

THE UNIVERSITY OF HULL

The Religious Dimensions of T.S. Eliot's  
Early Life, Poetry, and Thought

being a Thesis submitted for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the University of Hull

by

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March, 1984

To Janet

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Summary of Thesis submitted for Ph.D. degree

by Donald J. Childs

on

The Religious Dimensions of T.S. Eliot's

Early Life, Poetry, and Thought

This thesis is a contribution to the argument that T.S. Eliot's life, poetry, and thought form a continuous, consistent, and coherent whole. Toward this end, it explores the religious dimensions of Eliot's early readings in philosophy, anthropology, Christian mysticism, and Christian theology.

The first chapter discusses Eliot's acquaintance with the work of T.E. Hulme, Irving Babbitt, and Charles Maurras--showing sources in their political and literary conservatism for Eliot's religious conservatism. The following chapter, concentrating upon the impact of J.G. Frazer's Golden Bough, demonstrates the ways in which Eliot used his early anthropological readings to articulate his spiritual concerns. The next chapter explores Henri Bergson's continuing influence upon Eliot--despite the latter's occasionally dismissive attitude toward the former--emphasizing the ways in which Bergsonism catered to Eliot's predisposition towards mysticism. Similarly, chapter four emphasizes the pervasive conceptual influence of F.H. Bradley who, as the subject of Eliot's Harvard dissertation, not surprisingly appears in the language by which Eliot later articulates his religious and poetic beliefs. Chapter five discusses Eliot's readings in mysticism during his final years



at Harvard. Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism proves a particularly active and enduring influence. The final chapter explores the impact upon Eliot of his early reading of various Anglican divines--including, among others, Lancelot Andrewes, John Donne, and Hugh Latimer.

The conclusion reached is that a large part of the pattern in the carpet of Eliot's mature poetry and thought is woven from the religious elements in his early reading. In short, Eliot's end is very much apparent in his beginning.

## Acknowledgements

The research which this thesis embodies was made possible by a Commonwealth Scholarship awarded by the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission in the United Kingdom. I was nominated for this award by the Canadian Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Committee. The award was administered by the Association of Commonwealth Universities and the British Council; their representatives helped to make the transition from a Canadian to a British academic and domestic situation a relatively easy one.

I also wish to thank Professors Arthur Pollard and J.A.V. Chapple of the Department of English at the University of Hull who helped me to settle to my research. Similarly, Ruth Green and Gill Cowper always listened sympathetically to my accounts of the frustrations incidental to research and never failed to offer encouragement.

The Brynmor Jones Library of the University of Hull proved just as hospitable. In addition to a working environment conducive to study, it provided through its own resources--or those of the British Library, by means of an efficient Inter-library Loan system--most of the material necessary for my research.

Among many influences, I must acknowledge particularly that of Lyndall Gordon's book, Eliot's Early Years. Mrs. Gordon was also very helpful in answering questions that I asked concerning certain passages in her book. Unfortunately, however, Eloise Knapp Hay's T.S. Eliot's Negative Way--a book

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which attempts to qualify some of Mrs. Gordon's claims--came to my attention too late to be included in my readings. In general, Donald Gallup's work, T.S. Eliot: A Bibliography, proved indispensable during my research. My own particular methods of documentation and reference, however, derive from the MLA Handbook, whose guidelines I follow in my Endnotes and Bibliography.

I wish especially to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Professor R.L. Brett. Through his guidance, my research came to take a definite shape. As my work progressed, moreover, Professor Brett instilled confidence through both his conscientious criticism and kind encouragement. In the end, I came to regard him not only as a supervisor, but as a friend.

But most of all, I must thank my wife, Janet. Her enthusiastic support and encouragement during my years of research were matched only by her work in preparing the final typescript of the thesis. Her attention to detail proved invaluable in an exercise of this nature; any errors which remain, in fact, are entirely my own.



## Introduction

In a letter to Paul Elmer More in 1936, T.S. Eliot discussed his early spiritual biography. He was responding to an article in which More had discussed aspects of his own spiritual biography:<sup>1</sup>

What touches me most closely is the suggestion, here and there, of a spiritual biography which, if I may say so without presumption, is oddly, even grotesquely, more like my own, so far as I can see, than that of any human being I have known. And when you say,

"I have often wondered what line my experience might have taken had I been brought up in a form of worship from which the office of the imagination and the aesthetic emotions had not been so ruthlessly evicted. . . ."

I have made the same speculation. But I am inclined to think that I know how to value these things better, just for having (being me) to struggle for so long, and for so many years so blindly and errantly, towards them.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, as J.D. Margolis notes, "Having reached the bottom of this page, Eliot appended to his typewritten letter, in ink, 'May one say, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit?'"<sup>3</sup> Eliot, then, shares More's conception of the close relationship between the anglo-catholic form of worship and the office of the imagination and the aesthetic emotions. The long, blind, and often errant struggle which Eliot describes, therefore, refers just as much to his struggle for faith as it does to his struggle for a satisfying aesthetic. The note which he appended to the letter, however, reveals his belief that the Holy Spirit was present in this struggle and led him from the early loss of

his faith to the later acceptance of a more imaginative faith and the discovery in his own poetry of his Christian vocation.

In retrospect, then, Eliot is able to discern in his early experiences the influence of the Holy Spirit working to reveal to him a Christian faith and vocation. Presumably, this claim is at least partially verifiable; that is, there must be an objective--and so potentially verifiable--pattern of development such that Eliot is able to isolate a pattern of influence which he can attribute sincerely--however controversially--to the Holy Spirit. Even if the Holy Spirit does not exist, or if Eliot was not in fact graced by its guidance, the pattern of influence he observes exists nonetheless for having been misinterpreted. The task of the literary researcher, therefore, is not to seek to settle any question as to the influence--or existence--of the Holy Spirit, but to seek to verify the existence of a pattern of religious influence in Eliot's early experience.

Because Eliot does not actually document the religious influences he sees in his early experiences, one cannot hope to demonstrate the many subtle and perhaps inexpressible experiences which he later came to regard as religious influences. One must be content instead to explore the principal objects of his early intellectual concerns and demonstrate therein the religious dimensions. To demonstrate that his early reading is in many respects consistent with his later anglo-catholicism, for instance, is to show that a religious influence from this reading is at least possible.

Such an influence is likely, moreover, given Eliot's ex-



planation of the nature of the reading experience. In reading, he argues, one is affected wholly, as a human being, whether or not one intends to be and whether or not one knows it:

I suppose that everything we eat has some other effect upon us than merely the pleasure of taste and mastication; it affects us during the process of assimilation and digestion; and I believe that exactly the same is true of anything we read.<sup>4</sup>

Reading, therefore, is one of the experiences upon which a poet's mind goes to work:

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.<sup>5</sup>

For Eliot, reading is not merely a matter of intellectual assent or dissent; it is an experience which answers a wide variety of intellectual, emotional, and spiritual needs. In general, then, one is likely to find in Eliot some sort of religious influence from his early reading.

The likelihood of any particular religious influence, however, depends upon several factors. Given that there is a religious dimension to the writing in question, of primary importance in determining its influence is the impact of the reading upon Eliot. The passion with which Eliot devoted himself in turn to the writings of Henri Bergson and F.H. Bradley, for example, bears witness to the emotional impact which these writings achieved. Generally, the greater the impact, the more



pervasive any influence is likely to be. Relevant as well in determining religious influences in Eliot's early reading is the duration of the impact of the writers and writings in question. He encountered the writings of Irving Babbitt, Charles Maurras, and T.E. Hulme between 1906 and 1916, for instance, and they are still current in his conceptual vocabulary twenty or more years later. Similarly, he studied the writings of certain Anglican divines and certain saints and mystics both well before and well after his conversion. For these writers to continue to be important to Eliot, from his sceptical youth, through his conversion, to his mature faith, they must each have satisfied first, his aesthetic demands, and then, his religious needs, for Eliot's conscious priority as a young poet was aesthetic, and not religious. Presumably, however, the religious dimensions of these writers and their works, cherished by Eliot the anglo-catholic, existed potentially for Eliot, the spiritually confused young poet, at the time of his first acquaintance with them. And so, although the influence of these writers is not exclusively religious, neither is it exclusively aesthetic. In the end, after all, Eliot's aesthetic is closely bound up with his religion; it is not surprising, therefore, that the influence of Bergson and Bradley, for instance should appear first in Eliot's aesthetic thought, and then his religious thought.

In order to estimate the nature and extent of the influence of the religious element in this early reading, then, it is sufficient to demonstrate that what Eliot derives from this early reading is consistent with his later anglo-catholic faith

and that passions expressed in his early life, poetry, and thought not only derive logically and emotionally from this early reading, but also lead, by the same logic and emotion, to the conversion announced publicly in the For Lancelot Andrewes declaration of 1928.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> See Paul Elmer More, "Marginalia," American Review, 8 (1936), 25-6.

<sup>2</sup> T.S. Eliot, Letter to Paul Elmer More, 1936, as quoted by John D. Margolis, T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939 (London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 145.

<sup>3</sup> John D. Margolis, T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-1939 (London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. 145.

<sup>4</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, 3rd enlarged ed. (1932; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 394.

<sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in Homage to John Dryden: Three Essays on Poetry of the Seventeenth Century (London: Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 30.



## Chapter One: Babbitt, Maurras, Hulme

T.S. Eliot was born into a family with a strong tradition of Unitarianism.<sup>1</sup> Convinced that man was basically a noble creature, the Unitarian of Eliot's experience did not emphasize the damnation implicit in the concept of Original Sin; he ignored many of the general theological scruples responsible for distinctions between orthodoxy and heresy. The Unitarianism of the St. Louis Eliots, then, provided a liberal dogma against which the maturing poet could react. Similarly, the Puritan aspect of the New England Eliot mind produced in the family's most celebrated poet a Puritan sensitivity, if not a Puritan sensibility. F.O. Matthiessen finds in Eliot the same Puritanical cast of mind that Henry James exhibits: passion overweighed by thought, high moral idealism restrained by practical prudence, absorption in the problem of belief, and dry, unexpected wit.<sup>2</sup> That the Puritan influence upon Eliot's thought was a radical one is confirmed by Lyndall Gordon's explanation of Eliot's dislike of candy:

T.S. Eliot acknowledged that his early training in self-denial left him permanently scarred by an inability to enjoy even harmless pleasures. He learnt, for instance, that it was self-indulgent to buy candy, and it was not until he was forced to stop smoking for health reasons in his sixties that he could bring himself to eat it as a substitute.<sup>3</sup>

Though merely accidents of the environment into which he was born, the Unitarian and Puritan influences of Eliot's youth left a definite mark upon his consciousness.



From this perspective, the accidents of Eliot's early life appear to have caused the concerns of his maturer years as poet and critic. But this is not the only perspective possible. One might argue instead that Eliot's later concern with personal salvation "caused" these accidents of early life--or at least caused his later interpretation of their influence. The appropriate explanation depends upon whether one adopts a mechanistic or energetic perspective--terms which derive from an essay by C.G. Jung quoted by Eliot in "The Frontiers of Criticism":

It is a generally recognised truth (says Jung) that physical events can be looked at in two ways, that is from the mechanistic and from the energetic standpoint. The mechanistic view is purely causal: from this standpoint an event is conceived as the result of a cause. . . . The energetic viewpoint on the other hand is in essence final; the event is traced from effect to cause on the assumption that energy forms the essential basis of changes in phenomena. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Applying this double perspective not just to an isolated physical event, but to the entire life and work of a poet such as Eliot, reveals both how the past shapes the present and how the present shapes the past. The critic today inquiring into Eliot's early development knows so much more than the critics of fifty years ago precisely because he now knows the final shape of Eliot's life. One can see now that the "Lancelot Andrewes declaration" of 1928 merely confirmed for that and the following years a conservatism that had been awaiting articulation for almost forty years. Indeed, in introducing the subject of his classicism in literature, royalism in politics, and anglo-catholicism in religion, Eliot explains that he has "made bold



to unite these occasional essays merely as an indication of what may be expected, and to refute any accusation of playing 'possum."<sup>5</sup> But has Eliot not been playing 'possum all along? In this case, the Lancelot Andrewes declaration indicates not only what may be expected of Eliot in the future, but also what may be expected of him in the past. As Helen Gardner explains, any act such as Eliot's conversion, "which makes an apparent break with the past, is itself the result of the past, and when it occurs makes the past assume a pattern not visible before."<sup>6</sup> Moreover, "what is found is what was looked for, and since to look for anything is to act on the hypothesis that it exists, faith precedes faith in a regressive series."<sup>7</sup>

One ought not to be surprised, then, to find that much of Eliot's early reading now seems, from a perspective surveying his life and work as a whole, to be prerequisite to his later faith. Of those writers who influenced him at Harvard, Paris and London between 1906 and 1919, and who seem many years later to have influenced the Lancelot Andrewes declaration, three of the most important are Irving Babbitt, Charles Maurras, and T.E. Hulme. The classicism which Eliot proclaimed in matters of literature is evident in all three. Evident as well is an even more vigorous anti-romanticism. The royalism which Eliot advocated in politics derives largely from the writings of Maurras in support of L'Action Française, although Babbitt and Hulme both inclined towards authoritarian government. The anglo-catholicism, which was perhaps the most important aspect of the declaration, does not derive from any one of these writers, however, for they were none of them believers.

Yet although none of them could believe, they each acknowledged the usefulness of belief and preferred religious conviction to the materialism rampant in a material age. In short, they combined in Eliot's developing Christian awareness to provide the literary, political, metaphysical, and moral framework in which he might realize his anglo-catholicism. Although, therefore, merely an accident of his early environment and education, these readings proved as essential to the development of T.S. Eliot, the anglo-catholic, as his early experience of Unitarianism and Puritanism.

Eliot knew Irving Babbitt from his time as an undergraduate at Harvard. He studied French literature under him in a course entitled "Literary Criticism in France with Special Reference to the Nineteenth Century" during the two terms of the 1909-1910 academic year. He knew Babbitt's Literature and the American College,<sup>8</sup> published in 1908, and, whether or not he read The New Laokoon,<sup>9</sup> published in 1910, or was in the course in which Babbitt seems to have presented the main conclusions of this book, it is likely that he heard something of The New Laokoon during his year with Babbitt as this was the year when Babbitt published it. In any event, there are striking resemblances between Babbitt's work at this time and Eliot's early criticism several years later.

Babbitt introduced to Eliot the terms in which the debate about modern poetry would be waged: classicism and romanticism. Babbitt was not so much concerned to define the nature of art, however, as to define the relation between the artist's thought and society. He felt that an inquiry into the nature of the



arts "involves one's attitude not merely toward literature but life."<sup>10</sup> When, therefore, he observed in literature the spread of impressionism and aestheticism, he feared that the loss of standards and discipline, virility and strength, would make poetry incapable of defending itself and society against scientific positivism. He called for a balanced society, such as that of ancient Greece, in which spontaneity and inspiration were possible within a tradition of discipline and measure.

These apparently opposed concepts of spontaneity and discipline represented for Babbitt the key elements in romanticism and classicism, respectively. The spontaneous romantic enjoys a vivid imagination. He constructs a world of illusion through which he attempts to break down the adult barriers to the emotional and instinctive unity of the child. His return to nature, Babbitt argues, replaces a religion concerned with what is above the reason with one concerned with what is below the reason--the primitive and irrational. The result is a great disproportion between the emotion evoked and the object or incident from which it ostensibly derives. In short, the romantic of Babbitt's experience leaves little room for the intellect. Babbitt argues, however, that "the man of letters should not be so modest as to leave all the analytical keenness and intellectual virility to the scientist."<sup>11</sup> At the same time, one cannot produce good poetry by emphasizing the prosaic and sensible at the expense of the imagination. Classicism rightly tends to be rational, but it can be too rational if its reasoned discipline allows no scope for creative illusion. Neither a radical romanticism nor a radical classicism, there-

fore, is conducive to a healthy art. The Greek synthesis is required--a mediation between artistic standards and creative flexibility. The artist must produce a work of art "probable or convincing to both the imagination and the understanding."<sup>12</sup>

In tracing the effects of romanticism in art, Babbitt presents a fairly balanced and equanimical analysis. But when he extends his analysis to the effects of romanticism upon society as a whole, he becomes quite animated. The villain is Rousseau. With him began the rejection of the rational, the attack on the analytical understanding that multiplies distinctions, which Babbitt finds in all romanticism. The dogma that man is capable of infinite progress--or perhaps even perfection--once he has rid himself of the chains imposed by social institutions is dangerous. Babbitt felt that Rousseau had led directly to the belief that to become perfect man had only "to continue indefinitely the programme of the nineteenth century,--that is, to engage in miscellaneous expansion and back it up if need be with noisy revolt against all the forms of the past."<sup>13</sup> Babbitt granted that man grows, but he would not grant that growth necessarily entails progress; man does not grow by moving in one direction only, but by moving in several directions simultaneously. The great failure of romanticism is the failure to recognize or maintain the distinction between a law for human nature and a law for physical nature; the prospects of material progress held out by science cannot be taken as evidence for prospects of human progress.

Babbitt, then, is a classicist in his attitude toward literature and life. Man is a finite creature and as such



cannot hope to comprehend truth, beauty, or the absolute-- however one chooses to describe the infinite. He may achieve the occasional glimpse of the infinite and then attempt to formulate an awareness of it, but there is a danger that he will falsify it by the inadequate final form in which he presents it. Yet man must categorize his knowledge; it is his nature to do so despite the fact that he knows the infinite will always overflow his categories. The solution, as Babbitt sees it, is for man to maintain fluid categories, flexible standards, such that he may have a faith in the infinite while preserving a vitality in that same faith--a vitality responsive not to inadequacies in the infinite, but to inadequacies in man's apprehension of it:

If the perception gains ground that man's knowledge of physical, like his knowledge of human nature, is destined always to remain a mere glimpse and infinitesimal fragment, there may be hope of reaction against what one may call scientific Titanism [the hope that science will discover all, even heaven]. There might even be some recovery of that true humility--the inner obeisance of the spirit to something higher than itself--that has almost become one of the lost virtues.<sup>14</sup>

Babbitt felt that this sense of a vital authority distinct from either an outer authority such as God, or the inner authority of one's own temperament, was perhaps the real test of civilization.

One can see how attractive many of these ideas would have been to a young man such as Eliot who was seeking an absolute. Talk of "the inner obeisance of the spirit to something higher than itself" is about as close as one can come to expressing a religious point of view without actually swallowing the religious

dogma. Eliot may well have preferred to adapt Babbitt's perspective to a more explicitly Christian framework, but the latter made it clear that his was a humanism designed to avoid beliefs made untenable by science. Babbitt's humanism was dependent for its model, or authority, upon the exceptional men of antiquity; his advice was to imitate them. But as Stephen Spender points out, "Eliot saw that to do this would be to abstract from the antique models the metaphysical faith which had made their almost superhuman achievements possible."<sup>15</sup> Babbitt's talk of spiritual authority, therefore, and his suggestion that the Catholic Church might well be the only institution left in the West to preserve the past, seems to have served Eliot as at least a pragmatic and practical justification of Christianity, and may as well have illustrated, by the deficiencies of its presuppositions, that humanism was no replacement for Christianity.

There are other ways, however, in which Babbitt influenced Eliot. He interpreted Aristotle, for instance, in such a way as to emphasize the necessity of objectivity on the poet's part: "the poet is to turn away from himself and his own emotions, and work like the painter, with his eye on the object."<sup>16</sup> Eliot makes the same point in describing the writing of poetry as a sacrifice or surrender of the poet's personality to something greater; and so he incorporates into his poetic "the inner obeisance of the spirit to something higher than itself." One can also find in Babbitt traces of a perspective later elaborated by Eliot as the theory of the dissociation of sensibility. Like Eliot, Babbitt traces the break between intellect and emotion



to the Renaissance when "the drift toward a naturalistic conception of life" began.<sup>17</sup> But perhaps Babbitt's most important influence was in introducing to Eliot a theory of words which would stand him in good stead as he encountered later developments in Imagism. Babbitt pointed out the futility of attempting to paint pictures with words: the plastic arts deal with space whereas words deal with time. A painter, therefore, can represent but one moment; the poet, on the other hand, can portray an entire action. If he would paint with words, he must enumerate each of the different parts of his object until it becomes blurred and confused as a result of trying to portray what is coexistent--the object--by means of that which is successive--language. Given, then, Babbitt's careful explanation of the interrelation of words, time, and action, Eliot was never likely to have practised the static image for which the Imagists were so thoroughly criticized by the Vorticists.

Eliot's debt to Babbitt, therefore, is quite substantial and quite explicit. He first met in Babbitt's writing an analysis of classicism and romanticism; but more importantly, he learned from both Babbitt's insights and errors that a religious perspective was a necessary aspect of any classicism which might counter romanticism, not only in literature, but in society as a whole. Many years later, therefore, in "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," Eliot concluded that "the humanistic point of view is auxiliary to and dependent upon the religious point of view."<sup>18</sup> Babbitt, then, helped Eliot towards his anglo-catholicism but ultimately proved inadequate as a religious inspiration.

The quotation from "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt" continues:

For us, religion is Christianity; and Christianity implies, I think, the conception of the Church. It would be not only interesting but invaluable if Professor Babbitt, with his learning, his great ability, his influence, and his interest in the most important questions of the time, could reach this point. His influence might thus join with that of another philosopher--Charles Maurras--and might, indeed, correct some of the extravagances of that writer.<sup>19</sup>

In 1927, then, Eliot recognized that the philosophy of Charles Maurras followed logically from that of Irving Babbitt--according to the logic of T.S. Eliot, that is. It just so happens that this is the order in which Eliot read these two philosophers: Babbitt at Harvard by 1910, Maurras in Paris and at Harvard by 1913. According to the double perspectives of mechanism and energism, then, Babbitt and Maurras led Eliot to discover the importance of the Church, and the importance of the Church to Eliot later led him to rediscover the importance of Babbitt and Maurras in his early spiritual development. In any event, Eliot's experience of Maurras marks the next step in this development.

Maurras worshipped order. In fact, he saw order as heaven's first law. It was a law, therefore, in the arts as well as the state. Like Babbitt, then, Maurras chose Greece as his model of perfect order, for the ancient Greek found beauty in the concept of the limit or the measure. In respect of the state, however, Maurras, like Plato, rejected all forms of democracy in favour of a strong monarchy. The hereditary king would not



only represent order through the stability of his succession, but would impose order through his ruling in the knowledge of what was best for the nation as a whole, as opposed to any one part of it. The king, however, is not inclined towards order as an individual, but as an institution designed to look after the nation's interests. The individual, Maurras argues, has no principle of unity or order within him--at least not naturally. Individualism, it seems, is a revolutionary principle, producing in religion, on the one hand, the Reformation, and in politics, on the other, the French Revolution. The remedy against individual disunity and disorder is reason, for reason is concerned with the general as opposed to the particular, and so serves the individual as the king serves the state.

In this emphasis upon the individual as a principle of disunity and disorder, one can see Maurras' classicism showing through. Man's nature is constant; it is not necessarily progressing toward perfection however much it may in fact be developing. Man is simply an animal with reason: as an animal, a wolf; as an animal with reason, a god. To Maurras, then, the romantic emphasis upon the irrational and the individual represented a betrayal of all that was good in human nature. The traitor that Maurras accused was the same one that Babbitt accused--Rousseau. In breaking with reason, and in assuming that natural man was good, Rousseau denied both the one power responsible for civilization and the institutions through which it might civilize. Rousseau was simply a "Genevan vagabond, a homeless individual."<sup>20</sup> This break with civilization was really a break with Mediterranean culture; all that is not Latin



or Greek is barbarous. Maurras regarded France as the successor to Roman civilization; the Reformation, the Revolution, and romanticism in general being a betrayal of classical France. The only remedy for society as a whole was a return to the classical tradition of discipline and order. The individuals of the intellectual elite must first set their own house in order by returning this discipline and order to their thought. Then they must secure the classical tradition by founding the institutions of the state upon the concepts of discipline and order, for individuals perish while institutions endure. The "classical" institutions which Maurras would hope to see endure, of course, are the monarchy, the church, and the army.

Of these, Maurras' support for the Catholic Church is the most surprising, for during most of his life he found belief in the Church's dogma impossible. The Church, however, had stood against the disunity and disorder of the Revolution. Questions of faith aside, therefore, Maurras found the Church quite useful as a social institution; it advocated all that he interpreted classicism to stand for: "order, tradition, discipline, hierarchy, authority, continuity, unity, work, family, corporation, decentralization, autonomy, working-class organization."<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Maurras did not concern himself over questions about a faith which he felt was more a habit of tradition than real belief in any event. Maurras was careful, however, to distinguish between the Catholic Church of Rome and Christianity in general. He felt Christianity to be as dangerous to discipline and order as the Reformation, the Revolution, and romanticism. The Catholic Church, then, has performed a service

to mankind by controlling Christianity within its own particular order and discipline. Given the choice, therefore, of recognizing the value of the Catholic Church and so controlling Christianity, or of ignoring both and so leaving them both beyond his philosophical control, Maurras chose not only to recognize, but to recommend, the traditional virtues of the Church: "the Church that I saluted as the oldest, the most venerable, or the most fecund of visible things and the noblest and most holy ideas of the Universe . . . the Church of Order."<sup>22</sup>

But despite the respect--or even reverence--in which he held the Church, Maurras was not a Catholic. His respect for the Church was a respect for the Church's achievement, not for its achieving power. Neither was he a complete anti-romantic. His approval of classicism was, like his approval of the Church, based upon approval of achievements as opposed to the power responsible for such achievements. Indeed, Basil de Sélincourt argues that Maurras is merely an unusual type of romantic. De Sélincourt argues that romanticism is distinguished from classicism by its attitude toward the infinite, the former haunted by the element of infinity, the latter accepting it and placing it within its cosmos without denying reason. Maurras does not "weep and rave" like the average romantic, but instead tries to exorcize a potentially infinite chaos by the imposition of order and discipline within his cosmos.<sup>23</sup> Although Maurras' philosophy seems to be based upon reason and its consequent order and discipline, it actually derives from a horror of the element of infinity or chaos.

Maurras, then, is no more a classicist than a Catholic.



His classicism and Catholicism, however, such as they were, did exert an influence upon Eliot. The latter traced the literature of contemporary Europe back to the literature of the Europe of Homer, and described the achievement of Roman literature as its sacrifice of its own life as a living literature so that it might provide for Europe the definitive classic; Eliot thus demonstrates in essays as far apart as "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and What is a Classic? that he willingly follows Maurras in deriving modern culture from Mediterranean culture. But it is probably Maurras' emphasis upon tradition in general that proved most influential in shaping Eliot's classicism. Maurras constantly looked forward to the restoration of the monarchy in France and in so doing looked constantly backward toward the ancien régime. He idealized the traditions of the past to a degree perhaps incomprehensible even to one such as Eliot; one suspects that he wished not only to restore the monarchy but to restore the past entire. In short, Maurras was so disillusioned by the present that the past was all he had left to offer as an alternative, for the past endures and in so doing must always be greater and more important than the individual. Eliot makes much the same point in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" where he observes the literary monuments of the past in their ideal order, and where he calls upon individual writers to compose with their own and past generations in their creative bones.

Maurras also seems to have influenced Eliot's religious consciousness. As Stephen Spender points out, this consciousness develops in three ways.<sup>24</sup> First, Maurras confirmed in



Eliot's mind the distinction between classicism and romanticism, but then went on to distinguish between classicism, which acknowledges the Church, and humanism, which does not. Eliot could thus happily proclaim himself a classicist in more than literature. Secondly, Eliot learned from Maurras' philosophy and living example that it is possible to accept the values of religion even though one is unable to believe. This proved to be Eliot's position for the half of his life preceding the Lancelot Andrewes declaration. Maurras, however, was largely impotent in respect of the third stage, in which Eliot embraced dogma as more necessary than the tradition and ritual of the Church. Yet Maurras' influence upon Eliot's religious consciousness was not entirely constructive, but in at least one sense unfortunate, for Maurras seems to have contributed to Eliot's apparent anti-Semitism. Before the Second Chambre Correctionnelle du Tribunal at Versailles, Maurras refused to answer a question put to him by M. Worms, the President of the court, because the latter was Jewish: "I am French, you are of Jewish nationality. It is impossible for me to reply to a Jewish judge."<sup>25</sup> Maurras' anti-Semitism, however, was not merely personal. He regarded the question of Jewish control of the French economy as a question of national defence; what point would there be in defending France, and what would it mean to be French, if the French were not masters in their own home? On a more philosophical level, Maurras felt that cosmopolitanism, represented by, among others, the successful Jews of France and other nations, threatened to create disorder in the world. The confusion of nationalities would not lead

to understanding and harmony, but merely the dissolution of the hardly won values of each nation. Maurras, then, must have felt not only that he could not reply to a Jewish judge, for fear that the Jew would not understand the Frenchman, but also that he could not understand his question, for how could the Frenchman understand the Jew without the one or the other of them abandoning the hierarchical values of their respective nationalities? Perhaps such thoughts as these influenced--or simply confirmed--Eliot's portrayal of the Jew squatting on the window sill in "Gerontion," the "Chicago Semite Viennese" in "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," and the "murderous paws" of "Rachel née Rabinovitch" in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales."

