— "Burning, burning, burning, burning" and St. Augustine's cry "O Lord Thou pluckest me out"

When the tongues of flame are in-folded

Into the crowned knot of fire

And the fire and the rose are one.

[Little Gidding]

The moment of epiphany comes in the total perception of evil and good. When we are aware of the
eternal in the temporal the differences cease to exist-- the temporal is no less real than the timeless. Earlier ordinary life was seen as corrupt; one triumph of Four Quartets has been the union of the two worlds--divine and ordinary. Eliot writes in "Burnt Norton"--

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smoke fall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.

After this realisation one looks upon all things with equanimity-- "the stillness of the still point". Eliot finally attains his sought after vision of detachment; but this detachment is not a negation of life. There is no struggle to keep the material at bay. All conflicts fuse into a unity. However Eliot claims the mystical union is "an occupation for the saint". For ordinary people living their ordinary lives the moment of unity is caught only in "hints and guesses"--

For most of us there is only the unattended Moment, the moment in and out of time,
The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
However, by forging meaningful relationships through love, we can hope to liberate ourselves from "the future as well as the past". By an "expanding/ of love beyond desire" we can hope to achieve integration within ourselves as well as within society.

Denis Donoghue, in the article, "T.S. Eliot's Quartets; A New Reading", believes that the course of Eliot's persuasion in Four Quartets is to translate voiding into renunciation.92 He complains that there are certain moments in Four Quartets when Eliot couldn't convince himself of human value. He gives the instance of the dancers in "East Coker". Donoghue has made account of the first two movements in the Quartets, voiding and renunciation, but has left out the third and final movement, that of love. Eliot's final lines deal with love and life in a community. This would not have been possible had Eliot not believed in human value.

In this final Quartet Eliot makes a full circle not only to his own past but also to his poetry. Eliot answers Prufrock's "overwhelming questions

unframed but lurking beneath every poem and very pertinent in the present crisis wherein man is doomed to live in a world that no longer rejects his inner world. We can rescue ourselves from the endless repetitive cycles of the wheel. Our lives have meaning, if only we can find it.

On 28th March 1931 Eliot had written to Stephen Spender:

I have the A minor quartet [of Beethoven] on the gramophone, and I find it quite inexhaustible to study. There is a sort of heavenly or at least more than a human gaiety about some of his later things which one imagines might come to oneself as the fruit of reconciliation and relief after immense suffering; I should like to get something of that into verse before I die.

Four Quartets fulfilled this dream. The Four Quartets, he is to have told Helen Gardner in an

93Gordon, New Life 143.
Interview, "I rest on them". He also admitted that of all his poems "Little Gidding" best stood the test of saying exactly what it meant.

Though there have been disparagers of the Quartets, "Little Gidding" has been universally admired. C.K.Stead believes that of the Four Quartets, "Little Gidding" comes closest to achieving "completeness and unity". Helen Gardener finds this quality in the Quartets as a whole in "The Music" of Four Quartets, she writes "...Four Quartets is unique and essentially inimitable. In it the form is the perfect expression of the subject, so much so that one can hardly in the end distinguish subject from form. The whole poem in its unity declares more eloquently than any single line or passage that truth is not the final answer to a calculation, nor the last stage of an argument ... the subject of Four Quartets is the truth which is inseparable from the way and the life in which we find it." The last lines would probably be a fitting reply to C.K.Stead's criticisms. He writes that, "The poet

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94 Gordon, New Life 143.
95 C.K.Stead, "The Imposed Structure of The Four Quartets", T.S.Eliot; Four Quartets, ed Bergonzi 209.
who denies the world in favour of his abstract thought is in danger of becoming a "personality", imposing himself on the world instead of acting as a medium between it and his readers". Stead believes Eliot is guilty of this crime in *Four Quartets*. A poet has to begin from the particular which, in all cases is inevitably his own experience. Eliot himself had admitted that the *Quartets* were made up of small experiences that he had had in life. Helen Gardener had pointed out that the truth in the poem is inseparable from the life, in other words the final reconciliation in the poem would not have been possible for Eliot unless he had actually lived and experienced it. Stead further continues that . . . "the man who denies the world in order to perfect his soul may be in the danger of the sin of pride". In Eliot's case he denies the world only to once again embrace it with a greater love. It would be quite impossible to judge this as a denial. One has to look through the denial, as R.W. Flint did in the *Quartets*. Flint espies an Eliot who had stepped down from the pulpit to forgive and be a part of the common sufferings of his time. Flint found beneath the apparent denial, beneath the poet, who prayed to be taught to be still, "one of the very
few poets to whom the war years seem to have taught any final lessons, or whose poetry reached a level of fused eloquence, love and understanding where war experience was transformed into great art. 97

Critics further dart comments at what they call abstractions in the poem. Peter Ackroyd criticises the Quartets-- 'Eliot's imagery is at once precise and non-specific, and the power of his abstractions is such that they float above the surface of the poem. We look down for recognisable landscape but find it concealed.

Ackroyd's view goes contrary to Gardner's who believes that the subject and form are distinguishable. A. Alvarez speaks of Eliot as "a meditative poet", he is quick to add-- "But this does not mean a poet who deals in abstractions; Eliot's meditations are meditations on experience, in which the abstractions belong as much as the images; they are all part of his cast of mind, the meaning he gives to past experience." 98

Hence for a poet who throughout his life strove till the very end at the union between thought

and emotion, Ackroyd's criticism is a trifle unfair. One has only to turn to certain passages to acknowledge the brilliant translation of thought into image--

The brief sun flames the ice, on pond and ditches,  
In windless cold that is the heart's heat,  
Reflecting in a watery mirror  
A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.  
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,  
Stirs the dumb spirit .....

But there were several others who were anaesthetic to the experience of the poem. For instance Aldous Huxley, who gives a rather dramatic account of what the Quartets meant to him-- A great operation in which powerful lights are brought into focus, anaesthetists and assistants are posted, the instruments are prepared, finally the surgeon arrives and opens his bag but closes it again and goes off.99 In short a work where nothing really takes place.

However, Mary Lee Settle, an American novelist who did war-service in London recalls the impact of Four Quartets during the war days. At a time when people suffered loss and privation, Eliot "had

99 Ackroyd, T.S.Eliot 231.
somehow refined what he had to tell us, beyond the banality of disappointment and hopelessness, into a promise like steel". Eliot seemed to make a promise of recovery made with "a miraculous effrontery of spirit". He became, she remembers, "our lay priest".\(^{100}\)

The beauty and meaning in the *Quartets* is inaccessible to anyone unable to grasp the depths of thought and experience out of which it speaks. We may not endorse with the finale, which many view as orthodoxy, but what is important here is the authenticity of the search. In creating poetry out of the odd experiences we perceive in our rare moments of inattention, Eliot's *Quartets* add a confirming note that indeed such moments do exist and others too are a part to it. It gives the significance of a shared experience to the poem. As Spender says "... the barrier between the aesthetic and the religious consciousness is abolished by the appeal to the shared experience of writer and reader, both voyagers on the earth and within eternity".\(^{101}\) However the appreciation of *Four Quartets* extends to beyond that of the confines of the religious consciousness as Eloise Knapp Hay writes, "Nothing could better describe the

\(^{100}\) Gordon, New Life 144.

\(^{101}\) Spender, *T.S.Eliot* 163.
fragility of 20th century epiphanies, so different from those of either Greek or biblical antiquity. Yet no twentieth century epiphanies confirm the participatory and consensual nature of the biblical epiphany so well as those in Four Quartets.\textsuperscript{102}