The unique classicism and Catholicism of Maurras, then, clearly influenced the development of Eliot's religious consciousness. If he did not quite bring Eliot to belief, he brought him as close to it as possible. Eliot, therefore, need not regret the unlikelihood of his wished-for consummation of the philosophies of Irving Babbitt and Charles Maurras, for, although the two never met as Eliot may have hoped they would, they met in the mind of Eliot himself. Their influence may not have been completely benign, but it was certainly decisive--decisive in moving Eliot not only toward the commitment of the Lancelot Andrewes declaration, but toward a religious philosophy which could incorporate and stimulate a new poetic, a religious philosophy and poetic which Eliot was to find in the occasional writing and infrequent poetry of T.E. Hulme.

But whereas it has long been known that Eliot was influenced



in his early years by both Babbitt and Maurras, the fact that he was aware of Hulme by 1916 has only relatively recently been recognized. F.O. Matthiessen, apparently having heard so from Eliot himself, claims that "Eliot had not known Hulme personally, though he had heard much about him from Pound; and he had not read any of Hulme's essays before they were published, by which time Eliot's own theory of poetry had already matured."<sup>26</sup> Herbert Howarth, in an otherwise thorough account of early influences upon Eliot in Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot, does not even mention Hulme. Eliot's later debt to Hulme, however, is quite evident. Quotations provided in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism, "Baudelaire," "Second Thoughts About Humanism," and "The 'Pensées' of Pascal" prove just how closely Eliot had studied Speculations, published in 1924. Eliot's constant reference to Hulme in his articles and books in the years following this no doubt contributed toward Leavis' observation that Hulme's importance was the result of an intellectual fashion.<sup>27</sup> Eliot's appreciation of Hulme's importance, however, was deeply felt, for his philosophy and poetry were closely related to Hulme's.

Ronald Schuchard, in "Eliot and Hulme in 1916," suggests that this fact is not surprising at all given Eliot's probable acquaintance with most of Hulme's philosophy and poetry by 1916.<sup>28</sup> That Eliot knew and admired the poetry of T.E. Hulme is clear from his observation in "The Function of Criticism" that "the poems of T.E. Hulme only needed to be read aloud to have immediate effect."<sup>29</sup> What has only recently become clear is that the experience of reading Hulme's poetry aloud for the

sake of its immediate effects was provided as early as 1916 by Eliot's opportunity to lecture on "Modern English Literature" in Extension Courses for the University of London. In fact, he had probably been aware of Hulme's poetry since he had met Pound in 1914, for Pound, having in 1912 published in his Ripostes "The Complete Poetical Works of T.E. Hulme," is likely to have recommended them to Eliot as examples of good modern poetry. But whether recommended by Pound or not, Eliot seems to have happened across them. His 1914 poem "The Death of Saint Narcissus," later to find its place in The Waste Land, certainly owes something to Hulme's "Conversion." Both Hulme's speaker and Saint Narcissus undergo a conversion experience which, despite the experience of beauty, ends with the one passing "to the final river / Ignominiously, in a sack, without sound,"<sup>30</sup> and the other "Knowing at the end the taste of his own whiteness / The horror of his own smoothness."<sup>31</sup> Both Hulme's speaker and Eliot's Saint Narcissus are "stifled." As Lyndall Gordon points out, "Neither is enlarged by his sensations. Both in the end overreach themselves and suffer a psychic blow, some kind of ignominious death of the spirit."<sup>32</sup> Perhaps, then, A.R. Jones reveals more than an interesting coincidence when he observes that Hulme's "theory of poetry finds its most coherent expression neither in the poems of the Imagists, nor in his own poems, but in the early poetry of T.S. Eliot."<sup>33</sup>

Whatever articles by Hulme which Eliot may have read in periodicals such as The New Age, in which Hulme regularly published, and with which Eliot was presumably familiar, it is likely that Eliot was familiar with Hulme's preface to Georges



Sorel's Reflections on Violence, for the reading list for his 1916 lectures recommends Hulme's translation as published in 1916, which is one of the few editions to include the Translator's Preface. One who has taken careful note of this preface thus knows a substantial part of Hulme's philosophy; his enthusiasm to publicize Sorel's rejection of the naïve hope for a peaceful transformation and intelligent readjustment of society in favour of violence gives Hulme an opportunity to publicize his own perspective according to which man must be seen as fundamentally evil and incapable of progress. In what Pound describes as Hulme's "fussing about Sorel,"<sup>34</sup> therefore, one actually finds Hulme's essential thoughts concerning modern culture: he assesses the claims of romanticism and classicism in art and philosophy, explains the need for a critique of philosophical canons of satisfaction, and suggests the value of history in determining both the present and the past. Through Hulme's occasional writing on the one hand, then, and through his infrequent poetry on the other, Eliot knew Hulme's philosophy and poetic as well as he knew the philosophies of Babbitt and Maurras.

Hulme has often been dismissed as an unimportant figure in philosophy because his thoughts are not original. So great is his intellectual debt to Henri Bergson, for example, that one can find instances in Hulme's writings about Bergson where the former has lifted substantial passages from the work of the latter and used them as his own.<sup>35</sup> Consciously or unconsciously, Hulme simply seems to have found it easier to reproduce Bergson's words as his own than to expand upon Bergson's thoughts in

his own terms. Hulme's motive, however, was not a selfish one; he freely acknowledges that he finds Bergson to be the theoretical sine qua non of modern aesthetic theory:

the extraordinary importance of Bergson for any theory of art is that, starting with a different aim altogether, seeking merely to give an account of reality, he arrives at certain conclusions as being true, and these conclusions are the very things which we had to suppose in order to give an account of art.<sup>36</sup>

Both the fact that he can so easily assume Bergson's words as his own, and the fact that he has often chosen such words as are representative of Bergson's entire philosophy, illustrate the extent of Hulme's dependence upon Bergson as the conceptual foundation of his aesthetic. In part, then, Hulme is merely a propagandist and not a true philosopher; he chose to formulate in English a philosophical attitude which had already been formulated in French. His conservatism and classicism, however, were relatively original in an English context still dominated by the liberalism and romanticism of the nineteenth century. If this much-needed originality in political, moral, and aesthetic theory could come only from France, much as the much-needed originality in poetry came from America, then so be it.

Of the many aspects of intellectual activity which Bergson reveals to be non-vital, Hulme chooses to publicize the death-dealing tendency of language. Bergson describes the process by which reality is symbolized in language as a differentiation within, and separation from, the flux of pure duration. Hulme, therefore, does not expect language to be able to hand



over bodily the aspects of reality to which it refers. In fact, so far as this is the only indictment offered against language, language is no more disappointing in this respect than any other form of expression. Hulme has other reasons, however, for regarding language as the most effective known cause of the death of real experience. Beginning with Bergson's observation, for instance, that language must be able to communicate with as many people as possible, Hulme argues that language must therefore restrict its reference to only that which is common in experience; language cannot refer to that which is particular in experience for this can be understood only by the individual who has the particular experience. Unfortunately, however, the effect of this fact about the nature of language is most pernicious, for if people may speak only of that which is common, surely they are doomed to think only of that which is common. So Hulme observes that the "average person . . . does not even perceive the individuality of their own emotions."<sup>37</sup>

To illustrate this point, Hulme discusses the common feeling of "annoyance." In each individual who experiences annoyance, the feeling is personal and particular; it is coloured, in short, by the whole personality of the person who is annoyed. Given, therefore, the incalculably great number of people who have experienced annoyance at one time or another, and given also distinctions between different feelings of annoyance experienced by even one individual, one can see that the range of personal, particular kinds and degrees of annoyance is inexpressible. Yet the same word is used to express each of these



different experiences. The word "annoyance," then, can only refer to the objective, impersonal aspect of these personal experiences since, by definition, they can have in common only that which is non-particular. Hulme suggests that in a situation such as this the word has come to be used as a "counter"; it serves language as an algebraic symbol serves an algebraic function. Functions in algebra hold true regardless of the particular values of  $x$  and  $y$ --as long as these symbols have been defined. Language works in a similar way. Assuming that the "function of the intellect is so to present things not that we may most thoroughly understand them, but that we may successfully act on them,"<sup>38</sup> Hulme suggests that words can work in intellectual equations designed to promote practical actions with just the disregard for particularity which one sees in algebra. The average person thus need not concentrate his attention upon the particularity of his personal experience of annoyance, for, once he has classified his experience as one of annoyance, he can begin calculating a practical response. The average person, therefore, will inevitably develop the habit of not even perceiving the individuality of his own experiences since this will no longer be relevant to successful action and response. This, Hulme felt, was the result of the nineteenth century's tendency to solve important moral problems with simple verbal formulae--the tendency to prove "God's in his heaven / All's right with the world" by simply saying so.

Reacting against linguistic oppression in particular, Hulme determined to recover reality. The best way to do this, he argued, is through the medium of art: "the function of the



artist is to pierce through here and there, accidentally as it were, the veil placed between us and reality by the limitations of our perception engendered by action."<sup>39</sup> Perception, he feels, has not always been so limited by the ultimate goal of action. Originally, language was composed of "living" metaphors which evoked vivid mental images--images in which strong impressions were yoked together. But the metaphors which are already in the language are dead or dying; they have become intellectual "counters." One need only turn to prose to find "the museum where the dead metaphors of the poets are preserved."<sup>40</sup> The poet, then, must restore life to language by introducing new metaphors. Because of his ability to pierce through the action-oriented veil of perception, the poet recognizes the inadequacy of his language's fixed representation of reality. In the face of the reality he perceives, the poet must invent a new means of linguistic expression--a new metaphor--in order to capture just that aspect of his intuition which language has hitherto been unable to represent. The ultimate goal of art, Hulme suggests, is to reproduce in the reader the artist's intuition:

the big artist, the creative artist, the innovator, leaves the level where things are crystallised out into . . . definite shapes, and, diving down into the inner flux, comes back with a new shape which he endeavours to fix. . . . It is as if the surface of our mind was a sea in a continual state of motion, that there were so many waves on it, their existence was so transient, and they interfered so much with each other, that one was unable to perceive them. The artist by making a fixed model of one of these transient waves enables you to isolate it out and to perceive it in yourself.<sup>41</sup>



In short, the poet strives to express an experience just as he has experienced it; he attempts to communicate that which ordinary language lets slip through its descriptive net.

Hulme realized, however, that poetry cannot produce in the reader the same experience which comprises the poet's intuition; poetry is merely "a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensations bodily."<sup>42</sup> Since, then, the poet cannot directly communicate his experience of a reality beyond the veil of common language, he must at least communicate his conviction in the possibility of perceiving it. The poet, therefore, presents images which create the feeling in the reader that the poet has had an actual contact with reality; Hulme suggests that "by the use of image the 'creative' man can always convey over the feeling that he has 'been there.'"<sup>43</sup> In consequence, then, such a poet's reader ought to be in a receptive state in respect of the possibility of intuiting reality. Properly presented images, therefore, may serve to suggest and evoke in the reader a state very near that which the poet feels. For Hulme, then, as A.R. Jones points out, the reading of poetry is "an act of co-operation between poet and reader in which the reader, by virtue of poetic imagery shaped under the immediate pressure of reality, is able to seize the poet's original intuition."<sup>44</sup> Here, once again, one sees Hulme's debt to Bergson, for Hulme has merely taken up the latter's suggestion that "many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized."<sup>45</sup>



But despite his conviction that poets commune with reality, Hulme was anxious to deny that poetry is in any way a type of religion. He will not allow that poetry is a means by which the soul soars to a divine communion with a higher reality; it is nothing of the sort: "It is a means of expression just as prose is, and if you can't justify it from that point of view it's not worth preserving."<sup>46</sup> This tendency to confuse poetry with religion is the basis of Hulme's quarrel with romanticism--a movement which, in the nineteenth century, reduced poetry to no more than "spilt religion."<sup>47</sup>

Hulme felt that the nineteenth century's most serious error was a metaphysical one; it assumed the universal applicability of the principle of continuity. Following Bergson's distinction between the unextended and the extended, his distinction between life as movement and materiality as "the inverse movement,"<sup>48</sup> Hulme regarded the discontinuity between life and matter as having been sufficiently established. He still felt it necessary, however, to refine the distinctions concerning the discontinuities of reality even further. He suggested, then, that there are three absolute divisions in reality: "(1) The inorganic world, of mathematical and physical science, (2) the organic world, dealt with by biology, psychology and history, and (3) the world of ethical and religious values."<sup>49</sup> The romantic perspective of the nineteenth century errs in confusing the human and the divine: "it blurs the clear outlines of human relations--whether in political thought or in the literary treatment of sex--by introducing in them the Perfection that properly belongs to the non-human."<sup>50</sup> But



although such a perspective may have appeared most forcefully in the nineteenth century, Hulme felt that its origin might be traced back much further--ultimately to the beginning of the Renaissance.

In order to comprehend Hulme's historical perspective, however, one must come to terms with his peculiar conception of the function of philosophy. Philosophy is not a science, he claims, but an art. One will never discover in it the secret of the cosmos; "one merely finds elaborate and complete ways of expressing one's personal attitude towards it."<sup>51</sup> In Hulme's eyes, then, Bergson was simply an exceptional artist who found a coherent system of thought which perfectly expressed his attitude toward reality. Hulme argues that the philosopher's final attitude toward the world must be satisfying in some way. After all, if a philosopher has taken great pains to prove that the world is other than it seems, the final picture of reality which he presents must be personally satisfying--satisfying, that is, in respect of either his equally subjective wishes for this or that kind of world or his perhaps equally subjective need to obey the logical arguments he has contrived, whether or not these lead to the kind of world he wishes. Philosophy, then, seems to have a distinctly personal element in addition to its scientific interest. Surprisingly, therefore, philosophers seem to disagree in respect of scientific matters of fact--where they might have been presumed to agree--and agree in respect of a satisfying world picture--where they might have been presumed to disagree. This agreement concerning a satisfying destiny for man, Hulme suggests, derives from an uncritical



acceptance of the humanist perspective manifested in the Renaissance. And it is this uncritical acceptance of Renaissance "canons of satisfaction"<sup>52</sup>--pseudo-categories which are not apprehended but through which apprehension occurs--which ultimately leads to the excess and sloppiness of romanticism's "spilt religion."

The romantic, Hulme observes, believes that man is basically good--"an infinite reservoir of possibilities."<sup>53</sup> He is perverted, however, by society and its institutions such that his inclination to do good is thwarted. On this view, then, in order to allow the infinite progress which will inevitably follow from man's infinite possibilities, one need only rearrange society so as to remove the oppressive order of its institutions. In short, any type of order has a negative influence upon man. There is, then, no absolute ethical order beyond man's natural order; as man is by nature good, one need only observe the life of man fulfilling his infinite possibilities in order to determine what is good. Romanticism, therefore, in placing man at the centre of the cosmos, "develops logically into the belief that life is the source and measure of all values, and that man is fundamentally good."<sup>54</sup>

These radical assumptions, however, have not gone unchallenged. The religious attitude, or classical attitude, stands on assumptions directly contrary to romanticism. The first postulate of the religious attitude is the impossibility of "expressing the absolute values of religion and ethics in terms of the essentially relative categories of life."<sup>55</sup> In other words, "the organic world, dealt with by biology, psycho-



logy, and history," is discontinuous from "the world of ethical and religious values." Given the fact of absolute and ethical values, then, one must declare man, in so far as he falls short of these values, to be essentially limited and imperfect. When Hulme, therefore, asserts that man is "endowed with Original Sin,"<sup>56</sup> he is pointing out that man is born to a life of imperfection. From this perspective, then, man's nature is absolutely fixed by certain limits; he has infinite possibilities of going wrong, not right. Left to a life which was not ordered by social institutions, man would produce nothing but chaos: "It is only by tradition and organisation that anything decent can be got out of him."<sup>57</sup> According to the religious attitude, then, order is creative and liberating, for it works to release man from the basic limitations of his nature.

For Hulme, however, the opposition between the romantic and religious or classical attitudes is no more confined to philosophy than it was for Babbitt and Maurras; it leads to a fundamental distinction in art as well. Art, Hulme suggests, parallels a person's--and a people's--general philosophy or general world outlook; that is, it represents a satisfying attitude toward man and the world:

It is necessary to realise that all art is created to satisfy a particular desire--that when this desire is satisfied, you call the work beautiful; but that if the work is intended to satisfy a desire and mental need different from your own, it will necessarily appear to you to be grotesque and meaningless.<sup>58</sup>

Thus Hulme accounted for the current neglect of Byzantine art; it simply satisfied different desires, for the Byzantine artist



was no romantic. Romantic art flourishes when man, in his general conception of the order of the universe, places himself at its centre. In such an age and such a culture, man, in the words of A.R. Jones again, "will feel more or less confident in the face of the world and optimistic and happy in its contemplation, and his art will be vital and naturalistic celebrating the life and power of man and of nature. . . ." <sup>59</sup> Man will be conscious of no limitations upon his desires and so will picture the universe as that which satisfies his desire; in short, the human and divine will become identified. The Byzantine artist, however, typifies the religious or classical attitude toward man and the world. In a classical age, man is far less confident than his romantic counterpart. Nature is not one with man but opposed to him; the world seems a hostile and arbitrary place, for man pictures the universe as that which frustrates his desire. Man is aware that he is a severely limited creature that may never expect to attain the absolute values of religion and ethics. His art, therefore, expresses the desire to transcend human limitations. This entails a geometric, non-human, formal and non-naturalistic art, such as a Byzantine mosaic, for, by using abstract, inorganic forms to portray the living and organic, the religious artist can suggest the permanence and eternity of absolute values.

Because individuals here and there were beginning to appreciate Byzantine art once more, Hulme concluded that sensibility was returning from romantic to classical. This would be the return to the religious attitude toward life which



Hulme greatly desired, yet desired not simply because it would confirm the symmetry of his historical analysis of romanticism and classicism, but because he actually held "the religious conception of ultimate values to be right, the humanist wrong."<sup>60</sup> He set about accumulating evidence, therefore, that such a change in sensibility was occurring, and set about convincing his readers that such a change was due. The new geometrical tendencies he discovered in painting and sculpture proved that a classical movement was underway; the similarity between the new art and the art of past classical periods, in respect of their use of geometrical forms, demonstrated, to Hulme's satisfaction, that modern artists were seeking a new means to express a new, modern attitude toward life. Hulme claims that this aesthetic glance toward the past is a necessary step in determining both a new means and a new matter for expression. In a certain artistic movement of the past, the modern artist finds the intensity of expression which he finds lacking in the art of the movement against which he is reacting. The modern artist thus attempts to reproduce this intensity in order to convey his equally intense conviction that he has perceived that which has not been perceived before. In the now permanent or classic formulae of this previous form of art, the modern artist finds his first means of expressing his own intense perception. Initially, however, because clothed in an ancient form, the modern perception seems more like the old one. But the change of sensibility activating the modern artist eventually discovers its own formula which, in respect of the movement against which he is reacting, provides a "purer and more accurate



medium of expression."<sup>61</sup> This change of sensibility, furthermore, directs the modern artist to fix his gaze upon an artistic movement of the past which demonstrates a sensibility similar to his own. A new romantic movement, therefore, looks back to a previous romantic age just as a new classical movement looks back to its classical predecessors. The modern artist of which Hulme speaks, then, will find that he shares the classical or religious attitude of the Byzantine artist. Hulme expects that such a discovery will no doubt help the modern artist to articulate the particular attitude he wants to express in modern art. Again, however, although this new attitude may initially seem to be indistinguishable from the Byzantine attitude, the modern attitude will reveal its distinguishing features as the modern mind comes to comprehend the change of sensibility activating it.

Hulme's attitude to the past, then, must have attracted Eliot's attention, for Hulme's awareness of the past as part of the present foreshadows Eliot's conviction that a healthy culture requires the collective personality of its past to interact with the originality of its living generation. In short, Eliot must have found in writings by Hulme, and hearsay about him, the same concern for tradition that he found in Babbitt and Maurras; but in Hulme, for the first time, he found tradition linked creatively to the individual talent. He also found--in the Translator's Preface to Sorel's Reflections on Violence, for example--the first hint that the present may influence the past as much as the past influences the present. Hulme points out that critics now regard European art as a



coherent body of work deriving from certain clear presuppositions--but presuppositions which have only become clear as they have been denied by modern art. Similarly, philosophy since the Renaissance has been of one family although philosophers have only now recognized the romantic lineage because a new philosophical family has appeared, a family with a tradition of subordinating man to absolute religious and ethical values. Pointing to these observations on the relation between present awareness and the actual past, Hulme might well have claimed Eliot's observations in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" as his own: "the difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show."<sup>62</sup>

One can see as well that Hulme helped to make current the notion of a point in European history at which sensibility changed from classical to romantic. In metaphysical terms, at any rate, romanticism began with the Renaissance: "It seems as if no sooner had Copernicus shown that man was not the centre of the universe, than the philosophers commenced for the first time to prove that he was."<sup>63</sup> Eliot preferred to explain this development in terms of literature. He argued that Milton and Dryden were responsible for turning poets inward to contemplate their own feelings, for these two refined the magnificence of their language to such a point that feeling got left out altogether in favour of the ratiocinative and descriptive; as a consequence, the romantic reaction against reason began and, as Hulme has shown, man became the centre of



the universe. But whether or not Hulme influenced Eliot on this matter, they both agreed that man ought to be no more the centre of the universe than the poet ought to be the emotional centre of his poem. As Eliot argues, "poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality."<sup>64</sup> Hulme suggests similar reasons for avoiding a poetic indulgence in the simple expression of personality: the poet's mood is vague and indefinable; it passes away too quickly to be captured in any event. In writing a poem, then, the poet "selects, builds up, and makes even his own mood more definite to him."<sup>65</sup> Expression does not reveal personality, but builds it up; the poet aims to produce artificial, deliberate poises in himself so as to create his own emotional chessboard out of his poetry. Not only, then, would Eliot have found support in Hulme's writing, poetry, and conversation for his own theories of sensibility and impersonality, but he would also have found the very prescription for the artificial, but deliberate, poises which his own early poetry filled.

The need to escape from personality derives logically from Hulme's position in the debate between classicism and romanticism. Although he could trace the development of romanticism back to the beginning of the Renaissance, he felt that the worst aspects of romanticism were represented by the poets of the nineteenth century. Victorian opinion and rhetoric--to the effect that all was right with the world--was, according to Hulme, the worst symptom of the romantic disease. This lack of any real thought stemmed from an indulgence of



feeling and emotion; in short, it stemmed from an indulgence of personality. In a certain sense, then, the escape from personality represents for Hulme an escape from Victorian rationalization--an escape in which Eliot was only too willing to participate. Hulme saw the Victorian poets as creators of a sound signifying nothing; Eliot sees this tendency in Swinburne: "When you take to pieces any verse of Swinburne, you find always that the object was not there--only the word."<sup>66</sup> But Swinburne is not a typical Victorian poet, for his poetry pretends to be no more than sonorous words; it does not depend upon the assumption that God is in his heaven and all is right with the world:

The world of Swinburne does not depend upon some other world which it simulates; it has the necessary completeness and self-sufficiency for justification and permanence. It is impersonal, and no one else could have made it. The deductions are true to the postulates. It is indestructible.<sup>67</sup>

Eliot, then, would have found in any talk of an escape from personality a valuable suggestion as to how a modern artist might not only avoid the cynical use of words, but actually encourage their accurate use.

The thought of an escape from personality is also consistent with the religious attitude in so far as it demands order and discipline. It is not an abandonment of self-discipline, but rather an escape from that which is personally expressive and satisfying. The escape from personality is a discipline in at least a negative sense, then, because it avoids a lack of discipline. The poet, however, has a further purpose,



for, in denying his personality during the creative process, he is submitting to the discipline of inspiration. He must, in the words of C.K. Stead, negate "the conscious rational individual man in favour of the 'shaping spirit of imagination'" in order for inspiration to be possible.<sup>68</sup> Such is the discipline required in respect of this part of the creative process, moreover, that, as Eliot points out, no half-measures will suffice: "the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done."<sup>69</sup> The concept of impersonality, then, in the context here of poetic theory, is a discipline in the positive sense in which order and discipline are recommended in the classicism of Babbitt, Maurras, Hulme, and Eliot. But it is Hulme's classicism which suggests its poetic context in terms of personality, and Eliot's classicism which develops it in this respect.

Yet perhaps Hulme's most important influence upon Eliot was in the area of language. His description of the poet's use of metaphor to pierce the common veil of language, to dive down into the inner flux of experience and come back with a new aspect of reality to be fixed in the language, suggests Eliot's perspective when discussing Swinburne in The Sacred Wood: "the language which is more important to us is that which is struggling to digest and express new objects, new groups of objects, new feelings, new aspects, as, for instance, the prose of Mr. James Joyce or the earlier Conrad."<sup>70</sup> Hulme, then, made it the poet's responsibility to create a language in which insight would be possible, a responsibility--as Eliot acknowledged it later in "What Dante Means to Me"--"to pass on to posterity one's



own language, more highly developed, more refined, and more precise than it was before one wrote it . . . ,"<sup>71</sup> and a responsibility which Eliot had accepted by the time he had written the essays collected in The Sacred Wood.

But Eliot's acceptance of this responsibility created a tension within both his personality and his poetic, for Eliot's conception of the relation between poetry and the absolute was different from Hulme's. One of Hulme's reasons for defining the poet's responsibility toward language was to limit the Victorian romantic's subject matter. Hulme would not allow the poet to range through scientific and philosophic arguments in his own attempt to prove or disprove the absolute. In short, Hulme denied the poet any right to deal with the absolute. The absolute is unknowable; the poet, therefore, ought only to strive to produce an exact image of objects of ordinary perception. By surrendering the poet's claims to be able to compete with the scientist and philosopher, and by concentrating solely upon language itself, Hulme felt that poets could begin to produce the accuracy and exactness which a scientific age demanded. Although, then, Hulme seems actually to have believed in an absolute reality, he refused, as S.K. Coffman, Jr. observes in Imagism: A Chapter for the History of Modern Poetry, "to permit introduction of this reality into his verse, and in fact established the refusal as a major premise of his poetics."<sup>72</sup> But for the young Eliot, who occasionally attained, and always wished for, visionary glimpses of the absolute, such a restriction was bound to cause tensions. Hulme had effectively argued for the separation of religion and poetry--a separation to which Eliot



could only agree reluctantly, given that his early poems were really as much a naïve form of religion as poetry. In these early poems, Lyndall Gordon suggests, "Eliot moved too fast, riding on intuitions and truncated visions without any real experience beyond his own self-absorbed fantasies."<sup>73</sup> They really could not satisfy him, therefore, in respect of either their religion or their poetry. The period of poetic sterility which began in 1914, then, may have had two causes--two causes which reinforced each other: first, the recognition that this early poetry was inadequate both as religion and as poetry; and secondly, the influence of Hulme's poetic in arguing for a separation between religion and poetry. In the following years, then, Eliot would have had to decide whether poetry ought to declare its relation to the absolute values beyond it or whether it ought simply to interpret poetic values.

Tensions thus appear in The Sacred Wood where, in an essay on Blake, Eliot at once affirms and denies the importance of religion, or the absolute, to poetry. Blake, Eliot observes, lacks the framework of mythology, theology, and philosophy which supports Dante's poetry. Such a framework of belief "would have prevented him from indulging in a philosophy of his own, and concentrated his attention upon the problems of the poet."<sup>74</sup> Dante is a classic, therefore, and Blake merely a genius, because the former was provided with the proper conceptual framework whereas the latter had to make do with one of his own construction. One must conclude, then, that the best poetry depends upon the best conceptual framework, although this framework is not actually one of "the problems of the poet." In short,



Eliot has simultaneously connected and separated poetry and religion. The Waste Land, similarly, demonstrates a largely Christian conceptual framework, although this framework is apparently not one of the problems of the poet.

From Hulme's distinction and separation of poetry from religion, then, Eliot went on to connect them once more--although he maintained the distinction and separation even in doing so. This theme, of course, became of enduring concern to Eliot; even after his conversion he was concerned to define poetry's proper relation to religion. In Four Quartets, therefore, Stephen Spender observes that there is still a tension between "the mystical-religious view, which uses language in such a way that it tends to disappear into the state of ecstatic belief communicated, and the view that poetry is about poetry."<sup>75</sup> Hulme, then, even in leading Eliot to banish the absolute from the creative control of the artist, in order that the artist might concentrate upon his art alone, played a decisive role in shaping Eliot's religious consciousness; for Eliot understood through Hulme that salvation could not come from culture, intelligence, or any other product of man's mind, because man--including a genius such as Blake--is a limited and imperfect being. His salvation, therefore, is dependent entirely upon grace. Similarly, his literary salvation, in the form of a proper conceptual framework, is dependent upon some form of grace--a literary or historical grace. Hulme's denial of the poet's right to deal with the absolute, therefore, proved instrumental in the development of Eliot's suggestion that a proper conceptual framework is essential to the best poetry even though



it is beyond the control of the poet.

Hulme's impact upon Eliot's religious development during his first years in London, then, was just as important as the impact of Babbitt at Harvard and Maurras in Paris. Each confirmed in Eliot the conservative tendency in his nature. Indeed, the convictions expressed in the Lancelot Andrewes declaration derive in some measure from all three of these thinkers. But emphasis upon the three major aspects of Eliot's conservative creed varied from one to the other: Babbitt emphasized the concepts of classicism and romanticism; Maurras was for order and tradition; Hulme was--or at least wanted to be--a philosopher of morals and aesthetics. One can see, then, that there was some significance in the chronological order in which Eliot encountered them. Babbitt, as a humanist classicist, was not a believer; Maurras was a cerebral or pragmatic "believer" in the Church; and Hulme seemed on the verge of conversion--convinced, perhaps, by his own arguments in favour of the dogma of Original Sin, or perhaps overwhelmed by the infinite flatness of the Canadian prairies. This progress from unbelief towards belief, in other words, precisely reflects Eliot's own development during his early years. Whether, therefore, Eliot encountered these philosophers merely as an accident of his education and environment, or somehow intended the course of reading which he actually carried out, the influence of Babbitt, Maurras, and Hulme upon the early development of Eliot's religious consciousness is as undeniable as it is decisive.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> See the early chapters in Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964).
- <sup>2</sup> F.O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot, 3rd ed. revised and enlarged with a chapter on Eliot's later work by C.L. Barber (1935; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1959), pp. 9-10.
- <sup>3</sup> Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 8. See also William Turner Levy and Victor Scherle, Affectionately, T.S. Eliot: The Story of a Friendship: 1947-1965 (London: J.M. Dent, 1969), pp. 53-4.
- <sup>4</sup> C.G. Jung, Contributions to Analytical Psychology, as quoted by T.S. Eliot in "The Frontiers of Criticism," in On Poetry and Poets (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 110.
- <sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot, For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928), p. ix.
- <sup>6</sup> Helen Gardner, The Art of T.S. Eliot (1949; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1968), p. 103.
- <sup>7</sup> H. Gardner, p. 103.
- <sup>8</sup> Irving Babbitt, Literature and the American College (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1908).
- <sup>9</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910).
- <sup>10</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. x.
- <sup>11</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. 244.
- <sup>12</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. 74.
- <sup>13</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. 241.
- <sup>14</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. 211.
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- <sup>16</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. 9.
- <sup>17</sup> I. Babbitt, The New Laokoon, p. 200.



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- 19 T.S. Eliot, "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," p. 480.
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- 21 M. Curtis, p. 224.
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- 26 F.O. Matthiessen, p. 71.
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- 29 T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," in Selected Essays, p. 32.
- 30 T.E. Hulme, Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, ed. H. Read (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1924), p. 267.
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- 35 Compare T.E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," in Speculations, p. 144, with Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, trans. by Arthur Mitchell (1907; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1911), pp. 186-7, and T.E. Hulme, "Intensive Manifolds," in Speculations, pp. 189-90. with Henri Bergson, An Introduction to Metaphysics,

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- 36 T.E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," in Speculations, p. 146.
- 37 T.E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," p. 166.
- 38 T.E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," p. 147.
- 39 T.E. Hulme, "Bergson's Theory of Art," p. 147.
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- 50 T.E. Hulme, "Humanism and the Religious Attitude," pp. 10-11.
- 51 T.E. Hulme, "Searchers after Reality," p. 18.
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- 53 T.E. Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism," p. 116.
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- 57 T.E. Hulme, "Romanticism and Classicism," p. 116.
- 58 T.E. Hulme, "Modern Art and Its Philosophy," in Speculations, p. 84.
- 59 A.R. Jones, p. 112.
- 60 T.E. Hulme, "The Religious Attitude," in Speculations, p. 70.
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- 69 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 59.
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- 71 T.S. Eliot, "What Dante Means to Me," in To Criticize the Critic (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 133.
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## Chapter Two: Frazer and Anthropology

Ezra Pound, the poetic father-figure of the early twentieth century, demonstrated that mythology was a proper concern for the thoroughly modern poet. In 1918, for instance, he described the origins of mythology with an anthropological prescience not to be fully articulated until the publication of Ernst Cassirer's Language and Myth six years later. Pound wrote:

The first myths arose when a man walked sheer into 'nonsense', that is to say, when some very vivid and undeniable adventure befell him, and he told someone else who called him a liar. Thereupon, after bitter experience, perceiving that no one could understand what he meant when he said that he 'turned into a tree' he made a myth--a work of art that is--an impersonal or objective story woven out of his own emotion, as the nearest equation that he was capable of putting into words.<sup>1</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, Pound was greatly impressed by The Golden Bough of Sir James George Frazer. He felt Frazer to have provided as essential a light to the twentieth century as Voltaire to the eighteenth--essential, that is, "in the mental furnishings of any contemporary mind qualified to write of ethics or philosophy or that mixed molasses religion."<sup>2</sup> One need not even read Frazer's complete work in order to benefit from the experience of his intellectual light; but one must be aware of him, Pound argued, or risk invalidating one's own work through "simple ignorance."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the extent to which The Golden Bough came to dominate the inter-war intellectual milieu is indicated by Pound's ironic analysis of contemporary



European social conflict:

By 1934 Frazer is sufficiently digested for us to know that opposing systems of European morality go back to the opposed temperaments of those who thought copulation was good for the crops, and the opposed faction who thought it was bad for the crops. . . . That ought to simplify a good deal of argument.<sup>4</sup>

Furthermore, Pound tacitly acknowledges The Golden Bough's poetic relevance by at least two allusions in his Cantos. In Canto LXXIV, for example, the poet suggests the ritual observance of the priests of the goddess Diana--priests who, in the phrases of this Canto, "at Nemi waited on the slope above the lake sunken in the pocket / of hills."<sup>5</sup> In Canto LXXVII, moreover, the poet recalls not only the geographical location of the opening scenes of The Golden Bough, but also the nature of the vigil maintained there by Diana's murderer-priest: "With drawn sword as at Nemi / day comes after day."<sup>6</sup> The Golden Bough, therefore, was clearly required reading for the self-respecting modernist.

That Eliot should have become interested in The Golden Bough thus would seem to follow as a matter of course from the disposition of his one-time poetic mentor and the European intellectual milieu of his age. Moreover, the relation between poetry and mythology has long been acknowledged. As Professor R.L. Brett observes in Fancy and Imagination, the tradition can be traced back to Homer:

Earlier writers such as Homer had associated art with mythology; the poet was inspired by the Muse, who was, significantly, the daughter of memory. This enshrined the belief not only that the imagination was nourished by the images stored in a poet's



memory, but also that the poet embodied the tribal memory, that he kept alive in the hearts and minds of his contemporaries the feats of valour, the achievements and tribulations of the past, and transmitted these to future generations.<sup>7</sup>

That Eliot, then, a poet supremely conscious of poetic tradition, should have come to consider the traditional relation between poetry and mythology is thus even less surprising. As early as 1918 he declares his belief in a special relationship between the artist and man's primitive past: "The artist, I believe, is more primitive, as well as more civilized, than his contemporaries, his experience is deeper than civilization, and he only uses the phenomena of civilization in expressing it."<sup>8</sup> But neither Pound's influence, the influence of the age, nor the influence of a long poetic tradition serves to explain Eliot's interest in The Golden Bough, for this interest is essentially religious.

Frazer regards myths and religious rituals not simply as evidence of primitive ways of thinking about the world, but as evidence of actual past ways of life practised by primitive man as part of his struggle to create and sustain life in the uncertain world in which he finds himself precariously placed. The entire structure of The Golden Bough, therefore, is ostensibly arranged as an inquiry into the basis in fact for the myths surrounding the ancient priesthood of Nemi--those of the lake and grove of Aricia dedicated in antiquity to the service of the goddess Diana of the Wood. This servant was actually both priest and murderer, for he attained his priesthood by virtue of having murdered the priest who served before him.



Although the problem as to the origin of such an apparently irrational practice seems a difficult one to solve, Frazer's strategy for tackling it is quite simple:

recent researches into the early history of man have revealed the essential similarity with which, under many superficial differences, the human mind has elaborated its first crude philosophy of life. Accordingly, if we can show that a barbarous custom, like that of the priesthood of Nemi, has existed elsewhere; if we can detect the motives which led to its institution; if we can prove that these motives have operated widely, perhaps universally, in human society, producing in varied circumstances a variety of institutions specifically different but generally alike; if we can show, lastly, that these very motives, with some of their derivative institutions, were actually at work in classical antiquity; then we may fairly infer that at a remoter age the same motives gave birth to the priesthood of Nemi.<sup>9</sup>

One may be certain, however, that Frazer's concern does not begin and end with the practices of the priesthood of Nemi. Rather, he simply uses this anthropological instance to convey to the reader the shape of the inquiry to follow. The narrative from Diana of the grove of Aricia to the Norse god Balder is continuous, but the murderer-priest often seems far from Frazer's mind. Beginning The Golden Bough with an investigation of the ritual of the priesthood of Nemi is simply a literary licence designed to provide Frazer with the anthropological licence for a wide-ranging discussion of the history of religion.

Frazer set out in The Golden Bough to establish three main points. First, he wished to demonstrate that the history of religion was a matter of evolution. Revealing something of a bias against the mystical sensibility, he claims that "the movement of higher thought, so far as we can trace it, has on



the whole been from magic through religion to science."<sup>10</sup> Secondly, Frazer desired to convince his colleagues that primitive rituals derived from vegetative celebrations as opposed to solar celebrations. The yearly observances of the death and resurrection of Osiris at the annual flooding of the Nile in October and November, for instance, could not be explained as a celebration of the sun's rise and fall, nor as a celebration of the sun's rebirth in December, for the latter occurs at the wrong time of the year and the former occurs much too often to be marked by an annual observance. The view, therefore, that the essence of the rites of Osiris, and the rites of similar deities such as Attis and Adonis, "was the mimic death and revival of vegetation, explains them separately and collectively in an easy and natural way, and harmonizes with the general testimony born by the ancients to their substantial similarity."<sup>11</sup> Thirdly, he wished to undercut Christianity's claim to be other than a vegetative ritual. Toward this end, he assembled his most impressive array of anthropological artillery.

Early in the first volume of Adonis, Attis, Osiris, Frazer's patronizing--if not actually contemptuous--attitude toward primitive man's belief in magic combines with his scepticism about the Bible's literal truth to reveal the Old Testament prophet's responsibility for rain-making:

When the Israelites demanded of Samuel that he should give them a king, the indignant prophet, loth to be superseded by the upstart Saul, called on the Lord to send thunder and rain, and the Lord did so at once, though the season was early summer and the reapers



were at work in the wheat-fields, a time when in common years no rain falls from the cloudless Syrian sky. The pious historian who records the miracle seems to have regarded it as a mere token of the wrath of the deity, whose voice was heard in the roll of thunder; but we may surmise that in giving this impressive proof of his control of the weather Samuel meant to hint gently at the naughtiness of asking for a king to do for the fertility of the land what could be done quite as well and far more cheaply by a prophet.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, Frazer feels that it is once again primitive ignorance which has produced the widely instanced, but nonetheless erroneous, belief in the possibility of a virgin birth. The lapse of time between the act of conception and the first manifest symptoms of pregnancy is sufficient, he suggests, to disguise, from what he calls the "savage," the causal connection. As a result, stories alleging the birth of a god from a virgin mother might enjoy a high degree of plausibility amid such ignorance. Today, however, one must regard such myths "as relics of superstition surviving like fossils to tell . . . of a bygone age of childlike ignorance and credulity."<sup>13</sup> Clearly, then, for Frazer, the Virgin Mary is in some sense a fossil from a pre-rational, pre-scientific age.

Although Frazer can understand credulity such as this, or at least understand it as consistent with human nature, he cannot tolerate Christianity's anthropological chauvinism. Note, for instance, the tone of his review of the Church's eclecticism in respect of church festivals:

When we remember that the festival of St. George in April has replaced the ancient pagan festival of the Parilia; that the festival of St. John the Baptist in June has succeeded to a heathen Midsummer



festival of water; that the festival of the Assumption of the Virgin in August has ousted the festival of Diana; that the feast of All Souls in November is a continuation of an old heathen feast of the dead; and that the Nativity of Christ himself was assigned to the winter solstice in December because that day was deemed the Nativity of the Sun; we can hardly be thought rash or unreasonable in conjecturing that the other cardinal festival of the Christian Church--the solemnization of Easter--may have been in like manner, and from like motives of edification, adapted to a similar celebration of the Phrygian god Attis at the vernal equinox.<sup>14</sup>

Frazer cannot hide his disdain that the Church should have appropriated these dates and these festivals as its own without the slightest acknowledgement of their pagan origin. In reviewing a fourth-century debate on this very point, therefore, his ironical support for the Christian position undoes it completely.

Christians and pagans alike, it seems, were struck by the remarkable similarities between the worship of Christ and the worship of Attis. Essentially, the debate was concerned to determine which god was the first to experience death and resurrection. The supporters of Attis claimed that the Christian version was merely an imitation of the resurrection of Attis, who was a much older deity. Christians, however, put it about that Attis was no more than a diabolical counterfeit of Christ. At this point, by siding with the fourth-century Christians, Frazer awards the decision to the pagans:

In these unseemly bickerings the heathen took what to a superficial observer might seem strong ground by arguing that their god was the older and therefore presumably the original, not the counterfeit, since as a general rule an original is older than its copy. This feeble argument the Christians easily rebutted. They admitted, indeed, that in point of



time Christ was the junior deity, but they triumphantly demonstrated his real seniority by falling back on the subtlety of Satan, who on so important an occasion had surpassed himself by inverting the usual order of nature.<sup>15</sup>

In the evolution of religions, this particular battle for survival had been won by Christianity--presumably the stronger of the two combatants.

But Frazer resented this and similar victories by the Christian religion. He seems to have regarded this religion as posing a theoretical, if not practical, threat to the life which he felt it was the purpose of religion to further and preserve. Lest, for instance, his Christian readers should too comfortably condemn or deride the Western Asian custom of holy prostitution, Frazer subtly suggests that they look first to see that their own house is in order. He points out that the holy prostitute's vocation,

far from being deemed infamous, was probably long regarded by the laity as an exercise of more than common virtue, and rewarded with a tribute of mixed wonder, reverence, and pity, not unlike that which in some parts of the world is still paid to women who seek to honour their Creator in a different way by renouncing the natural functions of their sex and the tenderest relations of humanity. It is thus that the folly of mankind finds vent in opposite extremes alike harmful and deplorable.<sup>16</sup>

Given the choice between the fertility of the one or the sterility of the other, Frazer would opt for fertility. He regards it as a triumph of common sense that early Christians and Buddhists were not able to maintain the purity of the doctrine of their religions' founders in respect of poverty and celibacy. These ideals strike at the root of human existence, he suggests.

Whether, therefore, due to intellectual and moral weakness, or intellectual and moral strength, the inability to subscribe to these doctrines proved fortunate. Frazer seems unaware, however, that by admitting that original Christian doctrine proclaimed the ideals of poverty and celibacy, that is, an anti-material, anti-life philosophy, he undercuts his argument that Christianity, in its origin, is nothing more than a vegetative ritual designed to guarantee or celebrate the return of the material needs for life. His bias against Christianity, therefore, is not always supported by the evidence he cites, nor by the interpretation which he gives to such evidence.

This is not to say, however, that there is no substance to the claim that there are many and significant structural parallels between the ritual worships of Christ, Adonis, Attis, and Osiris. Frazer traces in each, for instance, the figure of the man-god, that is, the incarnate deity. He suggests that in primitive societies the connection between ordinary men and their gods was established and maintained by a man-god. This individual enjoyed the distinction of being both a man and a god, hence the society's dependence upon him in order to commune with its gods. In so far as he was a god, the man-god was accorded the respect due to one in touch with the power of life. As a man, however, he was obliged to use his divine and magical powers to provide fertility for his people and their land. But this responsibility also laid him open to punishment should crops fail or disease strike. The human representative of life, therefore, might well be put to death should his powers appear to fail. Even this drastic action, however, was designed,



according to Frazer, to ensure the continuity of life:

the motive for slaying a man-god is a fear lest with the enfeeblement of his body in sickness or old age his sacred spirit should suffer a corresponding decay, which might imperil the general course of nature and with it the existence of his worshippers, who believe the cosmic energies to be mysteriously knit up with those of their human divinity.<sup>17</sup>

In other words, in this case those of J.B. Vickery in The Literary Impact of The Golden Bough, what is established by the death of the divine figure "is not his mortality but his divinity. That is to say, incarnation conquers death and thereby introduces the resurrection which, in turn, promulgates regeneration."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, the divine figure having thus become incarnate once more in another form, the nation or society itself is restored and regenerated through the resumption of its link with the gods.

Here, then, in the dozens of various examples of incarnational rituals which he describes, is Frazer's most conclusive evidence that Christianity ultimately derives from primitive vegetative rituals. But lest he should have inadvertently flattered Christianity by implying that it is the culmination of incarnational religious development, Frazer is careful to disparage the concept of incarnation itself; it belongs essentially "to that earlier period of religious history in which gods and men are still viewed as beings of much the same order, and before they are divided by the impassable gulf which, to later thought, opens out between them."<sup>19</sup>

In the end, then, Frazer largely succeeds in proving that

which he set out to prove. The religious processes he has documented do suggest an evolutionary development of some sort. Whether similarities across cultures are due to direct and/or indirect influences, or universal absolute laws of human mental development, is unclear. Similarly, that the worship of Adonis, Attis, and Osiris did not derive from solar rituals, but from vegetative rituals, seems a point well proven. If, therefore, one were to regard The Golden Bough as a romantic quest, with Frazer representing objective, scientific truth in a series of battles against primitive superstition, then one would have to admit that Frazer had won the first two battles quite handily. He does not fare quite so well, however, in his confrontation with the Christian religion. Try as he might, Frazer could not kill this dragon. He demonstrates that Christianity has strong and suggestive connections to a long tradition of pagan incarnational ritual, but the same chauvinistic faith which bedevilled fourth-century pagan critics rises again to bedevil Frazer. In this final battle, Frazer may well have gained the upper hand, but the contradiction in claiming that Christianity derives originally from primitive vegetative fertility rituals, while admitting simultaneously that its original, founding ideals recommend poverty and celibacy, leaves him in a no-win situation.

As with any masterpiece of any kind, however, The Golden Bough transcends its author's conscious intentions. For many readers, for instance, Frazer's encyclopaedic cultural survey served to make them aware of the primitive roots of their own society; the more perceptive, in fact, recognized the yet



primitive nature of contemporary society. His rather detached chronicling of the various sexual elements in primitive rituals thus reinforced the public's preoccupation with the sexual instinct; Freud, Jung, and Frazer suggested that the sexual savage was very near the surface of civilized society. The carnage of World War I, in fact, showed that the savage had actually broken through. Moreover, the economic consequences of the war, the material emphasis of Marxism and communism, and the world depression, all argued that Frazer was right to reduce primitive and civilized man to the same level:

To live and to cause to live, to eat food and to beget children, these were the primary wants of men in the past, and they will be the primary wants of men in the future so long as the world lasts. Other things may be added to enrich and beautify human life, but unless these wants are first satisfied, humanity itself must cease to exist.<sup>20</sup>

Thus, in capturing the spirit of its age, in articulating the concerns of the early twentieth century, and in looking for an explanation of the present in the past, The Golden Bough transcended its conscious anthropological intentions. Still possessed of the nineteenth century's confidence in science and progress, but somewhat confounded by Christianity's refusal to submit before it, Frazer's work helped to convey a sense of the continuity between the spiritual dilemmas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is not surprising, therefore, that the intellectuals of the early twentieth century, overwhelmed by the sheer amount of knowledge amassed by the sciences, should seek some comfort in beginning, with Frazer, in the beginning, for, according to Eliot, this is the end.

Eliot certainly appreciated The Golden Bough: "It is a work of no less importance for our time than the complimentary [sic] work of Freud--throwing its light on the obscurities of the soul from a different angle. . . ." <sup>21</sup> Similarly, the famous Dial review of Ulysses, and the references to The Golden Bough in The Waste Land and its Notes, suggest Eliot's respect for Frazer's work. Ten years earlier, however, Eliot led several graduate seminars at Harvard in which he read papers critical of Frazer and the prevailing anthropological methods of research. Eliot's criticisms, in fact, are so devastating that, in the end, one must look for something other than the anthropology alone in order to explain his continuing interest in The Golden Bough.

Eliot's major anthropological concern, as expressed in his seminar paper "The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual," has to do with interpretation, or explanation and description. Interpretation, he feels, is an illegitimate anthropological activity. Influenced by Josiah Royce, who regarded interpretation of the past as a statement of the meaning of the present, Eliot argued that an anthropologist's interpretation of the primitive past can never get beyond that anthropologist's present cultural perspective. The anthropologist, in short, is methodologically trapped by the fact that he can never attain a vantage point from which to survey his subject; that is, the subject matter of his research is a historical point of view, while whatever perspective he might attempt is equally a historical point of view. Eliot explains the problem of perspective, in "The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual," in terms of natural versus



social or religious evolutionary studies: on the one hand, in the former "we are able practically to neglect all values that are internal to the process, and consider the process from the point of view of our value, wh[ich] is for our purposes conceived of as outside the process . . . "; on the other hand, however, "to some extent in a social progress, and to a very great extent in religious progress, the internal values are part of the external description."<sup>22</sup> In other words, the anthropologist inevitably encounters himself as an object in his own study.

Although equally false as interpretation, explanation and description differ, not in content, but in the nature of their activity. Explanation is relatively primitive. The anthropological explanation attempts to confine itself to one point of view but inevitably fails to do so. Because the anthropologist is himself a term in the relations he observes, his point of view will necessarily vary according to the relations in which he finds himself involved. Frazer understands the celebration of the burial of Osiris, for instance, not simply as a man with a blank mind, but as a man who knows of the worship of Adonis and Attis, as a man raised in a Christian culture, and as a man disdainful of superstition. In short, an anthropological explanation will attempt to incorporate its object into as comprehensive a category as possible; thus Eliot's reported conclusion that "explanation is an act which tries with indifferent success to bring the particular under the universal. . . ." <sup>23</sup> The goal of description, however, is to preserve the particular in its full autonomy. The result of description ought to be an absolutely objective catalogue of behaviour or

activity. Unfortunately, however, the responsibility for the act of description once again falls upon the anthropologist who, as a human being, cannot help but interpret the observed object. The very language in which the description is made will necessarily reflect that language's historical conceptual relativity. Concerning anthropologists, then, anthropology cannot live with them and cannot live without them.

But anthropology is still possible, Eliot feels, so long as the anthropologist refrains from interpreting the purpose of the changes he observes in religious development; he must confine himself to interpreting the process of change itself: "We can come to conclusions as to what men did at one period and another, and can to some extent see the development of one form out of another. . . ."<sup>24</sup> The most the anthropologist can hope to do is to establish a definite historical order, a process interpreted as a continuous function:

So far as there is an external order in ritual and creed and in artistic and literary expression, this order can be reconstructed and cannot be impugned. But the "facts" which can be thus arranged are decidedly limited, and consist historically in a certain order--we never know any too exactly of what the order is.<sup>25</sup>

Eliot felt, however, that the two main schools of anthropology--the English and the French--had both succumbed to the interpretative fallacy. The English were flagrant interpreters, but even the more scientific description by the French failed to eradicate cultural subjectivism. Eliot demanded a mind prepared to abstain from speculation; and, with but a few qualifications, he felt that he had found this in Frazer.



Frazer certainly indulged in the occasional interpretation. He suggests, for instance, that the similarities he has observed in a great cross-section of religions are probably due to "the similar and independent workings of the mind of man in his sincere, if crude, attempts to fathom the secret of the universe, and to adjust his little life to its awful mysteries."<sup>26</sup> Anthropologically speaking, this ought not to be any of Frazer's concern, for the anthropologist can "never know any too exactly of what the order is." He should have been content to have noted these similarities; as Eliot remarks in "The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual," "No one has done more to make manifest the similarities and identities underlying the customs of races very remote in every way from each other."<sup>27</sup> With a proper humility, therefore, he admonishes Frazer for this anthropological vice:

I have not the smallest competence to criticise Dr. Frazer's erudition, and his ability to manipulate this erudition one can only admire. But I cannot subscribe for instance to the interpretation with which he ends his volume on the Dying God.<sup>28</sup>

The essence of Frazer's method, Eliot felt, was sound; that is, interpretation aside, Frazer's comparisons between religions certainly work to establish the evolutionary order of the religious process. Moreover, as Eliot was to argue ten years later, Frazer himself seems to recognize this virtue of his historical comparative method, for with "every fresh volume of his stupendous compendium of human superstition and folly, Frazer has withdrawn in more and more cautious abstention from the attempt to explain."<sup>29</sup> Frazer, therefore, having reformed somewhat, is

elevated by Eliot to the position of culture hero; his Golden Bough transcends the partisan theoretical speculations of anthropological politics:

Yet it is not a mere collection of data, and it is not a theory. The absence of speculation is a conscious and deliberate scrupulousness, a positive point of view. And it is just that: a point of view, a vision, put forward through a fine prose style, that gives the work of Frazer a position above that of other scholars of equal erudition and perhaps greater ingenuity, and which gives him an inevitable and growing influence over the contemporary mind. He has extended the consciousness of the human mind into as dark a backward and abysm of time as has yet been explored.<sup>30</sup>

For Eliot, then, Frazer's rehabilitation seems to depend upon a selective reading--a reading which selects against the interpretation of primitive ritual.

But whether Frazer actually quantitatively reduced the instances of interpretation in his work as he progressed from edition to edition, or whether he merely added a greater quantity of facts so as to reduce the ratio of interpretation to fact, is uncertain. What is certain, however, is Frazer's constant conviction that it is important for the development of the modern mind that the anthropologist attempt to penetrate the primitive religious consciousness. He thus concludes his study of Adonis, Attis, and Osiris--the study to which Eliot refers in his notes to The Waste Land--with an affirmation of the interpretative method:

If we would understand the early history of institutions, we must learn to detach ourselves from the prepossessions of our own time and country, and to place ourselves as far as possible at the standpoint of men in distant lands and distant ages.<sup>31</sup>



The spirit of this statement is correct, according to Eliot's criticisms of cultural relativity, but Frazer inevitably fails-- as every man must fail--to detach himself from the prepossessions of his own time. Years later, moreover, in the 1922 abridged edition of The Golden Bough, Frazer, having recognized the validity of objections such as Eliot's, nonetheless hoped that the anthropologist might eventually produce a probable picture of primitive religious consciousness:

the savage is above being hidebound by the trammels of a pedantic logic. In attempting to track his devious thought through the jungle of crass ignorance and blind fear, we must always remember that we are treading enchanted ground, and must beware of taking for solid realities the cloudy shapes that cross our path or hover and gibber at us through the gloom. We can never completely replace ourselves at the standpoint of primitive man, see things with his eyes, and feel our hearts beat with the same emotions that stirred his. All our theories concerning him and his ways must therefore fall far short of certainty; the utmost we can aspire to in such matters is a reasonable degree of probability.<sup>32</sup>

Frazer, then, at no point in the history of The Golden Bough overcomes what Eliot regards as the interpretative fallacy. Eliot's observation, therefore, of Frazer's movement away from interpretation is not accurate. Rather, Eliot seems to have indulged in a rationalization which would give The Golden Bough both an integrity as anthropology and a legitimacy as an "influence over the contemporary mind." That is, just as Eliot later felt that the Bible, in order to maintain its literary influence, need be regarded as the word of God, so he felt that The Golden Bough, in order to maintain its cultural influence, need be regarded as legitimate and valuable anthropology.

In any event, Eliot maintained throughout his career the view that interpretation is misleading because historically and culturally relative. In his dissertation, for instance, he judges the point at which behaviour changes into mental life to be essentially indefinite because its explanation is a question of interpretation.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, in After Strange Gods, he remembers the difficulty he had at Harvard in understanding the Indian philosophers--a difficulty he analyzes in terms of the interpretative fallacy:

A good half of the effort of understanding what the Indian philosophers were after--and their subtleties make most of the great European philosophers look like schoolboys--lay in trying to erase from my mind all the categories and kinds of distinction common to European philosophy from the time of the Greeks. My previous and concomitant study of European philosophy was hardly better than an obstacle. And I came to the conclusion . . . that my only hope of really penetrating to the heart of that mystery would lie in forgetting how to think and feel as an American or a European: Which, for practical as well as sentimental reasons, I did not wish to do.<sup>34</sup>

Indeed, as late as Notes towards the Definition of Culture in 1948, Eliot resorts to the interpretative fallacy--in this case, in order to demonstrate the difficulties of understanding another culture:

The anthropologist may study the social system, the economics, the arts, and the religion of a particular tribe, he may even study their psychological peculiarities: but it is not merely by observing in detail all of these manifestations, and grasping them together, that he will approach to an understanding of culture. For to understand the culture is to understand the people, and this means an imaginative understanding. Such understanding can never be complete: either it is abstract--and the essence escapes--or else it is lived; and in so far as it is lived, the student will tend to identify himself so completely



with the people whom he studies, that he will lose the point of view from which it was worth while and possible to study it. Understanding involves an area more extensive than that of which one can be conscious; one cannot be outside and inside at the same time. What we ordinarily mean by understanding of another people, of course, is an approximation towards understanding which stops short at the point at which the student would begin to lose some essential of his own culture. The man who, in order to understand the inner world of a cannibal tribe, has partaken of the practice of cannibalism, has probably gone too far: he can never quite be one of his own folk again.<sup>35</sup>

Here, then, Eliot returns the concept of the interpretative fallacy to the anthropological context from which it sprang. Indeed, there may be something of Frazer in the straw anthropologist which Eliot knocks down in this passage.

But although Eliot never forgets his original criticisms of Frazer and his interpretative anthropology, Frazer nevertheless becomes a potent influence upon Eliot's critical prose. The title of Eliot's most famous collection of essays, The Sacred Wood, derives from the opening scenes of The Golden Bough which describe the sacred grove of Aricia where Diana's murderer-priest maintained his daily vigil. According to J.B. Vickery, it seems clear that Eliot's allusion makes poetry the sacred goddess, and criticism her warrior priest "who defends her honor and sanctity, and whose function is to prevent inferior poetry and criticism alike from usurping unworthily the role of deity or of priest and attendant."<sup>36</sup> This interpretation is no doubt true of Eliot's general critical practices; he does wield the critical sword so as to guard against inferior poetry and criticism. But surely Eliot was also announcing his intention to enter the sacred critical wood in a quest to become the new

murderer-priest of modern literature. If not his intention, however, this was certainly the result; and Frazer provided not just this title, but also the outline of many of Eliot's new critical concepts.

In the first place, The Golden Bough suggested to Eliot the possibility of organizing and controlling the vast array of knowledge being amassed by modern research. Frazer's assumption of universal laws of human development implied that modern science was continuous, as a theory of thought, with the earlier theories of thought embodied in magic and religion. In short, the modern poet might suppose a primitive categorical perspective on human behaviour just as valid--though perhaps less obviously articulate--as a more scientific categorical perspective. Frazer implied, therefore, although perhaps unwittingly, that poets such as Eliot might legitimately analyze the modern world in terms of The Golden Bough's primitive religious categories. Thus the Dial review of Ulysses:

In using the myth [of the Odyssey], in manipulating a continuous parallel between contemporaneity and antiquity, Mr Joyce is pursuing a method which others must pursue after him. They will not be imitators, any more than the scientist who uses the discoveries of an Einstein in pursuing his own, independent, further investigations. It is simply a way of controlling, of ordering, of giving a shape and a significance to the immense panorama of futility and anarchy which is contemporary history. . . . Instead of narrative method, we may use the mythical method. It is, I seriously believe, a step toward making the modern world possible for art. . . . 37

In any event, The Golden Bough, in so far as it contributed towards Eliot's awareness of the possibilities of the mythical method, certainly helped to make the modern world possible for



Eliot.

Similarly, The Golden Bough seems to have suggested to Eliot the primitive origins of poetry; it thus appears behind his observation in The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism: "Poetry begins, I dare say, with a savage beating a drum in a jungle. . . ." <sup>38</sup> There is also something of The Golden Bough's magical and religious consciousness in Eliot's concept of the auditory imagination--the feeling for syllable and rhythm, "penetrating far below the conscious levels of thought and feeling, invigorating every word; sinking to the most primitive and forgotten, returning to the origin and bringing something back, seeking the beginning and the end." It "fuses the old and obliterated and the trite, the current, and the new and surprising, the most ancient and the most civilised mentality." <sup>39</sup> Indeed, The Golden Bough itself is something of a fusion of the most ancient and the most civilized mentality. As such, moreover, it represents the vital connection necessary between past and present--a connection maintained through ritual, and a connection exemplified in art. Eliot thus asserts, in another early Dial review, that "all art emulates the condition of ritual. That is what it comes from and to that it must always return for nourishment." <sup>40</sup>

The necessary and vital connection between past and present in art, however, appears as a distinct emphasis in Eliot's critical prose--an emphasis inspired in several ways by Frazer's work. The latter's influence can be discerned, for instance, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent"; the great procession of death and rebirth which he details in The Golden Bough tends

to create a sense of timelessness at the same time as it emphasizes the temporal vastness of man's cultural history. That is, Frazer's cross-cultural, cross-temporal anthropological eclecticism creates the impression of an infinite present in respect of the universal human mind; the very survey itself, however, reinforces the past's separation from the present because of the strange and eccentric aspect the past assumes before the present. Moreover, Frazer's great anthropological knowledge leads to a perspective from which he can at once read the present in the past and the past in the present. In short, Frazer has what Eliot calls the "historical sense":

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 as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.<sup>41</sup>

Substitute "culture" for "literature" here and one has the essence of Frazer's comparative method. The same spirit prevails in Eliot's conception of the critic's role; his business is to see literature steadily and to see it whole--"and this is eminently to see it not as consecrated by time, but to see it beyond time; to see the best work of our time and the best work of twenty-five hundred years ago with the same eyes."<sup>42</sup> Just as Frazer contains cultural history within one perspective,



so Eliot's critic must contain literature within one perspective. It may be, then, that Eliot found the precedent for his abrupt transitions in time, place, and culture throughout his poetry, and the inspiration for his critical conception of the relation between past and present, in The Golden Bough's wanderings from nineteenth-century Scotland to sixteenth-century Mexico, classical Greece and Rome, and the Egypt of the pharaohs.

Similarly, The Golden Bough influenced Eliot's development of the concept of the impersonality of good art. Frazer's scholarly objectivity and detachment, in fact, serve as a model of anthropological impersonality. But whether or not the idea itself derives from Frazer, the terms in which Eliot expresses it certainly do. For instance, he uses the image of "surrender": "The emotion of art is impersonal. And the poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done."<sup>43</sup> The poet finds, moreover, that "what happens is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable." "Sacrifice" is another image: "The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality."<sup>44</sup> These images of surrender and sacrifice suggest that Eliot has in mind Frazer's dying man-god. The poet's personality assumes the role of Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and Christ; the poet must surrender or sacrifice his personality to the poetic power he represents in order that that power may again be made manifest in the world. As Eliot himself puts it in "The Function of Criticism," "there is . . . something outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice

himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position."<sup>45</sup> But, as Eliot is quick to point out, "only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things."<sup>46</sup> This serves as a reminder that the poet returns to his personality and emotions once the act of poetic creation is complete. In terms of Frazerian metaphor and imagery, then, Eliot's theory of impersonality thus comprises the death and rebirth of the poet as man-god.

Just as potent as this influence upon Eliot's critical theory, however, is Frazer's influence upon Eliot's poetry. T.C. Rumble, for instance, in "Some Grail Motifs in Eliot's 'Prufrock,'" notes in Eliot a predisposition towards the mythical method as early as "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."<sup>47</sup> He suggests that "Prufrock" is structured around the central motifs of the Grail story; Prufrock's quest culminates in the Grail story's life-restoring question--in this case, "an overwhelming question"<sup>48</sup> (13) which Prufrock knows will, if asked, disturb his sterile universe. When, therefore, Eliot later encountered The Golden Bough, and later still Jessie L. Weston's From Ritual to Romance, he was already prepared to exploit such material in the search for an objective correlative adequate to his experiences of the early twentieth century.

Examples of Eliot's poetic recourse to Frazer are thus quite easy to find. In respect of "Mr. Apollinax," Eliot seems to owe to Frazer the inspiration for combining the classical and anthropological worlds--worlds combined in the opening pages of The Golden Bough. The figure of Priapus represents fertility, for, as J.B. Vickery notes, Priapus was "a minor



Roman god of vegetation and wine."<sup>49</sup> He thus resembles the even more fertile Greek god, Dionysus, and so justifies the suggestion that Mr. Apollinax laughs "like an irresponsible foetus" (31). The Golden Bough, therefore, suggests the anthropological and classical context in which Eliot can explore contemporary social and sexual sterility. Similarly, in "La Figlia Che Piange," the fugitive woman in the garden, who--"Her hair over her arms and her arms full of flowers" (34)--must leave with the autumn, recalls one of Frazer's female fertility spirits such as Persephone or Eurydice. And Sweeney, whether "Erect" (42) and "straddled in the sun" (43), or "Apeneck" (56) among the nightingales--with "zebra stripes along his jaw" (56)--represents Frazer's savage. Knees spread and arms hung down to laugh, it is difficult to trace Sweeney's devious thought through "the jungle of crass ignorance and blind fear" described by Frazer.

It is The Waste Land, however, which is rightly celebrated as demonstrating Frazer's most sustained influence upon an Eliot poem. The consciousness which the poem itself represents seems to function as one of Frazer's man-gods. As a witness of the experiences portrayed in the poem, this consciousness is individual; it is separate from, and independent of, the experiences of the individuals portrayed in the poem. Yet, in so far as the individual experiences portrayed in the poem are universal, the consciousness behind the poem is also universal. The poem's consciousness, therefore, or its protagonist, if one prefers, is like a man-god, for it represents all men and yet lives an individual life: as a god, it witnesses the various scenes in the

poem, but, as a man, it also participates in each of them.

Specific imagery bears Frazer's impression as well. That "April is the cruellest month" (61) is consistent with Eliot's habit of regarding spring as the ambiguous season of both life and death. Significantly, this observation is also consistent with Frazer's documentation of sacrificial ceremonies concerning the man-god, for these were performed each spring. The death of the man-god, however, is not an occasion for simple sadness, for by his sacrifice the fertility of the coming growing season is ensured. Spring might therefore be described as a cruel season because of the tension as to whether or not the annual sacrifice had indeed ensured fertility. April is the cruellest of these spring months, of course, because it represents the tension to do with Christ's death and resurrection.

Similarly, Eliot may have derived the particular waste land imagery of his poem--"the dry stone" giving "no sound of water" (61)--from Frazer's description of actual waste lands such as an infertile Egypt during the dry season:

Egypt, scorched by the sun, blasted by the wind that has blown from the Sahara for many days, seems a mere continuation of the desert. . . . The plain appears to pant in the pitiless sunshine, bare, dusty, ash-coloured, cracked and seamed as far as the eye can see with a network of fissures.<sup>50</sup>

The very image of a waste land would itself become more pointed for a native of England upon reading Frazer's description of the differences between northern and southern summers:

in countries bordering on the Mediterranean the drought is almost unbroken through the long months



of summer. Vegetation then withers: the face of nature is scorched and brown: most of the rivers dry up; and only their white stony beds, hot to the foot and dazzling to the eye, remain to tell where they flowed. It is at such seasons that a green hollow, a shady rock, a murmuring stream, are welcomed by the wanderer in the South with a joy and wonder which the untravelled Northerner can hardly imagine. Never do the broad slow rivers of England, with their winding reaches, their grassy banks, their grey willows mirrored with the soft English sky in the placid stream, appear so beautiful as when the traveller views them for the first time after leaving behind him the aridity, the heat, the blinding glare of the white southern landscape, set in seas and skies of caerulean blue.<sup>51</sup>

Eliot, though a relatively untravelled Northerner, and perhaps aided by this very passage, seems remarkably able to imagine the intense aridity of this Southern waste land summer; thus, at the first sign of a shadow in The Waste Land, the exhortation: "Come in under the shadow of this red rock" (61).

The theme of the conversation with Stetson, moreover, derives from The Golden Bough's volume concerning the burial of Osiris. "That corpse you planted last year in your garden" (63) is the Egyptian god Osiris in whose effigy grain was annually planted such that each spring his worshippers might ask: "Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? / Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?" (63). As Vickery points out, the poem is brought, through the reference to Frazer's dying god, "to articulate the worry implicit in 'April is the cruellest month'--whether time and the god are being reborn."<sup>52</sup> Frazer's influence likewise appears in other figures in "The Burial of the Dead": The hyacinth girl--"Your arms full, and your hair wet" (62)--is the fertility spirit seen in "La Figlia Che Piange"; Madame Sosostri recalls the primitive magical con-

ception of nature; and the Hanged Man of the Tarot suggests the hanged god of ancient sacrificial rituals. Even the "Dog . . . that's friend to men" (63) derives from The Golden Bough, for Frazer relates that Sirius, the Dogstar, "the brightest of all the fixed stars, appeared at dawn in the east just before sunrise about the time of the summer solstice, when the Nile begins to rise."<sup>53</sup> The connection between the "Dog" and the burial of Osiris, therefore, is a natural one. The connection between these two images and the rest of the poem, moreover, is once again discovered in The Golden Bough, for note that Frazer's observation that, for the Egyptians, "the brilliant luminary in the morning sky [Sirius] seemed the goddess of life and love [Isis] come to mourn her departed lover or spouse [Osiris] and to wake him from the dead"<sup>54</sup> is parodied by lines in "The Fire Sermon": "She turns and looks a moment in the glass, / Hardly aware of her departed lover" (69).

And similarly, Frazer's description of certain other primitive cultures serves to contrast the inverted social ideals of "A Game of Chess." Lil and her companions, for instance, have profaned the ritual of indiscriminate sexuality. Frazer's evidence is that things were once otherwise:

In Cyprus it appears that before marriage all women were formerly obliged by custom to prostitute themselves to strangers at the sanctuary of the goddess, whether she went by the name of Aphrodite, Astarte, or what not. Similar customs prevailed in many parts of Western Asia. Whatever its motive, the practice was clearly regarded, not as an orgy of lust, but as a solemn religious duty performed in the service of that great Mother Goddess of Western Asia whose name varied, while her type remained constant, from place to place.<sup>55</sup>



The typist of "The Fire Sermon" thus performs the proper ritual but subverts its value because unaware of its meaning. As Vickery suggests, these characters "fail to see a sacred connection between themselves and other living kinds."<sup>56</sup> Both "The Fire Sermon" and "Death by Water," furthermore, show the influence of Frazer's work as well, for they illustrate the chief forms of purgation and purification documented extensively throughout The Golden Bough. Frazer also plays a part in the final section, "What the Thunder said." Here, Frazer helps to establish the connection between the death and revival of Christ and the death and revival of ancient deities. The key phrase concerns the "reverberation / Of thunder of spring over distant mountains" (72), for Christ's death was accompanied by such a storm and yet, according to Frazer, "the first peal of thunder in spring announces the reviving energies of nature."<sup>57</sup> The Waste Land, then, begins and ends with the same Frazerian tension concerning death and rebirth.

Though apparently representing the culmination of Frazer's influence upon Eliot's poetry, The Waste Land by no means marks the end of this influence. The figures in "The Hollow Men," for instance, recall the straw effigies which Frazer explained as a counterfeit of the actual man-god. "Journey of the Magi" reveals a Frazerian awareness of the connection between pagan and Christian religion. The birth witnessed by the magi is but a beginning; an endless cycle of death and rebirth follows-- endless so long as the Eucharist is celebrated. But the birth of Christ also appears here as the end of the life-cycle of Dionysus who is represented by the "vine-leaves over the lintel"

(103) and "the empty wine skins" (103) which the feet about the tavern are kicking. "Animula" refers to Floret's death-- "by the boarhound slain between the yew trees" (108)--and so refers to the similar mythical deaths of Adonis and Attis, Frazer's dying and reviving precursors of Christ. Burnt Norton includes the same anthropological and mythological reference:

We move about the moving tree  
 In light upon the figured leaf  
 And hear upon the sodden floor  
 Below, the boarhound and the boar  
 Pursue their pattern as before  
 But reconciled among the stars. (172)

Similarly, in East Coker, Eliot's Frazerian sensibility in respect of primitive ritual leads him to reflect on the fertility customs of his own ancestors:

In that open field

If you do not come too close, if you do not come too  
close,

On a summer midnight, you can hear the music  
 Of the weak pipe and the little drum  
 And see them dancing around the bonfire  
 The association of man and woman  
 In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie--  
 A dignified and commodius sacrament.  
 Two and two, necessarye coniunction,  
 Holding eche other by the hand or the arm  
 Whiche betokeneth concorde. Round and round the fire  
 Leaping through the flames, or joined in circles,  
 Rustically solemn or in rustic laughter  
 Lifting heavy feet in clumsy shoes,  
 Earth feet, loam feet, lifted in country mirth  
 Mirth of those long since under earth  
 Nourishing the corn. Keeping time,  
 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 milking and the time of harvest  
 The time of the coupling of man and woman  
 And that of beasts. Feet rising and falling.  
 Eating and drinking. Dung and death. (177-8)



Likewise, The Family Reunion shows Frazer's influence; Agatha's incantations recall the magical perspective of Frazer's savage:

Round and Round the circle  
 Completing the charm  
 So the knot be unknotted  
 The cross be uncrossed  
 The crooked be made straight 58  
 And the curse be ended. . . .

Even The Elder Statesman's surface preoccupation with names suggests Frazer's analysis of primitive taboos to do with the names of sacred ancestors or gods.

On the one hand, then, there is a great amount of evidence to show that Frazer's work proved a formative and lasting influence in respect of both Eliot's criticism and poetry. But on the other hand, there remains Eliot's original objection to contemporary anthropology. Neither Frazer, on behalf of English anthropology, nor Durkheim, on behalf of French anthropology, was able to transcend the interpretative fallacy. Because of the increasing cultural impact of The Golden Bough, however, Eliot managed to convince himself that Frazer was at least moving away from interpretation; that is, in order to regard this general cultural influence as legitimate, he needed to regard the anthropology as legitimate. But why should Eliot have gone to such lengths to rehabilitate Frazer's anthropology? Why not admit the validity of his own criticism and so dismiss the influence of The Golden Bough? Clearly Eliot was struggling to acknowledge the fact of Frazer's deep personal impact-- despite his own logic arguing against allowing this influence, and despite, later still, religious convictions contrary to

Frazer's scepticism about Christianity. How, then, does The Golden Bough transcend these objections so as to serve Eliot as an objective correlative of his religious consciousness?

Though part of the intent of The Golden Bough is to detract from Christianity, this is not necessarily the result. The seemingly endless, and largely pre-Christian, cycle of death and rebirth which Frazer's narrative unfolds would appear to undercut the uniqueness of Christ's incarnation. So argues the sceptic. To the Christian, however, the case appears quite different. Twentieth-century Christians, appealing to a logic familiar to their fourth-century ancestors, might well argue that there is a gain for Christianity in being associated with Adonis, Attis, Osiris, and the like, for this demonstrates that Christianity has a history as old as man himself. That is, assuming the unique Christian Incarnation, and so arguing from, not toward, this position, the Christian rightly regards pagan incarnational ritual as either a conceptual counterfeit or a glorious anticipation of the one Incarnation. In short, Christianity is, in a certain sense, Incarnation; in the same sense, moreover, all incarnation is Christian.

In fact, the consistency of Eliot's reference to The Golden Bough after his conversion to anglo-catholicism depends on this very argument. He regards Dionysus in "Journey of the Magi," the Floret-Adonis figure in "Animula," and the boar--the slayer of Adonis--in Four Quartets as complementary to Christianity because these images refer to incarnation. And incarnation itself, moreover, refers to Incarnation. In this respect, Eliot's Christian poetic shares the fourth-century Christian perspective



which Frazer mocked. Ironically enough, then, from this perspective, The Golden Bough proves a positively benign influence on Christianity. After his conversion, therefore, Eliot's allusions to Frazer's work are perfectly consistent with his Christian convictions, for these very convictions render harmless Frazer's hostile anthropological speculations as anticipations of Incarnation.

Similarly, Eliot's unease at the fallacy which underlay Frazer's anthropology was settled, somewhat, by F.H. Bradley. The anthropologist's epistemological difficulty proved to be the same as that of Bradley's philosopher. Just as the anthropologist might never gain an objective perspective from which to study the history of human perspectives, so the philosopher's perspective on the inaccessible Absolute was bound to be relative. Not surprisingly, then, Eliot fashioned the one activity which could save anthropology out of the one activity which Bradley felt could save philosophy. The goal of the philosopher, Bradley argued, given that the Absolute was inaccessible by definition, must be the utmost comprehensiveness and coherence possible. That which is the most comprehensive and the most coherent is that which is most true. Eliot, largely having accepted this perspective, thus chose Frazer's historical comparative method as the model for anthropology. Its vast historical perspective certainly ensured comprehensiveness. Its tendency to be interpretative might be forgiven, moreover, because this at least made for a greater degree of coherence.

Eliot was thus able to transcend--or at least to neutralize--first his logical qualms, and then any potential religious qualms,

in respect of The Golden Bough's influence upon him. The resolution of any such difficulties was really inevitable, however, given the number of ways in which Frazer's work was furthering the development of Eliot's Christian religious consciousness.

In the first place, The Golden Bough's description of a seemingly endless cycle of death and rebirth created a sense of timelessness in regard to man's preoccupation with this concern. Similarly, the juxtaposition of remote cultures and time periods contributed to this sense of timelessness. Indeed, the very act of describing or explaining the past in the present makes for timelessness. But the essence of timelessness is revealed in pattern--the pattern of incarnation, death, and rebirth which informs human history. The Golden Bough, therefore, in revealing the timeless pattern in the history of religions and cultures, reveals to Eliot the timeless pattern in time. It reveals, as well, through the same history, the inevitable association between this timeless pattern and the divine; in short, The Golden Bough portrays the history of religions and cultures--that is, time itself--as the incarnation of a timeless pattern. Eliot thus received from Frazer's work the categories by which he might conceive the timeless Christian Incarnation and through which he might later articulate it in his poetry. There is something of The Golden Bough's temporal presuppositions, for instance, in The Rock's description of Incarnation:

Then came, at a predetermined moment, a moment in time  
and of time,



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 one like a moment of time,  
 A moment in time but time was made through that moment: for without the meaning there is no time, and that moment of time gave the meaning. (160)

As Kristian Smidt remarks in Poetry and Belief in the Work of T.S. Eliot, "More and more in Eliot's later work the idea of timelessness is connected with the Christian revelation."<sup>59</sup>

Similarly, The Golden Bough reinforced Eliot's belief in the virtue of order. The result of Frazer's comprehensiveness and coherence is a perspective from which the history of religions and cultures forms a definite order. In fact, Eliot believed that the anthropologist could never attain more than the conception of some such chronological order:

So far as there is an external order in ritual and creed and in artistic and literary expression, this order can be reconstructed and cannot be impugned. But the "facts" which can be thus arranged are decidedly limited, and consist historically in a certain order--we never know any too exactly of what the order is.

In short, "what we can ever have, at best, is a continuous change of ritual in one direction. We can have . . . at least a function of continuous change."<sup>60</sup> In the context of the early twentieth century, moreover, and particularly in the context of Eliot's criticism and poetry, order ultimately implies religion. In any event, as Eliot observes in Poetry and Drama, such is the case in art:

it is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of an order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness

and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no farther.<sup>61</sup>

Such is the effect of The Golden Bough upon Eliot; its perception of an incarnational, resurrectional order in human history leads him to that state of "serenity, stillness and reconciliation" in which he recognizes, as early as The Waste Land, that a simple anthropological scepticism must be transcended by real belief. Frazer's emphasis upon order, therefore, a by-product of The Golden Bough, proved a decisive influence in enabling Eliot to discover "the still point of the turning world" (173).

Frazer also had an important geographical impact upon Eliot. The Waste Land demonstrates that people are a reflection of the land; "Gerontion" demonstrates that the old man is a reflection of his house. Similarly, location is a central theme in Four Quartets: Burnt Norton, the old house in Gloucestershire, provokes the religious ruminations which follow; East Coker depicts an imaginary reunion with the poet's seventeenth-century Somerset ancestors; The Dry Salvages returns him to the harsh New England coast of his youth; and the final poem of Four Quartets refers, through its title, to the seventeenth-century religious community in Huntingdonshire which was abandoned after the English Civil War. The inspiration for these geographical poetic devices derives from The Golden Bough; Frazer states his belief in the relation between environment and religion in the preface to the first edition of Adonis, Attis, Osiris:



In studying afresh these three Oriental worships, akin to each other in character, I have paid more attention than formerly to the natural features of the countries in which they arose, because I am more than ever persuaded that religion, like all other institutions, has been profoundly influenced by physical environment, and cannot be understood without some appreciation of those aspects of external nature which stamp themselves indelibly on the thoughts, the habits, the whole life of a people.<sup>62</sup>

But even so, Frazer nevertheless warns, toward the conclusion of volume one, that "the whole subject of the influence which physical environment has exercised on the history of religion deserves to be studied with more attention than it has yet received."<sup>63</sup> In reading these volumes, then, Eliot became aware of the relation between religion and environment; that is, he realized, in the words of John B. Barry in "Eliot's 'Burial of the Dead': A Note on the Morphology of Culture," that "sacral practices may be carried far and wide but their power remains latent in their place of origin."<sup>64</sup>

The Golden Bough's most important influence, however, was in suggesting to Eliot how he might revive what he perceived as a dead or dying European culture. The image of Frazer's description of healthy primitive cultures lies behind Eliot's prescription for his own: it is "the struggle of our time to concentrate, not to dissipate; to renew our association with traditional wisdom; to re-establish a vital connexion between the individual and the race. . . ." <sup>65</sup> However savage Frazer's primitive cultures might appear, they were nonetheless vital. Eliot, then, was faced with the problem of restoring that vitality to his own culture. The Golden Bough made it clear that primitive ritual was still echoed or parodied in the contemporary

world; but whereas at one time this ritual had meaning, it no longer did. The typist's indiscriminate sexuality--submitting without thought to the young man carbuncular--and the boudoir-lady's threat to prostitute herself promiscuously--"I shall rush out as I am, and walk the street / With my hair down, so" (65)--betray society's ignorance of the religious dimensions of sexuality. The behaviour of many of modern Europe's women was consistent with the ritual of the holy prostitutes of Western Asia, yet in the activity of the former there was none of the meaning which one finds in the activity of the latter. According to Eliot, then, the poet's duty is to recover the meaning of the rituals and symbols of the past:

as it is certain that some study of primitive man furthers our understanding of civilized man, so it is certain that primitive art and poetry help our understanding of civilized art and poetry. Primitive art and poetry can even, through the studies and experiments of the artist or poet, revivify the contemporary activities. The maxim, Return to the Sources, is a good one. More intelligibly put, it is that the poet should know everything that has been accomplished in poetry, (accomplished, not merely produced) since its beginnings--in order to know what he is doing himself. He should be aware of all the metamorphoses of poetry that illustrate the stratifications of history that cover savagery. For the artist is, in an impersonal sense, the most conscious of men; he is therefore the most and the least civilized and civilizable; he is the most competent to understand both civilized and primitive.<sup>66</sup>

In the end, however, the object is not just to revivify art, but to revivify the whole society. Frazer's influence here in a review of 1919 has clearly developed to the maturer awareness in After Strange Gods of 1934 that society itself must concentrate, not dissipate; it must renew its association with tradi-



tional wisdom and re-establish a vital connection between the individual and the race. It was Frazer, then, who enabled Eliot to see the meaninglessness of modern ritual; thus Frazer's relevance to The Waste Land, and thus Eliot's acknowledgement of his influence. But it was also Frazer who woke Eliot to the possibility of restoring the meaning to modern ritual, for The Golden Bough led nowhere if it did not lead Eliot to religion. The need to recover the primitive's living consciousness of the religious dimension of life--a need made obvious by The Golden Bough--could not be satisfied through anthropology, for, in Frazer's words, "We can never completely replace ourselves at the standpoint of primitive man, see things with his eyes, and feel our hearts beat with the same emotions that stirred his."<sup>67</sup> Eliot, then, was left with no alternative but religion--specifically the Christian religion--for it particularly emphasized the living understanding of all ritual, that is, Incarnation, with a capital "I":

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,  
The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning  
Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply  
That it is not heard at all, but you are the music  
While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,  
Hints followed by guesses; and the rest  
Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.  
The hint half guessed, the gift half understood,  
is Incarnation. (190)

From his experience of The Golden Bough, then, Eliot fashioned poetry and criticism which further developed his Christian sensibility. In general, however, he was unaware of the extent of Frazer's influence upon him. In criticizing

Yeats's attempt to take heaven by magic, for instance, Eliot points to the former's poetry where "golden apples, archers, black pigs and such paraphenalia abounded."<sup>68</sup> Yet these very things appear so frequently in his own Frazer-influenced poetry. Mythology itself is not necessarily incapable of taking heaven; it is only a lower mythology, such as Yeats's, which never can do so:

Mr. Yeats's 'supernatural world' was the wrong supernatural world. It was not a world of spiritual significance, not a world of real Good and Evil, of holiness or sin, but a highly sophisticated lower mythology summoned, like a physician, to supply the fading pulse of poetry with some transient stimulant so that the dying patient may utter his last words.<sup>69</sup>

The conclusion--implied but not stated--is that Eliot's own supernatural world is the proper one, a world derived from a higher mythology. Here, at least, Eliot acknowledges the importance of his own mythology, although he does not appear to recognize Frazer's formative and enduring influence upon it. But having concluded as early as 1913--in respect of anthropological works such as Frazer's--that "to understand my point of view, you have to believe it first,"<sup>70</sup> Eliot owed to The Golden Bough, and the reflections it provoked, the very underpinning of his later faith--that is, the conviction that belief must precede understanding. In Eliot's anthropological beginning, therefore, is his Christian end.



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### Chapter Three: Bergson and Bergsonism

Bergson's place in the history of modern literature has not properly been explained; indeed, according to some, it has not even been secured. Kathleen Nott, for instance, discusses Bergson's theories only in relation to T.E. Hulme, for "it is only in this connection that they bear on the current situation in poetry and art. Apart from that their place seems to be in the history of philosophy."<sup>1</sup> Even here, however, their prospect is poor. A.R. Jones, in The Life and Opinions of T.E. Hulme, admits that "Bergson is not a great philosopher and wrote little or nothing that has been widely recognized as a valid contribution to the permanent and universal science of philosophy." Jones feels that Bergson's significance consists in his aesthetic sensitivity, for he possessed "an acute, almost artistic sensitivity to that age of which he was a most typical product: a sensitivity which enabled him not only to formulate its problems but also to make a distinct and excellent attempt to answer them."<sup>2</sup> Irving Babbitt, however, is less charitable; he dismisses "the anti-intellectual trend of this philosophy and its tendency to present as a spiritual illumination what is at bottom only the latest refinement of Rousseauistic revery."<sup>3</sup> Eliot himself suggests--in the studied arrogance of his early prose--that Bergson's theories amount to nonsense: "the follies and stupidities of the French, no matter how base, express themselves in the form of ideas--Bergsonism itself is an intellectual construction. . . ." <sup>4</sup> Perhaps the most severe

criticism, however, comes from I.A. Richards who describes Bergsonism as an "insidious dry-rot-like invasion of contemporary intellectualism."<sup>5</sup> But this may also be the most ironically accurate criticism of Bergson, for Richards' hostility manifests itself amid a personal Bergsonian "invasion." His complaint, for example, that "we continually talk as though things possess qualities, when what we ought to say is that they cause effects in us of one kind or another,"<sup>6</sup> actually seems a paraphrasal of the following passage in Bergson's Time and Free Will: "We . . . associate the idea of a certain quantity of cause with a certain quality of effect; and finally . . . we transfer the idea into the sensation, the quantity of the cause into the quality of the effect."<sup>7</sup> Similarly, Eliot seems blind to Bergson's impact; yet despite his seemingly ungrateful attempts to cover his tracks, Eliot actually displays Bergson's influence widely in his prose, poetry and religious beliefs.

This fact is by no means obvious, however, given the variety of opinion on this matter. C.A. Patrides, in fact, suggests that "Bergson's influence, which on the modern novel was extensive even if not exclusive, was on Eliot entirely negative."<sup>8</sup> Indeed, if Eliot is right in dismissing Bergsonism as a confusion of art and philosophy--a typically intellectual French folly, according to Eliot--then Bergson's influence may well have been negative.<sup>9</sup> But even a potentially negative influence may nonetheless provoke a positive reaction. Herbert Howarth thus salvages something positive from Bergsonism:



By demolishing a clutter of assumptions and claims, especially the claims for scientific law as allowed by the nineteenth century, Bergson cleared a space in which work and play could begin afresh; and if he liberated the human mind, as some observers feared, for experiments in anarchy, he also created the conditions in which the new conservatism might grow by reaction and make its own use of the leveled space.<sup>10</sup>

In short, Bergson at least served Eliot as a philosophical example against which to react. Yet Eliot had once been a convert to Bergsonism. So strong was his interest in Bergson's lectures at the Collège de France in early 1911 that he arrived early at each lecture--a strong interest shown more by Kristian Smidt's picture of "Eliot arriving an hour and a quarter before the lecture started, as he says one had to do,"<sup>11</sup> than by Robert Sencourt's report that "Tom found that if he wanted a seat, he had to arrive there a quarter of an hour beforehand."<sup>12</sup> There was a period, then, when Bergson's influence is likely to have been substantial. And if, as Piers Gray suggests in T.S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development 1909-1922, Eliot's lack of poetic activity between 1911 and 1913 stems from a dissatisfaction with Bergsonism,<sup>13</sup> the resulting poetic incapacity at least serves to show how deeply the former had been impressed by the latter. At no point, however, does Eliot's conversion to Bergsonism seem to have been completely uncritical, for he wrote an essay in 1911 criticizing Bergson's durée réelle as "simply not final."<sup>14</sup> Thus not only the durée réelle itself, but Eliot's attitude towards it, is simply not final. This ambiguity or ambivalence--whatever the combination of Eliot's conversion and criticism yields--is explained by Philip Le Brun in terms of Eliot's distinct attitudes towards Bergson, on the



one hand, and Bergsonians, on the other. Bergsonians were responsible for Bergsonism--a confusion of philosophy and art, and a folly in its own right, according to Eliot; it was Bergson's disciples, Le Brun argues, "who had perhaps always been the real object of Eliot's antagonism."<sup>15</sup> As far as Bergson himself is concerned, "there appears to be an actual failure on Eliot's part to recognize what he gained from Bergson, and perhaps some process of repression is involved."<sup>16</sup> More likely, however, is Smidt's suggestion that, in moments of doubt, old ways of thinking come to the fore:

The whole past history of a man composes an ideal order, and the sense of this order compels a man to write with his whole past in his bones. One's allegiance can change, as Eliot's changed in respect of *Babbitt* or *Bradley*, but one's views and attitudes can hardly change so completely that the old ideas lose all their appeal and do not present themselves in moments of doubt as the only tenable ones.<sup>17</sup>

Here, then, after adding Bergson's name to this passage, is a psychological explanation of Bergson's presence in much of Eliot's later prose, poetry, and religious thought. But much more interesting is an explanation of the conceptual consistency which further justifies Bergson's continuing influence upon Eliot at all points in his critical, poetic, and religious development.

As Howarth hints above, and as Frank Kermode states plainly, "Bergson . . . is the almost inevitable result of the nineteenth-century effort to find room for art amid the encroachments of science. . . ." <sup>18</sup> Toward this end, Bergson began his assault against nineteenth-century materialism by asking whether thought



can properly be assimilated to things. He concedes, of course, that for the practical purposes of day to day living, and for scientific purposes, there have to be just as sharp and precise distinctions between ideas as there are between the material objects which they are supposed to represent. It would be impossible otherwise to observe any regularity between intentions and actions, or causes and effects--a regularity necessary for the practice of living and the practice of science. But this is merely the common perception of the matter; and it is, after all, within this common perception that certain philosophical problems arise. Ought thought, therefore, to be necessarily assimilated to its objects? As Bergson suggests:

it may be asked whether the insurmountable difficulties presented by certain philosophical problems do not arise from our placing side by side in space phenomena which do not occupy space, and whether, by merely getting rid of the clumsy symbols round which we are fighting, we might not bring the fight to an end.<sup>19</sup>

He therefore proposes to inquire as to the relation, if any, between the properly spatial--the extended--and the properly non-spatial--the unextended or mental.

Bergson observes that it is quite common--if not a rule--to speak of mental states in terms of magnitude. That is, one describes a certain thought, feeling, emotion, or sensation as greater or lesser than another. This description, then, is actually a comparison in respect of magnitude. But magnitude being properly a concept applied to things which are extended, what is one to make of the unextended magnitude implied by the ranking of mental states as greater or lesser than others? As



Bergson and Richards suggest, this curious aspect of common ways of thinking is the result of subtly importing cause into effect. Take, for example, the pricking of a finger of the left hand by a pin held in the right hand. The pin is pricked deeper and deeper into this finger as the effort of the right hand increases. Bergson denies, however, that the sensation in the finger increases, for this would once again quantify sensation. The intensity of a sensation is but "a certain shade or quality"; the mistake arises as one localizes in "the sensation of the left hand, which is pricked, the progressive effort of the right hand, which pricks."<sup>20</sup> And so a quality becomes representative of the magnitude or quantity of its cause; one thus speaks of it as though it were extended itself. Bergson is at pains to emphasize, however, that there is no point of contact between the extended and the unextended, between quantity and quality: "We can interpret the one by the other, set up the one as the equivalent of the other; but sooner or later, at the beginning or at the end, we shall have to recognize the conventional character of this assimilation."<sup>21</sup> Having determined, therefore, that a mental state neither increases nor decreases, Bergson proceeds to ask whether the very distinction between one mental state and another might not also be a conventional illusion--another aspect of the conventional assimilation of thought to material objects.

Material objects, of course, must be distinct; that is, they observe the law in respect of the impenetrability of matter: "Two bodies cannot occupy the same space at the same time." Bergson suggests, however, that this is not actually a physical



law, but merely a logical necessity. If something is to be counted, for instance, it must be distinct in space. In other words, objects simply could not be distinguished--that is, counted--if they were interpenetrated in physical or mental space. The law concerning the impenetrability of matter, therefore, reflects not a property of matter, but a property of number. There ought, then, to be no conceptual difficulty in picturing mental activity as an infinite interpenetration of mental states, for the multiplicity of these mental states is numerical only in the sense that the symbols which represent them--verbally or otherwise--are distinct and many in number. The fact remains, however, that people commonly conceive of mental states in the material terms of distinction and number. There must, then, be a convincing illusion responsible for the unnecessary, but nonetheless firmly established, convention of assimilating mental states to material objects.

Bergson accounts for this convention by tracing it to a confusion between time and space. One's reflective consciousness, he observes, tends to conceive of time through its distinction between a present and past state of consciousness. As a result, time appears to be "a medium in which our conscious states form a discrete series so as to admit of being counted. . . ." <sup>22</sup> But counting can only occur in space; in order to apply the concept of number, one must be able to distinguish objects in physical or mental space. Time, then, in so far as it is regarded as a medium in which distinction and counting occur, seems to be space. This concept of time, therefore, is impure; Bergson describes it as an alloy "surreptitiously bringing



in the idea of space."<sup>23</sup> Pure time, Bergson argues, knows no distinction between present states and past states; it is a living duration. Of these two concepts of time, however, the impure notion of time as a medium of extension is the far more pervasive. And it is this conceptual impurity which is responsible for the conventional assimilation between mental states and material objects.

In pure time--living time, concrete time, or the time of pure duration--thoughts, feelings, emotions, and sensations are in a constant flux; they are confused and ever-changing. In impure, extended time, however, these mental states are distinguished and named so that they come under the domain of a symbolic language. The act of distinguishing such states, so that they become clear and precise, actually reduces them to the lowest denominator common with the experience of others in order that what the name or symbol denotes might be communicated to as many as possible. This impersonalization, however unfortunate, proves necessary not only in the interest of science, but also in the interest of practical day to day living, for communication is impossible without it. In the end--the unextended consciousness having been extended and impersonalized by linguistic symbols--extended time produces an extended consciousness:

little by little . . . [our conscious] states are made into objects or things; they break off not only from one another, but from ourselves. Henceforth we no longer perceive them except in the homogeneous medium in which we have set their image, and through the word which lends them its commonplace colour.<sup>24</sup>



And so, Bergson claims, as mental states are assimilated to material objects, they not only separate from each other, but from the living, concrete consciousness as well. Eventually the real, "lived" thought, feeling, emotion, or sensation comes to be known only through the common, impersonal word or image which represents it--that is, fixes or extends it--in the extended consciousness. From the confusion between time and space, therefore, "a second self is formed which obscures the first, a self whose existence is made up of distinct moments, whose states are separated from one another and easily expressed in words."<sup>25</sup> But although this process begins with the confusion between time and space, it is perpetuated by the problems of communication: words, words, words.

To illustrate the impossibility of communicating a state of consciousness directly, Bergson describes the relationship between an author, the character he creates, and the reader. Describe as particularly as he will the character in his novel, the author can never convey his character's actual conscious state, for any "lived" thought, feeling, emotion, or sensation comprises an indefinite multiplicity of conscious states. The author, therefore, in order to represent such a complex state, must distinguish from this flux that which can be represented in words. The words he chooses, of course, are not themselves actual states of consciousness; thus the author can indicate the most personal "lived" sensation--individual consciousness--only by the least personal state of consciousness--the word. And so, even in his expert rendering of the character's states of consciousness through the speeches and actions he depicts,



the author can never produce for the reader "the simple and indivisible feeling" one should experience if one were able even for a moment to identify oneself with the character.<sup>26</sup>

As Bergson testifies:

Out of that indivisible feeling, as from a spring, all the words, gestures and actions of the man would appear to me to flow naturally. They would no longer be accidents which, added to the idea I had already formed of the character, continually enriched that idea, without ever completing it.<sup>27</sup>

In short, actions looked at from the inside appear different from actions looked at from the outside. According to Bergson, one might rise from one's desk, for example, with the intention of opening a window. Should something disrupt one's train of thought, however, such that the intention of opening the window is temporarily obscured, one might well feel that one is standing for a particular reason--a reason that may be recovered with due concentration--although the observation of another, or of language itself, both of which are outside one's state of consciousness, is the same whether one has stood to open a window, or simply to stand. Bergson's point, then, is that no representation by language, or any other means, is adequate to the thing represented.

Moreover, as a representation must always be imperfect in comparison with the object it represents, it therefore seems that the only perfect expression of an object is that object itself. To know an object, then, one must know more than its representation; one must know the object itself. And to know the object itself can mean nothing less than to become the



object; that is, one must know it from the inside as opposed to the outside. This distinction between views from the inside and outside, respectively, is fundamentally the distinction between intuition and intellect. The intellect, according to Bergson, infinitely divides its object, extends it in space, and expresses it in words. Intuition, on the other hand, is a "kind of intellectual sympathy by which one places oneself within an object in order to coincide with what is unique in it and consequently inexpressible."<sup>28</sup> It is not possible, therefore, for intellectual analysis actually to hand over the reality with which it is dealing; it merely lays concepts side by side in an artificial reconstruction of the object. It is occasionally possible, however, for the intellect to suggest an intuition through the skilful manipulation of images. Bergson explains that such images cannot replace the intuition of pure duration, "but many diverse images, borrowed from very different orders of things, may, by the convergence of their action, direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized."<sup>29</sup> Intuition itself, however, is a rare occurrence, for human understanding, according to Bergson's metaphor, is like a railway station: "it notes departures and arrivals. . . . It is more than human to grasp what is happening in the interval."<sup>30</sup>

The question as to why it should be more than human "to grasp what is happening in the interval" prompts Bergson to answer in the terms of his own version of the history of life on earth. To begin with, he accepts the principle of evolution as a conceptual framework within which to discuss the development



of life. Given existence, Bergson commences his history at the point of the distinction between animal and plant life; he assumes that animal and plant cells derive from a common stock: "the first living organisms oscillated between the vegetable and animal form, participating in both at once."<sup>31</sup> This common cellular stock consisted of "vegetable torpor, instinct, and intelligence"; an increasing distinction occurred within this "vital compulsion," however, due to its mixed nature.<sup>32</sup> In time, plants simply fell asleep, thus leaving the pursuit and development of instinctual and intelligent consciousness to animals. According to Bergson's analysis, one path of evolutionary development leads to instinct--evident primarily in insects--whereas the other path leads to intelligence--evident primarily in human beings. At the root of instinct, of course, is intuition; and at the root of intelligence is intellect. The passing of time, then, has made the power of intellect human and the power of intuition "more than human."

But although Bergson speaks of life in terms of evolution, one ought not to conclude that he has quietly, though nonetheless contradictorily, accepted the scientific materialism of the nineteenth century. He will not, for instance, accept that life may be explained as a combination of physico-chemical elements. Life is certainly dependent upon such things as cells, but to explain life in physico-chemical terms inevitably denies the very essence of that which it attempts to explain. In order to illustrate this point, Bergson discusses the mathematical



relationship of a curve to a straight line, by which he means to represent the relationship of life to physics and chemistry. A curve, in so far as it is concrete or "living," is actually a movement--the movement of its own generation. Life, of course, is just such a movement. The straight line in question may be taken to represent chemical and physical forces. From the analytical perspective of mathematics and science--that is, from the perspective of intellect--both a curve and a straight line are reducible to the limit of a point. A curve, then, in the aspect of a point, will be indistinguishable from a straight line in the same aspect. One might claim, therefore, that the curve is actually composed of straight lines. Such a point of view, however, confuses time with space, for it assumes that the living duration which is the curve can be reconstructed from the infinite extension in space of the moments which, undivided and undistinguished, generated the curve originally. Similarly, life is tangent at every point with physical and chemical forces, but no post mortem arrangement of these concepts can ever reproduce the vitality which exists in unextended, undifferentiated time.

Clearly, then, Bergson was willing to discuss the history of life within an evolutionary framework despite the association of evolution with scientific materialism. In fact, the concept of evolution seems to have enabled him to explain life as pure duration, for, according to the theory of evolution, there is a real persistence of the past in the life of the present. In short, life, like the individual consciousness, is an aspect of that undifferentiated flux which is the highest mode of exist-



ence conceivable. As Bergson observes, "continuity of change, preservation of the past in the present, real duration--the living being seems . . . to share these attributes with consciousness."<sup>33</sup> Not surprisingly, then, Bergson's analysis of the relationship of life to matter mirrors his analysis of the relationship of consciousness to material objects. Indeed, life is actually "a broad current of consciousness."<sup>34</sup> Bergson thus presents this broad current of consciousness as penetrating matter just as the individual consciousness penetrates material objects. That is, just as thoughts, feelings, emotions, and sensations in the individual consciousness differentiate and separate from the flux which is the "living" consciousness, in order to engage co-operatively with material objects in the practical activity designed to sustain this consciousness, so life--that broad current of consciousness--externalizes itself in a commerce with matter designed to overcome matter's resistance to life. As Bergson puts it:

In reality, life is a movement, materiality is the inverse movement, and each of these two movements is simple, the matter which forms a world being an undivided flux, and undivided also the life that runs through it, cutting out in it living beings all along its track. Of these two currents the second [materiality] runs counter to the first [life], but the first obtains, all the same, something from the second.<sup>35</sup>

What it obtains, of course, is its own furtherance--the furtherance of life. Life, therefore, in the same manner as the individual consciousness creates a second "material" consciousness to deal with the practical affairs of the material world, creates life in the form of living beings in order to wend its way through



matter.

Life manifests itself in the three modes catalogued above: vegetable torpor, instinct, and intelligence. Plants, however, having fallen asleep, are not the important agents in life's engagement with matter. Rather, instinct and intelligence perform this function. Whereas man represents the ultimate achievement of life in respect of intellect or intelligence, the insect, according to Bergson, represents the ultimate achievement of life in respect of intuition or instinct. Intuition, however, has not gone as far in the development of living beings as has intellect. Bergson suggests that intuition, by restricting its attention as much as possible to the minimum contact with matter necessary to sustain life, eventually shrinks into instinct-- a restricted intuitive consciousness. With the perfection of intelligence in man's intellect, however, Bergson suggests that consciousness may then "turn inwards on itself, and awaken the potentialities of intuition which still slumber within it."<sup>36</sup> Through reawakened intuition, individual consciousness might return to the broad current of consciousness from which it had originally descended into matter. In short, individual consciousness will become life itself. It will look at life through life--from the inside out--instead of trying to recompose life from the fragmentary analysis of a fragmented consciousness, as is necessarily the case when looking at life from the outside in. Toward this apocalyptic end, then, Bergson's exhortations in Creative Evolution wax enthusiastic:

Let us try to see, no longer with the eyes of the intellect alone, which grasps only the already made



and which looks from the outside, but with the spirit, I mean with that faculty of seeing which is immanent in the faculty of acting and which springs up, somehow, by the twisting of the will on itself, when action is turned into knowledge, like heat, so to say, into light. To movement, then, everything will be restored, and into movement everything will be resolved. Where the understanding, working on the image[,] supposed to be fixed[,] of the progressing action, shows us parts infinitely manifold and an order infinitely well contrived, we catch a glimpse of a simple process, an action which is making itself across an action of the same kind which is unmaking itself, like the fiery path torn by the last rocket of a fireworks display through the black cinders of the spent rockets that are falling dead.<sup>37</sup>

Intuition and intellect, in other words, need not be mutually exclusive approaches to life. In understanding an image, for instance, one glimpses the process by which the intellect constructs its fixed moment out of the duration which is continually unmaking itself through its constant flux. In short, one is prepared for the intuition of pure duration by the image-making activity of the intellect.

Essentially, this is the function which Bergson attributes to the artist. Whereas the intention of life--the flow of movement, the harmony of flux--escapes those who look at life through the eye of the intellect, the artist, Bergson feels, is able to regain this intention by "placing himself back within the object by a kind of sympathy, in breaking down, by an effort of intuition, the barrier that space puts up between him and his model."<sup>38</sup> The work of art, therefore, ought to communicate the thing itself--the very flux which is its object. To seek for the meaning of a poem in the letters of which it is composed is thus a vain effort, for "the letters . . . are not parts of the thing, but elements of the symbol."<sup>39</sup> The thing itself, however, is not the artist's



exclusive object, for he must necessarily portray something of himself as he places himself within this object. In effect, the simultaneous portrayal of the object and the artist within the object proves to be the very portrayal of the sympathetic process which is the artist's intuition. The artistic "thing itself," therefore, is actually the artist's intuition of himself as the thing contemplated. The work of art, then, incorporates the duration of the sympathetic process of intuition within itself, and so becomes as much as possible like the living experience which is its creation. As Bergson puts it:

to the artist who creates a picture by drawing it from the depths of his soul, time is no longer an accessory; it is not an interval that may be lengthened or shortened without the content being altered. The duration of his work is part and parcel of his work. To contract or to dilate it would be to modify both the psychical evolution that fills it and the invention which is its goal. The time taken up by the invention is one with the invention itself.<sup>40</sup>

The artist, therefore, testifies through his work that intuition is possible, and strives, furthermore, to make his intuition possible for others. He cannot communicate it, however, and so must leave these "others" to fare towards intuition as best they can.

In the end, one is left in a similar situation in respect of Bergson's philosophy as a whole. One now knows that consciousness, like time, ought properly to be undifferentiated. Moreover, one has become wary of the insinuating practicality of the intellect. Yet the possibility having been admitted that consciousness might become one with becoming itself, one seems no nearer to intuition than before this Bergsonian enlightenment.

Perhaps the fact that intuition has been discovered--or rediscovered--through intellectual analysis explains the difficulty--or even the impossibility--of logically proceeding to an alogical, unanalytical intuition by means of it. One can seemingly expect no more than that intellectual analysis may "direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized." In many respects, such seems to have been Eliot's experience of Bergson's philosophy.

Although sceptical of Bergsonism in general, Eliot nevertheless seems to reflect in his own critical preoccupation with time the same concern which ruled Bergson's intellectual life. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," for instance, one finds that "the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence . . ."<sup>41</sup>--a sense similar to Bergson's historical or evolutionary sense of the "preservation of the past in the present."<sup>42</sup> For Bergson, moreover, one's personal past exists as pure memory, that is, as a psychical entity in which past mental states exist as independently as the material world. Eliot and Bergson thus agree that the artist must have his finger on the pulse of the living duration--the flux which is at once past, future, and present--for, as Eliot warns, "he is not likely to know what is to be done unless he lives in what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past, unless he is conscious, not of what is dead, but of what is already living."<sup>43</sup> Similarly, in his earlier essay, "Reflections on Vers Libre," Eliot explains "the very life of verse" in the Bergsonian terms of a "contrast between fixity and flux."<sup>44</sup> In addition, then, to sharing with



Bergson the idea of a reality beyond time, an idea with an almost universal currency in eastern and western religion and philosophy, Eliot seems unconsciously to accept many aspects of Bergson's particular version of this reality.

So pervasive, in fact, is Eliot's sense of Bergsonian duration that, in the light of it, even his insistence upon impersonality can be interpreted as an attempt to deny the spatialized "second self" of Bergson's material world. In this world, the "surrender" or "extinction" of personality returns one ironically to the more personal self which is, essentially, duration itself.<sup>45</sup> Not surprisingly, then, Eliot later admits, in 1940, that he actually had in mind a very personal kind of impersonality--the impersonality "of the poet who, out of intense and personal experience, is able to express a general truth; retaining all the particularity of his experience, to make of it a general symbol."<sup>46</sup> According to Bergson, in fact, it is this very particularity which is the general truth. Bergson's impact, then, is not confined to Eliot's early years; it turns up, for instance, in What is a Classic? (1945):

In our age, when men seem more than ever prone to confuse wisdom with knowledge, and knowledge with information, and to try to solve problems of life, in terms of engineering, there is coming into existence a new kind of provincialism which perhaps deserves a new name. It is a provincialism, not of space, but of time; one for which history is merely the chronicle of human devices which have served their turn and been scrapped, one for which the world is the property solely of the living, a property in which the dead hold no shares.<sup>47</sup>

Here, the concern at the corrupt influence of materiality upon questions of life and time is Bergsonian. Far from being merely

negative or inconsequential, then, Bergson's influence upon Eliot seems important--indeed essential--to an inquiry into the process by which Eliot's progressive recognition and articulation of his deepest concerns culminate finally in a Christian perspective.

Among the earliest prose instances of Bergson's impact upon Eliot are the "Eeldrop and Appleplex" chapters in The Little Review of 1917. These characters, preferring evil neighbourhoods of silence to evil neighbourhoods of noise, because the former are more evil, wish "to apprehend the human soul in its concrete individuality."<sup>48</sup> This goal--the goal of Bergsonian intuition--is partially realized in their appreciation of an unpleasant, but nonetheless unique, Spaniard: they are "able to detach him from his classification and regard him for a moment as an unique being, a soul, however insignificant, with a history of its own, once for all."<sup>49</sup> The Bergsonian analysis continues as Appleplex centres the problem of modern consciousness in language: "The majority of mankind live on paper currency: they use terms which are merely good for so much reality, they never see actual coinage."<sup>50</sup> And, for good measure, Eeldrop adds that the "majority not only have no language to express anything save generalized man; they are for the most part unaware of themselves as anything but generalized men."<sup>51</sup> Here, then, is the Bergsonian emphasis upon the disparity between the individuality of immediate experience and the impersonal, common nature of language. Similarly, in the second chapter, one finds Eeldrop discussing art in Bergson's terms; he identifies the artist with his work, for instance, just



as Bergson identifies the duration of the creative process with the duration which is the work of art: "what holds the artist together is the work which he does; separate him from his work and he either disintegrates or solidifies. There is no interest in the artist apart from his work."<sup>52</sup> The artist, then, is in some sense a part of the work of art; Eeldrop thus adds that "the people who can be material for art must have in them something unconscious, something which they do not fully realise or understand."<sup>53</sup> In short, they must have the potential for intuition or instinct. Paradoxically enough, however, the true extent of Bergson's impact only appears when Eeldrop dismisses the Bergsonism which has been recommended to Appleplex:

Our philosophy is quite irrelevant. The essential is, that our philosophy should spring from our point of view and not return upon itself to explain our point of view. A philosophy about intuition is somewhat less likely to be intuitive than any other. We must avoid having a platform.<sup>54</sup>

That is, Eeldrop transcends Bergson's philosophy, in the sense in which it depends upon arguments of the intellect, in order to live the philosophy as the intuition or duration towards which it strives. Perhaps, then, just as Eeldrop's refusal of Bergsonism is actually the act of a Bergsonian, so Eliot's refusal to acknowledge Bergson's impact is not so much an act of repression, as an unconscious--or even tacit--acceptance of Bergsonism.

Much of Eliot's criticism is, in fact, couched in Bergsonian terms. As Philip Le Brun points out, Eliot often seems to have specific passages from Bergson's work in mind. Whereas, in Time

and Free Will, Bergson writes of duration as "a musical phrase which is constantly on the point of ending and constantly altered in its totality by the addition of some new note,"<sup>55</sup> Eliot, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," writes of literary duration in similar terms:

what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered. . . .<sup>56</sup>

And similarly, whereas Bergson warns that having turned inner states into objects "we no longer perceive them except in the homogeneous medium in which we have set their image, and through the word which lends them its commonplace colour,"<sup>57</sup> Eliot notes, in "Philip Massinger," that it "is to be feared that the feeling of Massinger is simple and overlaid with received ideas,"<sup>58</sup> and warns, in "Blake," that the ordinary processes of society which constitute education "consist largely in the acquisition of impersonal ideas which obscure what we really are and feel, what we really want, and what really excites our interest."<sup>59</sup> Moreover, as Le Brun points out, Eliot's observation, in "John Donne," that in the case of Baudelaire "every new mood is prepared by and implicit in the preceding mood,"<sup>60</sup> is paralleled by passages in An Introduction to Metaphysics--where Bergson suggests that each conscious state "announces that which follows and contains that which precedes it"<sup>61</sup>--and Time and Free Will--where, dis-



cussing a curved line which changes direction, Bergson declares that "every new direction is indicated in the preceding one."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, as Bergson describes the function of art, within consciousness as a whole, as "to put to sleep the active or rather resistant powers of our personality,"<sup>63</sup> so Eliot, within the realm of poetry, describes the role of meaning as "to satisfy one habit of the reader, to keep his mind diverted and quiet, while the poem does its work upon him: much as the imaginary burglar is always provided with a bit of nice meat for the house-dog."<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, Eliot's conception of poetic creation in "The Frontiers of Criticism"--where he explains that in the "creation" of a poem "something new has happened, something that cannot be wholly explained by anything that went before"<sup>65</sup>--is an echo of Bergson's Creative Evolution, which declares that creation cannot be explained as that which is "already invented."<sup>66</sup> Eliot, then, was clearly well-versed in Bergsonian texts.

It is also clear that Bergson's influence extends beyond mere words to the very structure of Eliot's critical thought. Eliot displays a Bergsonian and Bradleyan despair of the intellect as early as Knowledge and Experience: "if we attempt to put the world together again, after having divided it into consciousness and objects, we are condemned to failure. We cannot create experience out of entities which are independent of experience."<sup>67</sup> The difficulty in understanding experience, according to Bergson, arises from the impossibility of being inside and outside an experience at the same time. This is one of the problems inherent in an anthropological perspective,

a point Eliot first made in Josiah Royce's seminar classes of 1913 and 1914. The idea is still shaping Eliot's thought thirty-five years later, for he explains in Notes towards the Definition of Culture that to understand a foreign culture

is to understand the people, and this means an imaginative understanding. Such understanding can never be complete: either it is abstract--and the essence escapes--or else it is lived; and in so far as it is lived, the student will tend to identify himself so completely with the people whom he studies, that he will lose the point of view from which it was worth while and possible to study it. Understanding involves an area more extensive than that of which one can be conscious; one cannot be outside and inside at the same time.<sup>68</sup>

Essentially, these observations hold true for individual experience as well as cultural experience, for a perfect understanding of one's own experience comes only from living that experience; one must be completely inside, and so beyond the consciousness which objectifies personal experience. Practical consciousness, however, is a fact of life; the result, therefore, is a Bergsonian despair at what Eliot describes as "the awful separation between potential passion and any actualization possible in life."<sup>69</sup>

In the world of literature, Eliot sees this problem reflected in the distinction between prose and poetry:

It seems to me that beyond the namable, classifiable emotions and motives of our conscious life when directed towards action--the part of life which prose drama is wholly adequate to express--there is a fringe of indefinite extent, of feeling which we can only detect, so to speak, out of the corner of the eye and can never completely focus; of feeling of which we are only aware in a kind of temporary detachment from action . . . . This peculiar range of sensibility can be expressed by dramatic poetry,



at its moments of greatest intensity. At such moments, we touch the border of those feelings which only music can express.<sup>70</sup>

According to Eliot, then, language as a whole--apart from poetry--tends to run counter to feeling in so far as it is directed towards action. On this account, Eliot's "language" opposes feeling as Bergson's matter opposes life. Similarly, Eliot observes that language and the accepted way of life change "under the pressure of material changes in our environment in all sorts of ways"; faced, therefore, with the prospect of an unwitting material assimilation of sensibility through the neglect of literature, Eliot warns that "unless we have those few men who combine an exceptional sensibility with an exceptional power over words, our own ability, not merely to express, but even to feel any but the crudest emotions, will degenerate."<sup>71</sup> But that Bergson's conception of the life force serves as a ground for Eliot's conception of poetic language is best indicated in the latter's comments about the poetry of Swinburne:

Only a man of genius could dwell so exclusively and consistently among words as Swinburne. His language is not, like the language of bad poetry, dead. It is very much alive, with this singular life of its own. But the language which is more important to us is that which is struggling to digest and express new objects, new groups of objects, new feelings, new aspects. . . .<sup>72</sup>

This process of verbal digestion and expression, in effect, is the same process of material digestion and expression which Bergson sees life itself performing as it cuts its way through matter. For Eliot, the author enters his fiction, and so brings

life to the characters of his drama, in the same way: "The creation of a work of art, we will say the creation of a character in a drama, consists in the process of transfusion of the personality, or, in a deeper sense, the life, of the author into the character."<sup>73</sup>

Eliot's criticism, therefore, owes a great deal to Bergsonism. Despite his professed distaste for this confusing, intellectual French folly, Eliot unquestionably found it instrumental in enabling him to articulate his critical principles. Whatever else his objective correlative may be, for instance, it is certainly Bergsonian in so far as it can "direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized." Indeed, it was probably in grappling with Bergson's questions as to how--or even whether--real, concrete, living states of mind can be conveyed to another person that Eliot arrived at his objective correlative. And similarly, however diverse and numerous the sources of inspiration and modes of development of Eliot's critical conceptions of creativity, language, time, and immediate experience, these conceptions nonetheless incorporate a significant element of Bergsonism.

Not surprisingly, then, Bergson's philosophy appears in Eliot's poetry as well. Evidence, however, of an awareness of time in his poetry--an awareness which Nott describes as "the sine qua non of poetic experience in general"--actually predates his awareness of Bergson.<sup>74</sup> In his teens, for instance, one finds already the carpe diem theme which Bergsonism refines to a metaphysic of the moment:



But let us live while yet we may,  
 While love and life are free,  
 For time is time, and runs away,  
 Though sages disagree.<sup>75</sup>

Here, then, in adolescent verse, Eliot reveals the poetic awareness of the experience of time traceable within all his poetry. More particularly, he reveals a predisposition toward marking the difference between the perceptual time of "love and life" and the conceptual time about which "sages disagree"-- a predisposition which Bergsonism enables him to confirm and articulate throughout his poetry.

Bergson's influence is evident, for instance, in "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," a poem completed during Eliot's year in France. His preoccupation with time appears as the word itself is used eight times within twelve lines:

And indeed there will be time  
 For the yellow smoke that slides along the street  
 Rubbing its back upon the window-panes;  
 There will be time, there will be time  
 To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet;  
 There will be time to murder and create,  
 And time for all the works and days of hands  
 That lift and drop a question on your plate;  
 Time for you and time for me,  
 And time yet for a hundred indecisions,  
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,  
 Before the taking of a toast and tea.<sup>76</sup> (13-14)

Moreover, time is as essential to activity in "Prufrock" as it is to free will in Time and Free Will. As Piers Gray points out in his analysis of the poem's logic, "the greater the space, the greater the time; the greater the time, the greater the choice; the greater the choice, the greater the indetermination; the greater the indetermination, the less the action."<sup>77</sup> It is

more than possible, then, that, in Staffan Bergsten's words in Time and Eternity, "The poem may in fact be interpreted as an illustration of the decadent impotence against which Bergson reacted in preaching his gospel of free-will."<sup>78</sup> Eliot thus depicts the contemporary experience of impotence through Prufrock's indecision and revision. That is, Prufrock suffers from the inability to assert the priority of his inner experience of time over clock time. According to Nancy K. Gish, in Time in the Poetry of T.S. Eliot, this poem is primarily concerned with "the split between Prufrock's inner and outer life, with his inability to take the chance of living according to his own feelings and desires, and, hence, with his surrender to time in the form of an empty round of events."<sup>79</sup> Prufrock, in fact, in so far as he has "lingered in the chambers of the sea / By sea-girls wreathed with seaweed red and brown . . ." (17), seems occasionally to have experienced the living duration to which he is all too often inadequate. Unfortunately, however, he objectifies the dilemma of his age; wanting to express his inner experiences, he can present only a prepared face. The poem, then, in the sense in which it represents Prufrock's thoughts, amounts to no more than a series of "Streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent / To lead you to an overwhelming question . . ." (13). In other words, the poem itself represents Prufrock's problem, for Prufrock's thoughts, as represented by the poem, objectify his anxieties concerning inner experience and so, to the extent of this objectification, remove these very anxieties from his inner experience. The overwhelming question is never asked,



therefore, because the anxieties which prompt it inevitably dissipate as the question approaches the point of articulation--that is, the point at which the entire matter becomes impersonal through language. Eliot's poem, however, as opposed to "Prufrock's" poem, certainly manages to pose the question, for the Prufrockian dilemma leaves one asking how, on the one hand, Bergsonian duration is possible and how, on the other, it is expressible.

Similarly, much of what has been said about "Prufrock" applies equally well to the remaining poems of the 1917 collection. "Preludes," for instance, develops the same Bergsonian concern about self, immediate experience, and time. Written about the same time as "Prufrock," it parallels the "time / To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet" (14) of "Prufrock" with its own reference to time's "masquerades" (22). Time, it seems, masquerades as evening and morning, as winter, as "four and five and six o'clock" (23), and as night, wherein the soul is revealed through a "thousand sordid images" (23). These images, moreover, are themselves an aspect of time's masquerade, for they bring past and present together in the soul as memory. As Bergson explains,

In reality, the past is preserved by itself, automatically. In its entirety, probably, it follows us at every instant; all that we have felt, thought and willed from our earliest infancy is there, leaning over the present which is about to join it, pressing against the portals of consciousness that would fain leave it outside.<sup>80</sup>

The soul at any one moment, therefore, depends upon time past and present. And similarly, time past and present depends upon

a soul able to make the distinction. J.F. Lynen thus argues, in The Design of the Present, that clock time in "Preludes" is "created by the progressive development of consciousness. In each of the poems one sees the self realizing its identity by observing the time of day."<sup>81</sup> In other words, reading "soul" for "consciousness" here, the souls in "Preludes" are constituted of the present moment of awareness. But the present moment itself is partially constituted of the soul which is aware; as Lynen remarks, "Time comes into being in the process by which immediate experience is organized into self and world."<sup>82</sup> The individual consciousness, self, or soul finds its identity in the time of day, therefore, because the time of day in "Preludes" represents the present moment of the past--a past remembered in the present moment through the old "newspapers from vacant lots" (22) and the lingering "faint stale smells of beer" (22). In short, the soul is constituted of immediate experience--but an experience which nonetheless includes the past, as well as the present, through a "thousand sordid images." "Preludes," then, demonstrates Bergson's influence upon Eliot in so far as it explores both the relationship between the self and immediate experience, and the relationship between this immediate experience, on the one hand, as present event and, on the other hand, as remembered event.

Time--particularly clock time--also dominates "Rhapsody on a Windy Night." The poem is regularly punctuated by the passing hours of the morning: "Twelve o'clock," "Half-past one," "Half-past two," "Half-past three," and "Four o'clock"



(24-6). In between, however, Eliot "shakes the memory / As a madman shakes a dead geranium" (24). Lyndall Gordon, in Eliot's Early Years, suggests that "In 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' Eliot experimented with Bergson's method of grasping truth not by means of analysis but by casting oneself on a current of immediate perception as it flowed through time."<sup>83</sup> But whether consciously or not, Eliot nonetheless represents here the contrast between clock time and duration. The ironic "last twist of the knife" (26) derives from the fact that duration, which is the immediate experience potential in every moment, is usually only experienced during sleep when the intellect's practical--clock time--restraints on the enduring memory are relaxed or overcome; ironically, therefore, one must "sleep" to "prepare for life" (26). Similarly, one finds in "The Boston Evening Transcript" a description of a typical Boston evening in which The Boston Evening Transcript--presumably a fragmenting agent of the intellect--threatens the life and real time which "quicken faintly in the street" (28). The epigraph to "Gerontion," moreover, announces the truth of duration--"Thou hast nor youth nor age / But as it were an after dinner sleep / Dreaming of both" (37)--in opposition to the concept of history which the poem develops: "History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions, / Guides us by vanities" (38). History, then, is another of time's masquerades.

Time as history, of course, plays a fundamental role in The Waste Land. As Bergsten puts it, "In The Waste Land, the historical sense is developed into a sense of simultaneity, or

coexistence, of the identity, almost, of events and places of widely separate origins in time and space."<sup>84</sup> Post-war London, pre-war Germany, Elizabethan England, and the Mediterranean world of Tiresias and Phlebas thus occupy the same poem; that is, they occupy the same time and space of the creative duration which is The Waste Land. In this poem, then, Eliot provides evidence to support Bergson's contention that reality is actually an interpenetration of the many elements which the intellect distinguishes within the living duration. Yet despite shifting his perspective from the individual within time to time or history itself, Eliot manages still to convey the conflict between clock time and duration. As Gish observes, Eliot was able "to retain the sense of individual futility and despair while placing individuals in a context of all time, and to present both the misery of daily routine and the terror of emptiness as part of a larger horror."<sup>85</sup> So the plaintive wife confronts her moribund husband with "What shall I do now? What shall I do?" and "What shall we do tomorrow? / What shall we ever do?" (65). The Bergsonian inner passion is here constrained by what the practical intellect will allow to be done. On the one hand, then, through his historical perspective, Eliot implies that what is possible is limited by what, according to history, actually happens. Gish thus notes that "The juxtaposition of all times, denying real change or development and thus precluding renewal, predominates and intensifies the sense of Hell."<sup>86</sup> On the other hand, however, through his anthropological perspective, Eliot implies that one's real, living, inner passion may yet be released, for, in Gish's words



again, "The symbolism based on Weston relies on a concept of time as allowing for change, development, rebirth and redemption from sterility."<sup>87</sup> In respect of its historical perspective, therefore, The Waste Land recognizes the Bergsonian despair at what Eliot describes as "the awful separation between potential passion and any actualization possible in life."<sup>88</sup> The poem's anthropological images, however, hold out the hope that time may yet be redeemed so as to recover Bergsonian duration. If, therefore, as Gish claims, "In this gap between possible and actual lies the beginning of an increasing separation, throughout Eliot's work, between thought and feeling,"<sup>89</sup> then this increasing separation between thought and feeling may actually derive some of its impetus from the Bergsonian distinction between the practical intellect and intense inner feeling.

Ash-Wednesday assumes the same Bergsonian poetic metaphysic as The Waste Land. One finds "The desert in the garden the garden in the desert" (97); that is, these two worlds occupy the same time and space. And similarly, one can trace Ash-Wednesday's call to "Redeem the time, redeem the dream" (95) to the goal of Bergson's philosophy, that is, to recover pure time and immediate experience. In "Animula," moreover, one finds the twisted result of what Bergson calls impure time:

Issues from the hand of time the simple soul  
 Irresolute and selfish, misshapen, lame,  
 Unable to fare forward or retreat,  
 Fearing the warm reality, the offered good,  
 Denying the importunity of the blood,  
 Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom,  
 Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room;  
 Living first in the silence after the viaticum. (107)





Harry, however, in The Family Reunion, strives to overcome the practical intellect so as to achieve immediate experience. In confronting the family members, therefore, he dismisses their rather conventional experiences:

You are all people  
 To whom nothing has happened, at most a continual  
 impact  
 Of external events. You have gone through life in  
 sleep,  
 Never woken to nightmare. I tell you, life would be  
 unendurable  
 If you were wide awake. You do not know  
 The noxious smell untraceable in the drains,  
 Inaccessible to the plumbers, that has its hour of  
 the night; you do not know  
 The unspoken voice of sorrow in the ancient bedroom  
 At three o'clock in the morning. I am not speaking  
 Of my own experience, but trying to give you  
 Comparisons in a more familiar medium. I am the old  
 house  
 With the noxious smell and the sorrow before morning,  
 In which all past is present, all degradation  
 Is unredeemable. As for what happens--  
 Of the past you can only see what is past,  
 Not what is always present. That is what matters.  
 (293-4)

Actually to become the old house or to see all in a continuous present--as Harry professes, or recommends--requires that one intuit all things in duration. Once again, then, the Bergsonian influence upon Eliot's poetry and plays becomes clear.

Time, however, is also an important concept and experience in Four Quartets. The very first word following the epigraph is "Time" (171). Indeed, time proves to be the central subject of meditation throughout the poem. Moreover, as Bergsten points out, "The theme of time in the Four Quartets has two different aspects: the perceptual and the conceptual aspect, i.e. time as immediate experience and time as the subject of abstract

speculation."<sup>90</sup> Exploring time as immediate experience, one enters the garden: "Through the first gate, / Into our first world, shall we follow / The deception of the thrush? Into our first world" (171). Exploring time through abstract speculation, however, is tautologically sterile: "What might have been is an abstraction / Remaining a perpetual possibility / Only in a world of speculation" (171). These are the categories through which Bergson, among others, explores time; his exploration of time through the speculative or philosophical category, however, is designed ultimately to lead to the intuition of time under the category of immediate experience. Similarly, Four Quartets establishes the opposition between talk about time and the actual experience of time. "Words, after speech, reach / Into the silence" (175); but the real experience of time--"Sudden in a shaft of sunlight" (176)-- is "Quick now, here, now, always" (176). The structure of Four Quartets, therefore, in so far as it involves the dialectic between speculation about time and the immediate experience of time, derives potentially from Eliot's experience of the dialectic between his experience of Bergson's philosophy of time and his own immediate experience of time itself. So closely aligned are the sensibilities of the philosopher and poet, in fact, that the rose of Four Quartets, for instance, may derive in part from Time and Free Will:

I smell a rose and immediately confused recollections come back to my memory. In truth, these recollections have not been called up by the perfume of the rose: I breathe them in with the very scent; it means all that to me.<sup>91</sup>



Similarly, as Le Brun points out, Bergson's criticism of the intellect finds an echo in East Coker.<sup>92</sup> Bergson claims that "Precisely because it is always trying to reconstitute, and to reconstitute with what is given, the intellect lets what is new in each moment of a history escape."<sup>93</sup> Eliot makes the same point:

There is, it seems to us,  
At best, only a limited value  
In the knowledge derived from experience.  
The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies,  
For the pattern is new in every moment  
And every moment is a new and shocking  
Valuation of all we have been. (179)

Although, then, there is also the influence of Heraclitus, Plato, and St. Augustine to be considered in any investigation of the role of time in Four Quartets, there is nonetheless a sufficient Bergsonian presence in the particular images and phrases, on the one hand, and the general structural dialectic between thought and feeling, on the other, to suggest that Bergson remains an influence upon Eliot even at this stage of his development.

In the light of Bergson's pervasive poetic and critical influence, then, it is not surprising to find that Bergsonism played its part in the confirmation and articulation of Eliot's religious beliefs as well. Given Eliot's Puritan predisposition toward what Matthiessen describes as a "trust in moments of vision,"<sup>94</sup> the Bergsonian prospect of a vision of duration naturally attracted the young New England poet. Eliot's temporary conversion to Bergsonism, however, was short-lived. Yet despite his subsequent hostility towards Bergsonism, this philo-

sophy continued to exercise the religious dimension of his thought. In his 1926 Clark Lectures, "On the Metaphysical Poetry of the Seventeenth Century," for instance, Eliot--on the point of his Christian conversion--shows clearly that he regards Bergsonism as a variety of mysticism not unrelated to religious mysticism:

There is a type of religious mysticism which found expression in the XII century, and which is taken up into the system of Aquinas. Its origin is in the Metaphysics of Aristotle 1072b and elsewhere, and in the Nichomachean Ethics, and it is the opposite of Bergsonism. You know how the Absolute of Bergson is arrived at: by a turning back on the path of thought, by divesting one's mind of the apparatus of distinction and analysis, by plunging into the flow of immediate experience. For the XII century, the divine vision or enjoyment of God could only be attained by a process in which the analytic intellect took part; it was through and by and beyond discursive thought that man could arrive at beatitude.<sup>95</sup>

The distinction between Bergsonism and twelfth-century mysticism, however, is not as clearly defined as Eliot suggests. In fact, on Eliot's account of the matter, the approaches to mysticism in question are much more similar than dissimilar.

According to Eeldrop, "A philosophy about intuition is somewhat less likely to be intuitive than any other."<sup>96</sup> In some ways, this is the most penetrating criticism of Bergsonism possible. One's first approach to this philosophy, of course, has necessarily to be through words--whether those of Bergson's lectures, or those of his books. In other words, Bergsonism inevitably makes its first impression as a philosophically discursive system. But this discursive system must then suggest its own non-discursive transcendence if its discourse is to be



valid. In short, it must "direct consciousness to the precise point where there is a certain intuition to be seized." However mutually antipathetic, therefore, Bergsonian intuition is as much dependent upon the Bergsonian intellect as the Bergsonian intellect upon Bergsonian intuition. That is, some sort of intuition presumably led Bergson to his philosophy of duration, and this philosophy should lead to some sort of intuition. In short, the process of understanding Bergson ought to end in the act of living the Bergsonian duration. In effect, then, Bergson turned back on thought "by a process in which the analytic intellect took part." In the end, therefore, man achieves not only Bergsonian duration, but beatitude as well, "through and by and beyond discursive thought." In the light of Eliot's early criticism of Bergsonism through Eeldrop, then, there actually seems to be a certain similarity between the approach to the Absolute by the Bergsonian mystic, on the one hand, and the twelfth-century mystic, on the other. Given this interpretation, Bergsonism is able to reinforce the mystical aspect of Eliot's Christian belief.

Similarly, Bergson's concept of duration parallels in some respects the Christian concept of faith. The intuitional leap to duration, for instance, is not unlike the Christian leap to faith, for in neither case can the analytical intellect produce intuition or faith. To a certain extent, of course, both God and the Bergsonian duration can be apprehended "through and by" discursive thought. But God and duration lie "beyond discursive thought." In short, the Christian and the Bergsonian can only enter a real relation with the Absolute through some

form of grace. In other words, Bergsonism is no more a mere matter of knowledge or gnosis than Christianity. Just as one can only know the will of God by doing the will of God, so one only ever knows Bergsonian duration by living this duration. Theoretically, therefore, the Bergsonian's pursuit of the Absolute is just as active as the Christian's.

Similarly, Bergson's concept of duration is potentially Christian in so far as it is incarnational. Robert Sencourt, however, feels that the Christian Incarnation contradicts Bergsonian duration--especially the concept of duration explained by Bergson's version of creative evolution:

At the Collège de France, in 1910-1911, Eliot had listened with eager ears to Bergson lecturing on Creative Evolution. Now in 1927 he had to accept that at a certain point in this evolution--say, 2,000,000 years after the appearance of what Teilhard de Chardin has called "the Phenomenon of Man"--the Logos became more closely identified with man and man's environment. He entered time; He became Incarnate; in other words, one Christ was both God and man, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh but by the taking of manhood into God--one not by confusion of two separate categories of being but by the union of the two separate categories in His own person. As far as His divinity was concerned, He was equal to the Father; but in so far as He was created man, He was not co-equal with his Creator.<sup>97</sup>

But although Bergson has no conception of such a special creation as Christ within his evolutionary framework, the process by which life individualizes matter into living things is in some sense incarnational. Life, in fact, is qualified by its material nature just as Christ is qualified by His human nature. That is, just as Christ enters time by taking on a human form, so life enters impure, extended, material time by taking on a material



form. Time, moreover, is redeemed in both the Christian and the Bergsonian worlds. Just as Bergsonian duration is an eternal presence, and so a potential of every moment, so Christ is eternally present and guarantees the redemptive potential of every moment. Incarnation, therefore, is not the fundamental contradiction of Bergsonism that Sencourt assumes it to be. In fact, Eliot's acceptance of the Christian Incarnation in 1927 should not have been made any the more difficult because of Bergson. If anything, Eliot's unconscious Bergsonism should have facilitated his acceptance of the Incarnation.

In the end, then, Bergsonism is not so much incompatible with Eliot's Christianity as insufficient for it. Just as Eliot's immediate experience of time transcends Bergson's discursive philosophy--as, according to Bergsonism, it should--so his Christian experience transcends this immediate experience of time. This development begins with Bergson, however, and one must remember that Eliot's "is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughtsmen."<sup>98</sup> Neither, then, does it superannuate Bergson. What begins in the scepticism and confusion of "Prufrock" and the Bergson lectures of 1911 thus ends in the Christian faith of Eliot's later prose and poetry. Once again, then, Eliot's end is found in his beginning.

## Endnotes

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- <sup>5</sup> I.A. Richards, Practical Criticism: A Study of Literary Judgement (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1929), p. 255.
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- <sup>8</sup> C.A. Patrides, "T.S. Eliot and the Pattern of Time," in Aspects of Time, ed. C.A. Patrides (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), p. 162.
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- 98 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 51.



## Chapter Four: Bradley and the Absolute

Amy Lowell, the American-based collaborator with Ezra Pound in the effort to publicize Imagism, once declared of The Waste Land: "I think it is a piece of tripe. I know Tom Eliot--he was brought up around here, distantly related to the Harvard Eliots. But Tom is an intellectual and an intellectual cannot write a poem, which is a matter of heart and emotion."<sup>1</sup> She was correct, of course, in observing that Eliot was distantly related to the Harvard Eliots--Charles William Eliot, for instance, president of Harvard from 1869 to 1909 and a third cousin once removed of T.S. Eliot's grandfather.<sup>2</sup> And she was correct, furthermore, in pointing out that Eliot was an intellectual; his work at Harvard and Oxford concerning "Experience and the Objects of Knowledge in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley" more than proved her point. The effect of this early intellectual interest, moreover, was an enduring one; "A Commentary" in The Criterion of October 1924 reveals its extent:

Few will ever take the pains to study the consummate art of Bradley's style, the finest philosophic style in our language, in which acute intellect and passionate feeling preserve a classic balance: only those who will surrender patient years to the understanding of his meaning. But upon these few, both living and unborn, his writings perform that mysterious and complete operation which transmutes not one department of thought only, but the whole intellectual and emotional tone of their being.<sup>3</sup>

Eliot cannot agree with Amy Lowell, therefore, when she declares that "an intellectual cannot write a poem, which is a matter of heart and emotion," for he finds in an intellectual such as

Bradley a style "in which acute intellect and passionate feeling preserve a classic balance." Indeed, "the secret of Bradley's style, like that of Bergson--whom he resembles in this if in nothing else--is the intense addiction to an intellectual passion."<sup>4</sup> For Bradley, intellectual exercise is but one way of pursuing the Absolute; he thus speaks of philosophy "as a satisfaction of what may be called the mystical side of our nature--a satisfaction which, by certain persons, cannot be as well procured otherwise."<sup>5</sup> In reply to Amy Lowell, therefore, Eliot would have argued that there is potentially as much "heart and emotion" in his intellectual as in her poet. In fact, he advances such a claim in his dissertation: "There is no greater mistake than to think that feeling and thought are exclusive--that those beings which think most and best are not also those capable of the most feeling."<sup>6</sup>

Amy Lowell's critical opinion of The Waste Land, then, and her reasons for this opinion, are not only amusing, but also quite useful in so far as they prompt one to call Bradley as a witness in Eliot's defence, for Bradley proves to have been a pervasive influence in Eliot's early development--an influence, moreover, without which Eliot's "heart and emotion" might never have found their repose in the Church. But although Eliot acknowledges in 1924 the change wrought by Bradley in the "whole intellectual and emotional tone" of his being, even this is an inadequate acknowledgement of Bradley's influence. His experience in reading Bradley, in fact, seems comparable to his experience in reading certain poets of the Romantic and Victorian periods. However much influenced by his reading of



Byron, Shelley, Keats, Rossetti, and Swinburne--from his fourteenth year to his twenty-second--he was not able, at the end of this process of poetic development, to recognize their part in it: "Being a period of rapid assimilation, the end may not know the beginning, so different may the taste become."<sup>7</sup> As a result of studying Bradley, Eliot's philosophic, poetic, and religious "taste" had not so much changed as become much more articulate and coherent. But as his relative emphasis on these tastes changed from the philosophical to the poetic and religious, he no longer fully recognized and appreciated the Bradleyan perspective of the former in the latter.

Eliot's dissertation--well-received by members of the department of philosophy at Harvard such as Josiah Royce--as well as several philosophical articles, and a seminar paper delivered at Harvard, suggest that Eliot might well have succeeded as a modern academic philosopher.<sup>8</sup> In any event, it certainly demonstrated a thorough command of Bradley's metaphysical concepts--a command which Lewis Freed and Anne C. Bolgan reveal in Eliot's prose and poetry, respectively.<sup>9</sup> But Bradley's philosophy provided more than a conceptual language in which to express a modern poetic; it also provided the conceptual foundation for Eliot's personal religious development.

Bradley begins his study of appearance and reality by analyzing knowledge expressed in a relational form--where the subject is related to a predicate--for it seems that all knowledge is expressed in this form. In fact, an absence of relations in the world of knowledge would imply that all reality is one, that there are no real differences to be related, and

thus no individual qualities to be discriminated. Having robbed the world of knowledge through relations, this world of one--but not many--is what Bergson leaves. The logic of relations, he argues, is merely an attempt to reunite the differences which a scientific approach to experience has caused. Bradley sees it as performing a similar function: "It is an attempt to unite differences which have broken out of the felt totality."<sup>10</sup> Neither believes that this attempt can be successful. According to Bergson, only duration is alive and real; no arrangement of concepts, therefore, can recreate it. And Bradley, withholding his judgement as to the actual nature of reality, can see no way of knowing reality--whatever it may be--by the relational form of thought, for it is shot through with contradictions.

The relation, Bradley claims, is not compatible with diversity or unity, the many or the one. In the relation "A is not related to B," for instance, one is claiming that A is not related to B while placing them in a relation--the very nature of which suggests that they are related. Now in what, Bradley asks, does their difference consist? If the difference between A and B is to be placed in the relation itself, one merely multiplies the number of relations involved in the distinction, for the original relation must now be related as a new term to the original terms A and B. This process can clearly continue ad infinitum. If one suggests, however, that the difference is somehow independent of the relation, one denies the relation any meaning; in fact, one denies the relation itself, for A and B become completely



independent owing to their radical difference. Furthermore, if one attempts a compromise by suggesting that part of A is B, while part of A is not B, one merely produces in the individual terms the difficulties evident in the original relation. A relation, then, is always self-contradictory:

It implies always two terms which are finite and which claim independence. On the other hand a relation is unmeaning, unless both itself and the relateds are the adjectives of a whole. And to find a solution of this discrepancy would be to pass entirely beyond the relational point of view.<sup>11</sup>

In short, a relation attempts to force together differences by means of an underlying identity and so asserts simultaneously both plurality and unity, difference and identity.

Space, for instance, seems to consist of space and that which is not space. That is, in order to define space, one must bound it by something outside it; but this something which is not space must be space as well if it is to be placed outside space. The relation of space and not-space, then, will always yield more space. The concept of space itself, therefore, is relationally infinite. Moreover, as it is self-contradictory, space must be merely an appearance of reality. Similarly, time is incoherent as a relational concept. If time is held to be the relation between individual units of time which themselves possess no duration, then, as Bergson would argue, one cannot create duration from the relation of these units. If, however, each unit of time is held to possess duration, then each unit of time is all time, that is, duration itself. As Bradley points out,

All that we require is the admission of some process within the 'now'.

For any process admitted destroys the 'now' from within. Before and after are diverse, and their incompatibility compels us to use a relation between them. Then at once the old wearisome game is played again. The aspects become parts, the 'now' consists of 'nows', and in the end these 'nows' prove undiscoverable.<sup>12</sup>

Time, then, is just as much a mere appearance as space. Each claims a simultaneous difference and identity within itself.

The self itself cannot escape these difficulties. The self to which one refers as "I," for instance, engages in an infinite number of relations with the objects of its experience. It thus suffers the contradictions of all relations. According to relational logic, that is, the self must be distinct from its objects, on the one hand, while identical with them, on the other. In short, this self is but an appearance. The actual self never, in any of its states, has itself before itself as itself; instead, it presents to itself what it feels itself to be. The self referred to as "I," in other words, is not the actual self, but the perceived self. But the actual self experiences relational difficulties as well. Presumably, that is, the actual self must be related to both the perceived self and the objects of the perceived self's experience. This greater self, therefore, must also be simultaneously identical with, and different from, the distinctions it comprises. One cannot even posit an infinite self which constitutes all reality within its consciousness--at least one cannot do so and hope to escape the contradictions of relations--for consciousness itself implies an abstraction from, and discrimination within,



the primitive unity of feeling assumed to have preceded this consciousness. And all such abstraction and discrimination involves relational logic. In short, the perceived self, the actual self, and the hypothetically infinite self are just as dependent upon the relational form of thought as space and time. The self, then, is but an appearance of reality; it too attempts to present itself as the one and the many at once.

Bergson's retreat to pure, undifferentiated duration, then, is not an unreasonable tactical move at this point in the argument, for, as Bradley observes, "if you go back to mere unbroken feeling, you have no relations and no qualities. But if you come to what is distinct, you get relations at once."<sup>13</sup> In the state of unbroken feeling there is not yet a distinction in experience between the self and the not-self; it seems that at this stage, then, experience may be reality itself. But though this state of unbroken feeling must be prior in time to consciousness of self and not-self--prior, that is, to consciousness itself--one finds, as Eliot notes, that "no actual experience could be merely immediate, for if it were, we should certainly know nothing about it. . . ." <sup>14</sup> That is, the awareness of such an immediate experience requires the very consciousness which the experience denies. The immediate unity of unbroken feeling, then, is just as much an intellectual construction as any relational thought; it too is a self-contradictory concept. Bradley puts it this way:

through its own imperfection such first experience is broken up. Its unity gives way before inner unrest and outer impact in one. And then self and Ego, on one side, are produced by this development,

and, on the other side, appear other selves and the world and God.<sup>15</sup>

Bradley cannot agree with Bergson, therefore, that this hypothetical first experience, unbroken feeling, or pure duration is reality itself, for its self-contradiction is an imperfection which Bradley regards as inconsistent with reality.

In short, man can never, by mere thought alone, apprehend reality; he will always become caught up in the contradictions of relations. The human mind, therefore, interprets experience largely in terms of the ideal:

Our experience in short is, essentially and very largely, ideal. It shows an ideal process which, beginning from the unity of feeling, produces the differences of self and not-self, and separates the divisions of the world from themselves and from me.<sup>16</sup>

The mind thus does not have reality as its object, but truth: "Truth is the object of thinking, and the aim of truth is to qualify existence ideally."<sup>17</sup> This involves the attribution of characteristics to reality such that reality can rest in these characteristics consistently and harmoniously. Falsehood, then, or error, attributes characteristics to reality which reality finds inconsistent and unharmonious. In the end, however, truth and error are but appearances of reality. To think of the reality of falsehood or error, for instance, is to attribute imperfection to reality--clearly a contradiction, for one would then have to posit a reality in which this imperfection was made perfect. Error, then, cannot be real; it is, in Bradley's words, "the collision of a mere idea with reality."<sup>18</sup> Truth, also, however, is but an appearance of reality. An idea



appears to be true, that is, appears to be reality itself, only from the perspective of those relations which it subsumes. And that which subsumes all relations no longer merely corresponds with reality, but is reality itself; it is no longer true or false, but real--the very Absolute.

The Absolute, then, is that toward which all appearance approximates; it comprises everything: "the ultimate Reality, where all appearance as such is merged, is in the end the actual identity of idea and existence."<sup>19</sup> The Absolute, however, although it is everything, is never one thing exclusively; but one appearance--seemingly a true one, for instance--can be more real than another one--which is also in some sense true:

taken for itself and measured by its own ideas, every level [of appearance] has truth. It meets, we may say, its own claims, and it proves false only when tried by that which is already beyond it. And thus the Absolute is immanent alike through every region of appearances. There are degrees and ranks, but, one and all, they are alike indispensable.<sup>20</sup>

Everything, then, in some degree contains a vital function of the Absolute. And the more individual anything may be, that much more reality does it possess, "for it contains within its own limits a wider region of the Absolute, and it possesses more intensely the type of self-sufficiency."<sup>21</sup> Self-sufficiency, then, or independence from relational thought, is the criterion by which Bradley judges reality--and the Absolute is self-sufficient.

It remains, of course, for Bradley to demonstrate that this hypothetically all-inclusive reality--that is, the Absolute--actually exists. Toward this end, he begins writing Appearance

and Reality with at least a conviction of its existence:

"I am so bold as to believe that we have a knowledge of the Absolute, certain and real, though I am sure that our comprehension is miserably incomplete."<sup>22</sup> One may be certain, he goes on to argue, that the contradictions and errors in this world of appearance become consistent in a reality beyond the relational form of thought. This resolution of all contradictions in an Absolute is certain because it is conceivable. Since a fundamental aspect of thought is the fact that contradiction is to be avoided as invalidating thought, the Absolute not only may exist, but, as the only existence which can resolve all contradiction, must exist in order to save thought from contradictory relations. As Bradley explains, "what is possible, and what a general principle compels us to say must be, that certainly is."<sup>23</sup> Reality, then, must be one, for plurality inevitably contradicts itself; that is, plurality necessitates relations which imply a superior unity to which the relations are adjectives. The Absolute, then, is an inescapable conceptual conclusion: to posit something other than the Absolute implies another, greater Absolute as the unity superior to the relation between the original concept of the Absolute and that "something other" which has been distinguished from it. This Absolute, therefore, "cannot be doubted, since it contains all possibilities."<sup>24</sup>

The possibility of such an analysis of appearance and reality derives from Bradley's three-stage logic. In the first stage, one assumes that an object such as A exists and can be known to exist simply as A. But it soon becomes clear, in what



one might call the relational stage, that A cannot be known without a B which denies A, or which is at least in some way distinct from it; this is the second stage. But the final stage--Bradley's stage--involves the recognition that any such relation between A and B depends upon a whole in which such a relation is possible. Relations are contradictory and therefore depend upon a whole which reconciles such contradictions in its wholeness. The relation between husband and wife, for instance, is operative only within that whole denoted by "marriage," and the relation between knower and object known is operative only within the possibility of a whole such as knowledge. Relations themselves, moreover, are possible only within that whole which contains all possibilities--the Absolute.

Bradley's metaphysical emphasis upon wholes proved an important influence upon Eliot. In Knowledge and Experience, for example, one finds that facts are not merely "found in the world and laid together like bricks, but every fact has in a sense its place prepared for it before it arrives, and without the implication of a system in which it belongs the fact is not a fact at all."<sup>25</sup> Similarly, he concludes "The Function of Criticism" with this notice:

if any one complains that I have not defined truth, or fact, or reality, I can only say apologetically that it was no part of my purpose to do so, but only to find a scheme into which, whatever they are, they will fit, if they exist."<sup>26</sup>

In both of these instances, Eliot's talk of systems and schemes seems to derive from that Bradleyan conception of ever greater

wholes subsuming more and more relations of knowledge. It is the business of Eliot's literary critic, furthermore, "to see literature steadily and to see it whole. . . ." <sup>27</sup> There is something of Bradley, then, in Eliot's use of this line from Arnold's sonnet "To a Friend." The poet's mind, moreover, whenever confronting new experiences--no matter how disparate--is always "forming new wholes." <sup>28</sup> Not surprisingly, then, the literature produced by the individual, the single country, Europe, and the world forms "organic wholes." <sup>29</sup> And so criticism itself must be just as concerned with organizing these wholes:

It [criticism] is a second stage in our understanding of poetry, when we no longer merely select and reject, but organise. We may even speak of a third stage, one of reorganisation; a stage at which a person already educated in poetry meets with something new in his own time, and finds a new pattern of poetry arranging itself in consequence. <sup>30</sup>

Similarly, Eliot suggests that the sensibility of the poet ought to form a unified whole. Although, then, Eliot's concern is more psychological than metaphysical or epistemological, it is nonetheless Bradley's great whole--the Absolute--which has left this mark upon Eliot's thought.

But one can also trace quite practical matters of Eliot's poetic back to Bradley. One finds already in Knowledge and Experience, for instance, evidence of Eliot's determination to combine thought and feeling in his poetry: he feels that there "is no greater mistake than to think that feeling and thought are exclusive--that those beings which think most and best are not also those capable of the most feeling." In agreement with Bradley, Eliot points out that one cannot really know anything



about the actual state of unbroken feeling or immediate experience, for ideal construction--that is, relational thought--is necessary before this feeling or experience can be known. Unbroken feeling may seem to be prior in time to relational thought, but one can never quite reach the limit of this process of ideal construction; as Eliot puts it, "the line between the experienced, or the given, and the constructed can nowhere be clearly drawn."<sup>31</sup> Viewed from the opposite perspective, one might assume that if feeling were itself epistemologically self-sufficient, then there would be no such thing as consciousness--no subject, no object, no feelings about either--because experience would have remained unbroken, and relations would have remained unnecessary. Eliot points out, therefore, that consciousness is not only the natural result of what Bradley calls the "imperfection" of unbroken feeling, but is also necessary in order that feeling be apprehended at all:

in order that it should be feeling at all, it must be conscious, but so far as it is conscious it ceases to be merely feeling. Feeling therefore is an aspect, and an inconsistent aspect, in knowing; it is not a separate and isolable phase.<sup>32</sup>

From this early acceptance of Bradley's analysis of immediate experience, therefore, Eliot's determination to establish a poetic sensitive to both intellectual and emotional experiences follows quite naturally.

Eliot's earliest speculations concerning the origins of the aesthetic use of language, in fact, occur in his dissertation on Bradley. Prior to speech, he suggests, knowledge could have been no more than a similar way of acting in the presence of

similar objects. These objects thus were not known as such, but "lived." A dog, for example, does not know a cat as a human being knows a cat--by name, that is--but by the behaviour it calls forth from him. Although Eliot acknowledges that language is in some sense a behaviour prompted by such things as cats, he makes it clear that language is more than such simple behaviour. Unfortunately, however, just as the point at which unbroken feeling becomes ideal construction is indefinite, so is the point at which behaviour changes into articulate mental life. But nonetheless, before the change, one merely has passions; after the change, one has objects; "Or at least we have no objects without language."<sup>33</sup> Having thus concluded that language is the objectifier of human experience, Eliot speculates that the indefinite transition from behaviour to language may actually be the root of the fine arts: "what was at first expression and behaviour may have developed under the complications of self-consciousness, as we became aware of ourselves as reacting aesthetically to the object."<sup>34</sup> The "lived" aesthetic experience, in other words, became expressible not only through language, but also through the fine arts. Eliot's objective correlative, therefore, derives in part from his speculation here as to the role of language in objectifying experience--speculation which he offers "only as a suggestion" concerning the origin of aesthetic objects in consciousness.<sup>35</sup>

But Bradley also helped Eliot to realize that there is a danger in the objectification which consciousness, through language, performs upon immediate experience. As that which



is most individual--being thus most self-sufficient--is most real, it would seem that the truest, most important, most real experience is the private experience--the experience, that is, which is most individual and thus most self-sufficient. And so Eliot suggests that "All significant truths are private truths."<sup>36</sup> He sees in the public nature of language, then, the same danger apprehended by Bergson and Hulme; as private truths "become public they cease to become truths; they become facts, or at best, part of the public character; or at worst, catchwords."<sup>37</sup> The danger that a very private experience might--in fact, usually does--become trivialized as a catchword is the same danger Hulme apprehends when he objects to words being used as "counters" which express only the lowest common emotional denominator in any experience. Language, then, cannot hope to capture the whole truth. In the first place, any "lived" truth is only partial and fragmentary because it can never be more than an approximation of the Absolute, which alone is absolutely true. In the second place, language expresses the least particular truth about an experience in order that it may be understood by the greatest possible number of its users. The lived truths interpreted by one language, one individual, one generation, one civilization, and so on, must, therefore, "be taken up and reinterpreted by every thinking mind and every civilization."<sup>38</sup> Otherwise, absolute truth is even more remote than it ought to be. The historian, the literary critic, the metaphysician, and the artist, therefore, must maintain some sort of cross-cultural contemporaneity; in short, they must possess the historical sense:

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.<sup>39</sup>

This historical sense is presumably the result of that constant reinterpretation of culture which Eliot recommends. In any event, the recommendation itself derives clearly enough from Bradley's conception of reality, for what does not exist now simply does not exist. The Absolute, that is, comprises everything--including every possibility of existence. Literature, then, must be felt as a simultaneous existence, or a simultaneous order, if it is to exist at all.

From Appearance and Reality, therefore, and from Bradley's metaphysics in general, Eliot derived a sense of literature as a "whole" with a simultaneous existence. The existing monuments of literature thus form an ideal order among themselves in which the "existing order is complete before the new work arrives. . . ."<sup>40</sup> He derived as well a sense of the importance of language in articulating feeling--in other words, a sense of the importance of language in any endeavour to express reality. At the same time, however, he found good reason to beware the infelicities of language--infelicities which the modernists in general tried to avoid by using not one word more than necessary. Both Eliot's thoughts on literature and his actual practice, then, demonstrate how radically the "whole intellectual and emotional tone" of his being had been influenced by Bradley's metaphysics and epistemology.

But although the Absolute has certain similarities with



the God of the Old Testament, Bradley makes it difficult for Eliot, or any other, to equate the Absolute with the Christian God. According to Bradley, God is but an aspect of the Absolute. He is only an aspect of it--and not the Absolute itself--because He maintains a relation with man. In other words, if He were pantheistically all in all, He would be the Absolute; but then He would not be the God of the Christian religion--nor, indeed, the God of most other religions. Eliot, then, could not reach God through Bradley's metaphysics. But metaphysics itself--even, presumably, Bradley's metaphysics of the Absolute--is only an appearance of the Absolute. Its disqualification of God as the Absolute, therefore, is itself not absolute. God, then, is not yet dead--and this is a good thing for both Bradley and Eliot, for God is in many ways the ultimate conclusion of Bradley's ethics.

Bradley's Ethical Studies was published about seventeen years earlier than his Appearance and Reality. In retrospect, his concept of the Absolute, and his conception of the metaphysical implications of a relational epistemology, can clearly be seen in the earlier work. In this sense, then, Bradley's end is in his beginning too. But his purpose in Ethical Studies is not to discuss metaphysics: "Beyond us lie the fields of metaphysic, which the reader must remember we are, so far as possible, not to enter but merely to indicate."<sup>41</sup> Coincidentally, Eliot's essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," also "proposes to halt at the frontier of metaphysics or mysticism, and confine itself to such practical conclusions as can be applied by the responsible person interested in poetry."<sup>42</sup> But

coincidental though phrasing such as this may be, it nonetheless points toward a definite parallel between Eliot's poetic and religious development and Bradley's ethics.

Morality, Bradley observes, implies both something to be done and the doing of it by a particular individual. The latter requires that the individual not merely perform the act, but actually desire to perform it. And in desire, the individual in some sense desires himself, for he desires that he should be in a particular state--"our wanting anything else would be psychologically inexplicable."<sup>43</sup> Consistent, then, with the later development of his doctrine of wholes, Bradley argues that the whole self is present in each of its states, given that what one desires is a state of one's self. Desire, therefore, and particularly moral desire, aims to realize the whole self. Morality, then, is a matter of self-realization.

In a moral decision, for instance, one must first distinguish oneself from the choices possible. By this act, the individual places himself above these choices, for he thus assumes the function of the superior whole in which the relation between the choices may hold. This is the universal aspect of a moral decision. But the act of making the decision itself is particular; one must identify oneself with one of the possible choices. The actual moral volition, however, involves a relation between these manifestations of the self--that is, a relation between the self in the fact of choice and the self in the fact of the choice made. In short, carrying the moral decision into existence realizes the self both in the decision as to what actually has to be done and in the decision that



something does have to be done. The moral volition, therefore, is in the end a matter of self-realization: the self as a whole is present in each volition as the state which is willed, and thus the one self comes to have life in the many states which realize it.

The self, then, is the key to morality: "I wish to be nothing but my true self, to be rid of all external relations, to bring them all within me, and so to fall wholly within myself."<sup>44</sup> But in questions of moral choice, the individual cannot escape external relations, for these relations are the very means of identifying the self with this or that choice. The self, therefore, if it is to become a whole, must not ignore the relations in which it engages, but must instead aspire to extend itself so as to include these relations as part of its wholeness. But as Bradley observes: "The difficulty is: being limited and so not a whole, how extend myself so as to be a whole?"<sup>45</sup> There is only one answer: become a member of a whole. In short, one must realize in oneself a greater whole in order to partake of that wholeness. When such a whole is truly infinite, and one's will made one with it, one realizes oneself both as a whole and as one of the infinite particular relations which specify that whole.

All moral beings, therefore, must look to a greater whole in order to realize their own wholeness. This greater whole, however, necessary as the whole implied by moral relations, is only realized in the free self-development of the individual. The circularity of this relationship is intended by Bradley. The individual member of the whole is but a parasite if its

life is not one with the life of the whole; and the whole life does not exist except in the life of its members. The greater whole, therefore, which makes morality possible, comprises the common life of all. The individual, then, must make his moral life the moral life of all: "the individual can only truly develop his individuality by specifying in himself the common life of all."<sup>46</sup> The means of this specification, of course, is the individual's moral will. The will which is good, therefore, wills the realization of self; that is, wills the realization of a greater whole; that is, wills the realization of a common will. What is good, then, is the will to wholeness, which, in the end, is the moral will itself since this will wills wholeness. Bradley thus concludes:

In short, the good is the Good Will. The end is will for the sake of will; and, in its relation to me, it is the realization of the good will in myself, or of myself as the good will. In this character I am an end to myself, and I am an absolute and ultimate end. There is nothing which is good, unless it be a good will.<sup>47</sup>

To act for the sake of the good will, therefore, is also to act for one's own sake, for the good will necessarily attempts to realize the ideal self.

Bradley's argument to this point, though amenable to a Christian adaptation, is not an overtly religious one. Eliot, however, was nonetheless influenced by Bradley's analysis of the individual will. Bradley, for instance, relates the present reality of the past to the will: "the will is what it has done; and the present is thus also the past. Evil deeds must survive in a present evil will which is a positive evil, just



as good deeds are not lost, but live in a present good will."<sup>48</sup>

From this, Eliot derived confirmation of his belief that the past--in the form of a tradition or a historical sense--is necessary in any contemporary literature. And so his account of the historical sense which "involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence. . . ." <sup>49</sup>

But more importantly, Eliot found in Bradley's moral will an insistence upon the relevance of evil to the possibility of good--a relevance claimed, but not proved systematically, by the classical sensibilities of Babbitt, Maurras, and Hulme. Essentially, Bradley's position on good and evil is the Biblical one: the Fall led from innocence to an awareness of evil.

He writes:

a being not limited, and limited by evil in himself, is not what we call moral. . . . A moral will must be finite, and hence have a natural basis; and it must to a certain extent (how far is another matter) be evil, because a being which does not know good and evil is not moral, and because . . . the specific characters of good and evil<sup>50</sup> can be known only one against the other. . . .

Similar thoughts and phrases occur in Eliot's essay "Baudelaire" in which he concedes that even Satanism is a way of affirming belief--"an attempt to get into Christianity by the back door."<sup>51</sup>

That is:

So far as we are human, what we do must be either evil or good; so far as we do evil or good, we are human; and it is better, in a paradoxical way, to do evil than to do nothing: at least we exist. It is true to say that the glory of man is his capacity for salvation; it is also true to say that his glory is his capacity for damnation.<sup>52</sup>

Eliot, then, was clearly of the same mind as Bradley concerning the necessity of both a good and bad will. Eliot, however, ultimately developed a much more religious point of view than Bradley.

Yet, surprisingly enough, Bradley felt a religious point of view to be the logical conclusion of morality. Morality properly begins only when the self consciously identifies itself with the act to be done; it realizes itself in a good or bad act and thus accepts responsibility for this goodness or badness. In practice, then, there is both a good self and a bad self. The good self, of course, is identified with the morally good; it realizes the good will, and so realizes the ideal self. The bad self, however, is identified with whatever is antagonistic to the good; "The content of the bad self has no principle, and forms no system, and is relative to no end."<sup>53</sup> The ideal self sought by the good self, however, remains unattainable in a moral world, for morality requires a bad self as well. The ideal self remains as an "ought" only. But the object of religion--the religion, that is, of which Bradley speaks--is this same ideal self; it is the supreme existence. In a transcendent religious realm, therefore, the ideal self, sought by the good self through the good will, not only ought to be, but actually is. The identification of the individual will with the good will in the realm of morality is thus the identification of the individual will with the divine will in the realm of religion.

Consistent again with his triadic logic, Bradley argues that the individual will cannot be identified with the divine



will unless these wills are the wills of one subject--the whole, that is, in which such a relation can exist. In Bradley's religious terms, a self is not just good and bad, but human and divine. This distinction between the human and divine selves, moreover, causes turmoil: "we have the felt struggle in us of two wills, with both of which we feel ourselves identified."<sup>54</sup> The possibility of such an identification, however, is necessary to the religious consciousness; without it, much of religion would seem to be nonsense:

You can not understand the recognition of and desire for the divine will; nor the consciousness of sin and rebellion, with the need for grace on the one hand and its supply on the other; you turn every fact of religion into unmeaning nonsense, and you pluck up by the root and utterly destroy all possibility of the Atonement, when you deny that the religious consciousness implies that God and man are identical in a subject.<sup>55</sup>

What remains to be answered, however, is the question of how the individual will can in fact be identified with the divine will.

The individual will, as the will of the private self, never can be the divine will; the imperfect individual will "must die, and by faith be made one with the ideal"; in short: "You must resolve to give up your will, as the mere will of this or that man, and you must put your whole self, your entire will, into the will of the divine."<sup>56</sup> In other words, one must die to one's individual self in order to be born again into an identity with the ideal or divine self. The divine self must become one's true self, one's only self; any other self with a claim upon this new self must be renounced. In short, the

identity between the individual will and the divine will occurs by an act of faith. And as faith, according to Bradley, "is both the belief in the reality of an object, and the will that that object be real . . . ," one must both believe that one's own will is identified with the divine will and act as though one believed it as well.<sup>57</sup>

Bradley's doctrine of the two selves thus results in a religious conceptual framework. The ideal self, or the divine self, is clearly enough a version of God--though not necessarily an explanation of God. This much Bradley acknowledges. He is less willing, however, to describe the relationship between the divine self and the individual self as incarnational. But so it is, for Bradley posits a self which is superior to the individual self and yet somehow possible within that individual self. And this is just the sort of relationship that the Christian believes to hold between his own particular individuality and Christ. Bradley's development of an incarnational perspective in explaining Christian doctrine, if not in justifying it, was thus the aspect of his Ethical Studies which most interested Eliot. In the essay "Francis Herbert Bradley," for instance, Eliot quotes Bradley in Ethical Studies: "How can the human-divine ideal ever be my will? . . . You must resolve to give up your will, as the mere will of this or that man, and you must put your whole self, your entire will, into the will of the divine."<sup>58</sup> This is not, Eliot argues, the extinction of the individual; rather, Bradley is merely distinguishing between "the individual as himself and no more, a mere numbered atom, and the individual in communion with God."<sup>59</sup>



In other words, the human-divine ideal fulfils the concept of individuality; it does not destroy it. In fact, as Bradley points out, "The mere individual is a delusion of theory; and the attempt to realize it in practice is the starvation and mutilation of human nature, with total sterility or the production of monstrosities."<sup>60</sup> The individual self is more truly itself, more individual, in fact, when completed by a greater self.

Having been influenced thus by Bradley, Eliot could no longer be happy in the post-Hegelian world, for, according to A.C. Bolgan in What the Thunder Really Said, "within post-Hegelian philosophy god is dead. . . ." <sup>61</sup> He is dead, that is, in so far as He is regarded as transcendent being, for in place of being, post-Hegelian philosophy has established becoming. At the centre of a dialectical universe, the post-Hegelian naturally enough places a dialectical god--a god whose death as thesis and antithesis leads to his resurrection as a more inclusive synthesis. The post-Hegelian principle of divinity, then, is not the fact of being, but the possibility of becoming; absolute integrity or wholeness is never actual in the post-Hegelian god, it is merely potential in the dialectical process. In other words, the post-Hegelian god is always becoming more and more whole, but never is so absolutely. As Bolgan concludes, it is the spiral of the dialectical process which drives the hypothetical post-Hegelian god "to his own ever-expanding integrity or wholeness and which confers on the dialectical hero the only principle of divinity which can possibly exist in a post-Hegelian world."<sup>62</sup> Eliot, therefore,

had necessarily to be concerned about post-Hegelian philosophy, for, if it did not kill God, it transformed Him radically.

Eliot, however, could not object to dialectical reasoning itself, for he was committed to Bradley's dialectical idealism. Rather, any objection he might wish to raise against the post-Hegelian dialectical god must rest on the distinction between the Hegelian and Bradleyan dialectics. Hegel's dialectic is productive, or generative, in that it creates reality. Bradley's dialectic, however, never actually creates reality, but merely reveals it. Hegel strives towards a whole, Bradley presupposes it. In respect of the self, then, the post-Hegelian presumes a great deal of freedom in its creation. Bradley, however, argues that the realization of the individual self begins with its sacrifice to the absolute self; whether this is a result of free will or grace, or a combination of the two, is difficult to determine. What is clear, however, is that the Hegelian dialectic is in some sense romantic and the Bradleyan dialectic modern. That is, the Hegelian gives priority to self-expression and self-creation, whereas Bradley is more concerned with the self as an object existing and revealed than as a subject created and expressed. As Bolgan puts it:

Inwardness as feeling expressed, or inwardness as outwardness absorbed--these seem to be the major ideological polarities dividing the post-Kantian German Absolute Idealism of Schlegel and Hegel from the post-Kantian English and American Absolute Idealism of Bradley and Bosanquet and, as a consequence, the romantic literary tradition from the modern.<sup>63</sup>

The romantic, she explains, displays his self by acting out his



internal life in the various roles he enjoys playing; the modern, on the other hand, is one in whom these roles "are actualized and made real rather than acted out or impersonated."<sup>64</sup> In this sense, Yeats is perhaps the first modern poet--and not just the "last romantic"--for, as Frank Kermode notes in his Romantic Image, "He is the poet in whose work Romantic isolation achieves its full quality as a theme for poetry, being no longer a pose, a complaint, or a programme. . . ." <sup>65</sup> But it is Eliot--fresh from the encounter with Bradley's dialectic--who recognizes the artificiality of all personality and so sets about the deconstruction of the romantic ego.

Prufrock and Gerontion, for instance, are depicted as self-romanticizing egos. Even when Prufrock is apparently most self-aware--as, for instance, when he declares, "No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be"<sup>66</sup> (16)--he can only express his own personality by objectifying it in terms of a character such as Polonius, "Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse" (16). Similarly, Gerontion is preoccupied with his own inconsequential role in history:

I was neither at the hot gates  
Nor fought in the warm rain  
Nor knee deep in the salt marsh, heaving a cutlass,  
Bitten by flies, fought. (37)

Eliot himself, however, must not be equated with these personae. Instead, one must recognize his use of these ironic masks to expose the artificiality of the personalities which they represent. The relevance--and perhaps even the legitimacy--of Gerontion's claim to be a wasted and decrepit old man, for

instance, is undercut by the quotation which begins the poem: "Thou hast nor youth nor age / But as it were an after dinner sleep / Dreaming of both" (37). Prufrock, moreover, is no more than one of the faces that he prepares to meet the faces he may meet. Ultimately, Prufrock's face is the face that Eliot himself has prepared to meet the reader's face. In this early poetry, then, Eliot affirms the artificiality of all personality--even the most private personality which Prufrock and Gerontion assume to be their true self. Personality, in general, is as inconsistent and fragmented as the personality of the friend in "Portrait of a Lady":

And I must borrow every changing shape  
To find expression . . . dance, dance  
Like a dancing bear,  
Cry like a parrot, chatter like an ape. (21)

Having largely accepted Bradley's analysis of the self, therefore, Eliot set about revealing through his early poetry the prevailing romantic illusions about the self.

Indeed, Bolgan sees the problem of the self as the main concern of The Waste Land. The poem, she suggests, is Eliot's Hamlet--his most notable artistic failure. It is full of some stuff that Eliot could not bring to light.<sup>67</sup> The poem requires a dialectical hero--a hero, that is, who is both a man and a god--in order to reunite the fragmented modern personality. Toward this end, Eliot puts before the reader the myth of the Fisher King, for this myth depends upon two individuals--a hero and an ailing king--who have divine, as well as human, powers and responsibilities. The poem fails, Bolgan suggests, because it fails to establish a relationship between its human and



divine aspects. On the one hand, the human self is represented by the monologue which is the poem. The personality Eliot portrays is in some respects hysterical--"You! hypocrite lecteur!--mon semblable,--mon frère!" (63)--and so suggests the "monstrosity" that results, according to Bradley, from the attempt to realize in practice the mere individual. On the other hand, one has the divinity suggested by the hanged man, the sprouting corpse, and the thunder. That is, there are distinctly human and distinctly divine elements in The Waste Land, but there is no dialectic between the poem's human and divine dimensions. Eliot's hero, the self whose internal monologue--The Waste Land itself--reveals what Bolgan calls the "significant self-in-becoming," suffers from too radical a distinction between his two selves: the human self and the divine self.<sup>68</sup> Eliot's mistake, according to Bolgan, was in not heeding the lessons of Bradley's triadic dialectic; he treated his hero's two selves as "actual but disjointed existents in precisely the way that his romantic predecessors had done before him instead of as terms in a developing 'relation' internal to them both and to their actual formation as existents."<sup>69</sup> The result of such a radical distinction between the human and divine selves, as Bradley makes clear, is the logical impossibility of any relation between them. But this is not necessarily a mistake on Eliot's part. Indeed, in portraying the human and divine selves as "actual but disjointed existents," Eliot objectifies the problem of the modern fragmented personality. Although, then, The Waste Land does not actually overcome "the metaphysical theory of the substantial unity of the soul"--

a theory which concedes too distinct an existence to the individual personality--it nonetheless defines the problem, and defines it, furthermore, in Bradley's terms.<sup>70</sup>

What Eliot was working toward was Bradley's ethical version of incarnation. According to Bradley, the divine self may enter the individual self, remaining divine while becoming human. At the same time, the individual self remains human while becoming divine. Simply to have allowed the Hegelian dialectical relation would have been to argue for the divine at the expense of the human, for such a dialectic assumes a linear, temporal progress towards divinity. The Bradleyan incarnational dialectic, however, assumes a simultaneous human transcendence and divine condescension. Guarding against the incorrectly exclusive direction of Hegel's dialectical relation on the one hand, and aiming at Bradley's inclusive incarnational whole on the other, Eliot lapsed into the theory of the substantial unity of the human soul. That is, in spite of his own warnings, he accorded too much importance to human personality; the very form of the poem--an overheard internal monologue--emphasizes the importance he placed upon personality. In thus preventing any relation between the human and divine, Eliot at least prevented the exclusively divine Hegelian conclusion, but he also prevented Bradley's incarnational conclusion.

In the end, Tiresias proves to be the poem's proper representative--even if he is not the main character that Eliot suggests he is. In Eliot, Stephen Spender observes that in Tiresias "subjectivity has been acted upon by all that has happened in history between his Thebes and modern times. He



has become its objective voice, with nothing left of his own subjectivity."<sup>71</sup> The loss of subjectivity, Bradley argues, is necessary if one is to realize oneself as the divine self. But Tiresias' loss of subjectivity is essentially negative. He has not actively surrendered or sacrificed it to the divine self; he has merely lost it. Neither the Bradleyan nor Christian incarnation can thus take place. In his spiritual impotence, therefore, Tiresias represents the spiritual impotence of the personality whose thoughts the poem comprises, the society reflected in the poem, the poem itself, and Eliot himself in so far as he is unable to reach an incarnational conclusion at this time.

But even so, Eliot continued to develop his poetic conception of self and personality. In contrast to the early poetry, the language of the poetry after Ash Wednesday, for instance, becomes less personal; Eliot withdraws to a certain extent from individual manners of speech. As Hugh Kenner puts it in The Invisible Poet, "This poetry [that after Ash Wednesday] is related less intimately now to the speaking voice than to renovated decorums of the impersonal English language."<sup>72</sup> By Four Quartets, Eliot's individual voice has all but disappeared. In Kenner's words again, "No persona, Prufrock, Gerontion, Tiresias or the Magus, is any longer needed. The words appear to be writing themselves. . . ." <sup>73</sup> In short, convinced of the artificiality of all personality and the illusion of any portrayal of self, Eliot concluded by restraining--if not actually eliminating--personality and self in his poetry. This process accomplished, Eliot found a further development of the poetic

treatment of self and personality to be possible within poetic drama. After all, if no constructions of self or personality can ever be real, why not treat them in the theatre where self and personality are recognized as fictions? The characters in Eliot's plays suffer the same problems of self and personality as those in his early poetry. Harry Monchensey, Celia Coplestone, Colby Simpkins, Lord Claverton, and even Thomas Becket suffer a crisis of identity. Eventually, they discover that their individual fulfilment is possible only in conforming their individual wills to the will of God. The necessity of the sacrifice of the individual self to the transcendent self is thus a constant and consistent factor in Eliot's poetry and drama both before and after his conversion.

One finds a similar attention to Bradley's theory of the two selves in Eliot's critical prose. Passages in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" concerning the sacrifice or extinction of the poet's individual personality are numerous; surely Bradley is in part responsible for Eliot's conception of this process as the poet's "continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable."<sup>74</sup> The "something which is more valuable" is a historical poetic personality which offers a poetic perspective greater than that of any individual poet. According to Bradley's conception of the incarnational relation between the individual self and the greater self, one would expect the individual poet to achieve his greatest success and fulfilment when animated by the spirit of the greater poetic personality to which he has sacrificed himself; so Eliot suggests that "we shall often find that not only the best, but



the most individual parts of his [a poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."<sup>75</sup> There is also something of Bradley's pattern of thought in Eliot's conclusion, in After Strange Gods, that it is "the struggle of our time to concentrate, not to dissipate; to renew our association with traditional wisdom; to re-establish a vital connexion between the individual and the race. . . ." <sup>76</sup> Although talk of this vital connection may well have derived from contemporary psychology and anthropology, Eliot's receptivity to such an idea seems to have been conditioned in part by Bradley's philosophy, a philosophy which teaches that the real--including the real personality--is concentrated in an absolute; dissipation is merely appearance. In short, the individual is fulfilled, not extinguished, by his relation to the Absolute. One ought not to be surprised, then, at the apparent contradiction when Eliot suggests, in his essay "Yeats," that the sacrifice of self which produces impersonality may yet sustain the particularity of the poet's personality. That is, having recognized that there is a sense in which impersonality fulfils personality, Eliot dismisses his earlier discussion of impersonality as badly expressed, as perhaps revealing "only an adolescent grasp of that idea."<sup>77</sup> In fact,

There are two forms of impersonality: that which is natural to the mere skilful craftsman, and that which is more and more achieved by the maturing artist. The first is that of what I have called the 'anthology piece', of a lyric by Lovelace or Suckling, or of Campion, a finer poet than either. The second impersonality is that of the poet who, out of intense and personal experience, is able to express a general truth; retaining all the particularity of this experience, to make of it a general symbol.<sup>78</sup>

The discussion of impersonality in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," therefore, is not so much inadequate or wrong as incomplete. That Eliot takes up the matter again, twenty years later, and once again casts the matter in a Bradleyan mould, shows how Bradley's impact had endured.

Similarly, Eliot's analysis of culture derives in important ways from Bradley's philosophy of wholes. He begins Notes towards the Definition of Culture, for example, with a typically Bradleyan analysis of the hierarchical definitions of culture possible from the different perspectives of the individual, the group or class, and, finally, the whole society:

It is a part of my thesis that the culture of the individual is dependent upon the culture of a group or class, and that the culture of the group or class is dependent upon the culture of the whole society to which that group or class belongs."<sup>79</sup>

Any author, then, who is to be judged a landmark of a national literature must demonstrate "strong local flavour combined with unconscious universality"; aesthetically, he must move freely through all three levels of culture.<sup>80</sup> Ultimately, however, national artists must develop a world culture, a culture conceived--in Eliot's words, but Bradley's philosophical terms--as "the logical term of relations between cultures."<sup>81</sup> He goes on to elaborate the concept:

Just as we recognise that the parts of Britain must have in one sense, a common culture, though this common culture is only actual in diverse local manifestations, so we must aspire to a common world culture, which will yet not diminish the particularity of the constituent parts.<sup>82</sup>



In this last phrase, one again finds the incarnational perspective suggested by Bradley's dialectic between the two selves; that is, the universal does not diminish the particular. But one also finds, in the tendency to aspire to a greater cultural whole, the acceptance of Bradley's triadic dialectical logic; that is, assuming an Absolute, Eliot concludes that culture is, at some primitive stage, actually identical with religion--or, at least, "religion and culture are aspects of one unity. . . ." <sup>83</sup> And yet, in order that any such relation might obtain, Eliot must follow Bradley's argument to the end and so claim somewhat contradictorily that religion and culture "are two different and contrasted things." <sup>84</sup> Once again, then, Eliot follows Bradley's philosophy to its conclusion in a relational logic which necessitates an Absolute. And once again one sees in Eliot's discussion of the relation between local culture and world culture the pseudo-religious Bradleyan incarnational relation between the particular human self and the universal divine self. But whereas Bradley believed in his incarnational dialectic only in so far as it was the necessary conclusion of his Ethical Studies, Eliot came to believe in the Christian Incarnation.

Bradley thus takes Eliot to the end of philosophy which, for Eliot, proves to be the beginning of religion. Lewis Freed, in T.S. Eliot: The Critic as Philosopher, suggests how Eliot managed the intellectual transition:

With Bradley, though the Absolute is immanent in finite centers and finite centers are immanent in the Absolute, the manner of this coherence is "in-

explicable." The point at which Bradley stops thus leaves space for mystery, wonder, and doubt. For Eliot, the problem posed by Bradley is resolved by the Incarnation.<sup>85</sup>

That is, the problem is solved not just by the intellectual machinery of incarnation, but by a faith in the fact of Incarnation. But Bradley proves to be of even further use in moving Eliot towards a full conversion, for he argues, in Ethical Studies, that faith requires not only belief in the reality of the divine object, but also the will that this object be real. In short,

In order to be, religion must do. Its practice is the realization of the ideal in me and in the world. Separate religion from the real world, and you will find it has nothing left to do; it becomes a form and so ceases.<sup>86</sup>

If, that is, one's religious experience is indeed genuine, one's conviction must be actualized and made real rather than acted. Bradley points out, moreover, that real faith cannot go unexpressed:

That inward assurance, the self-consciousness that we are one with the divine, and one with others because one with the divine, naturally does not exist without expressing itself. And moreover it is right that it should express itself; because that expression reacts most powerfully upon the self-consciousness, to intensify it, and so strengthen the conviction and will in which faith consists. It is right that the certainty of identity with the divine, and with others in the divine, should be brought home by the fore-tasted pleasure of unalloyed union. . . .<sup>87</sup>

Eliot's decision to live his faith publicly is thus consistent with--if not actually suggested by--Bradley's analysis of the Christian faith. So too is his declaration, in the essay



"Religion and Literature," that "Literary criticism should be completed by criticism from a definite ethical and theological standpoint," for Eliot knew that real faith could hardly go unexpressed in one's literary work.<sup>88</sup>

Bradley's main contribution towards Eliot's religious development, therefore, was his incarnational metaphysical and ethical dialectic. There were certainly other influences leading Eliot to accept the Christian Incarnation as fact, but Bradley's usefulness in laying the incarnational tracks for that train of thought to follow is undeniable. The incarnational perspective he advanced concerning the relationship between the individual self and the greater self appears throughout Eliot's poetry--gaining in clarity and conviction as Eliot's faith becomes more certain. Bradley's transcending and condescending whole similarly appears in Eliot's literary and cultural criticism; in every instance its relation to particular individuals is incarnational. And finally, after Eliot's formal conversion, Bradley's philosophy seems to have gained a new influence in suggesting--perhaps even in some sense documenting--the course which Eliot's religious life was to follow. To conclude once again, then, that in Eliot's intellectual beginning is his religious end, is to confirm and extend the Bradleyan analysis of Eliot's experience, for Eliot's life, poetry, and thought are thus the unified whole in which the relation between his beginning and end subsists.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Amy Lowell, as quoted by Burton Rascoe, in "Pupils of Polonius," in The Critique of Humanism: A Symposium, ed. C. Hartley Gratton (New York: Brewer and Warren, 1930), p. 116.

<sup>2</sup> Herbert Howarth, Notes on Some Figures Behind T.S. Eliot (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1964), p. 86.

<sup>3</sup> T.S. Eliot, "A Commentary," The Criterion, 3 (1924-25), 2.

<sup>4</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Francis Herbert Bradley," in For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928), p. 70.

<sup>5</sup> Francis Herbert Bradley, Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay, 2nd ed., 9th impression corrected (1893; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 6.

<sup>6</sup> T.S. Eliot, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley (London: Faber and Faber, 1964), p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 33.

<sup>8</sup> T.S. Eliot, Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup> Lewis Freed, T.S. Eliot: The Critic as Philosopher (West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue University Press, 1979), and Anne C. Bolgan, What the Thunder Really Said: A Retrospective Essay on the Making of The Waste Land (London: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1973).

<sup>10</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 394.

<sup>12</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 35.

<sup>13</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 22.

<sup>14</sup> T.S. Eliot, Knowledge and Experience, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 465.

<sup>16</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 266.

<sup>17</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 145.

<sup>18</sup> F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 166.



- 19 F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 338.
- 20 F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 431.
- 21 F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 338.
- 22 F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 3.
- 23 F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 173.
- 24 F.H. Bradley, Appearance and Reality, p. 460.
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- 32 T.S. Eliot, Knowledge and Experience, p. 20.
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- 48 F.H. Bradley, Ethical Studies, pp. 241-2.
- 49 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 49.
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- 52 T.S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," p. 429.
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- 56 F.H. Bradley, Ethical Studies, p. 325.
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- 59 T.S. Eliot, "Francis Herbert Bradley," in Selected Essays, p. 453.
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- 88 T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, p. 388.

## Chapter Five: Saints and Mystics

Writing of the influence of Yeats, in his 1941 essay "Yeats," Eliot noted that "the poetry of the young Yeats hardly existed for me until after my enthusiasm had been won by the poetry of the older Yeats; and by that time--I mean, from 1919 on--my own course of evolution was already determined."<sup>1</sup> The important point to note here is that Eliot, at the time of the composition of Four Quartets, believed his own poetic evolution to have been determined by 1919. Presumably, then, given the necessary relation which Eliot, in 1941, assumed to obtain between poetry and religion, this suggests that the mystical aspect of the poetic and religious development evident in Four Quartets is determined to a certain extent by Eliot's pre-1919 experiences. Matthiessen's observations support this suggestion, for in The Achievement of T.S. Eliot he notes that New England intellectuals such as Henry James and T.S. Eliot were born into the Puritan Mind with "its absorption in the problem of belief and its trust in moments of vision."<sup>2</sup> Eliot, in other words, inherited a predisposition towards the visionary aspect of mystical experience. One is not surprised, then, to find Lyndall Gordon reporting that Eliot experienced a vision at the age of twenty-one; in this vision--the subject of his poem "Silence," dated June 1910--Eliot saw the streets of Boston "suddenly sink and divide."<sup>3</sup> According to Gordon, the year 1910 "marked the beginning of a religious ferment and a rebellion against the world's dull conspiracy to tie him to its lifeless



customs."<sup>4</sup> And the critical year, in terms of Eliot's religious evolution, was not 1927, but 1914:

Eliot's Notebook and other manuscript poems show that he began to measure his life by the divine goal as far back as his student days, in 1910 and 1911, and that the turning-point came not when he was baptized in 1927 but in 1914 when he first interested himself in the motives, the ordeals, and the achievements of saints.<sup>5</sup>

According to Gordon, again, "During Eliot's last years at Harvard he made a study of the lives of saints and mystics, St. Theresa, Dame Julian of Norwich, Mme Guyon, Walter Hilton, St. John of the Cross, Jacob Böhme, and St. Bernard."<sup>6</sup> In 1914, then, Eliot "was circling, in moments of agitation, on the edge of conversion."<sup>7</sup>

In fact, however, Eliot's actual conversion was delayed until 1927. But so strong was the case for conversion in 1914 that he unconsciously became his own apologist in later explaining the religious climate of his youth. Writing in "Thoughts After Lambeth" in 1931, Eliot suggests that

whereas twenty years ago a young man attracted by metaphysical speculation was usually indifferent to theology, I believe that to-day a similar young man is more ready to believe that theology is a masculine discipline, than were those of my generation.<sup>8</sup>

Similarly, in After Strange Gods, he explains the difficulty of interpreting mystical experience:

Of divine illumination, it may be said that probably every man knows when he has it, but that any man is likely to think that he has it when he has it not; and even when he has had it, the daily man that he is may draw the wrong conclusions from the enlightenment which the momentary man has received. . . .<sup>9</sup>

And, by describing an age in which modern literature is so secular "that it is simply unaware of, simply cannot understand the meaning of, the primacy of the supernatural over the natural life . . . ,"<sup>10</sup> and an age in which almost all contemporary novelists except James Joyce "have never heard the Christian Faith spoken of as anything but an anachronism,"<sup>11</sup> Eliot demonstrates again not only how difficult his conversion in 1927 must have been, but also how much more difficult the public acceptance of such a faith would have been in 1914.

Just as strong, however, were the forces acting to make mysticism once again intellectually respectable. Helen Gardner, in The Limits of Literary Criticism, summarizes the process by which mystical interpretation has become respectable in literature:

The method of 'mystical interpretation' can hardly any longer be said to be 'alien and repellant to the modern mind'. On the contrary it is plainly only too fascinating. The work of anthropologists studying primitive myths and rituals supports it, as does the work of psycho-analysts analysing dreams by the interpretation of symbols. The efforts of philosophers constructing theories of symbolism, the discussion of the language of poetry as a symbolic language, and the conception that the work of art is a symbol, objectifying experiences which defy conceptual expression, have encouraged critics of literature to look below the surface of narratives or dramatic actions, and the thread of the discourse of a lyric, in an attempt to discover the realities which the writer is symbolizing, and find personal symbols or archetypal myths.<sup>12</sup>

While many of these developments occurred during Eliot's years as a mature poet, many also occurred during his early years. Frazer's work, for instance, made mystical ways of thought seem reasonable and natural even if somewhat limited. Similarly, The Symbolist Movement in Literature, by Arthur Symons, introduced



to Eliot the concept of the work of art as a symbol. Bergsonism, moreover, seems to be a type of mysticism and is interpreted as such by Eliot in his Clark Lectures in 1926: the Bergsonian Absolute as reached "by a turning back on the path of thought" is compared with the twelfth-century vision of God "through and by and beyond discursive thought."<sup>13</sup> And Bradley, furthermore, the subject of masculine metaphysical interest in Eliot's youth, reveals in his philosophy a similarly non-discursive aspect of reality. As R.L. Brett observes,

For Bradley, metaphysical systems were like great works of art; elaborate expressions of a sensibility which tried to impose some order upon experience. Indeed, Bradley can be seen not as a metaphysician, but as a mystic, who believed that reality can never be described in discursive terms at all.<sup>14</sup>

But whereas these anthropologists, philosophers, and critics helped to make possible for Eliot the appreciation of a mystical sensibility, whether in the literary criticism of which Helen Gardner speaks, or in the lives of the saints and mystics about which he read at Harvard, it was Evelyn Underhill's Mysticism--from which "Eliot made copious notes"--which enabled him to articulate his own mystical sensibility.<sup>15</sup>

Underhill's Mysticism consolidated Eliot's experience of Bergsonism, for it established from its earliest pages the parallels and sympathies between Bergsonism and mysticism. Vitalism--the modern philosophy of which Bergsonism is a type--is but a

"new" way of seeing the Real [that] goes back to Heracleitus, whose "Logos" or Energizing Fire is but another symbol for that free and living spirit of Becoming, that indwelling creative power, which Vitalism acknowledges as the very soul or immanent

reality of things. . . . Its theory of knowledge is close to that of the mystics: or would be, if those wide-eyed gazers on reality had interested themselves in any psychological theory of their own experiences.<sup>16</sup>

Vitalism furnishes the prospective modern mystic with an essential message: "Cease to identify your intellect and your self. . . ." <sup>17</sup> As Underhill points out, "the true intellectualist, who concedes nothing to instinct or emotion, is obliged in the end to adopt some form of sceptical philosophy."<sup>18</sup> But even the best intentioned idealistic philosophy--such, presumably, as Bergson's Vitalism--proves inadequate to the Real:

Idealism, though just in its premises, and often daring and honest in their application, is stultified by the exclusive intellectualism of its own methods: by its fatal trust in the squirrel-work of the industrious brain instead of the piercing vision of the desirous heart. It interests man, but does not involve him in its processes: does not catch him up to the new and more real life which it describes. Hence the thing that mattered, the living thing, has somehow escaped it; and its observations bear the same relation to reality as the art of the anatomist does to the mystery of birth.<sup>19</sup>

According to Underhill, that which achieves "the piercing vision of the desirous heart," that which obtains a true relation to reality, is mysticism:

I understand it [mysticism] to be the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order; whatever be the theological formula under which that order is understood. This tendency, in great mystics, gradually captures the whole field of consciousness; it dominates their life and, in the experience called "mystic union," attains its end. Whether that end be called the God of Christianity, the World-soul of Pantheism, the Absolute of Philosophy, the desire to attain it and the movement towards it--so long as this is a genuine life process



and not an intellectual speculation--is the proper subject of mysticism.<sup>20</sup>

Vitalism, then, is clearly inadequate to the mystic's conception of the Real, for it merely explains the Real without actually offering a way to live it. Vitalism, moreover, recognizes only the Spirit of Becoming, whereas mysticism harmonizes both Becoming and Pure Being. As Underhill explains, the mystic, on the one hand,

knows, and rests in, the eternal world of Pure Being, the "Sea Pacific" of the Godhead, indubitably present to him in his ecstasies, attained by him in the union of love. On the other, he knows--and works in--that "stormy sea," the vital world of Becoming which is the expression of Its will.<sup>21</sup>

In its emphasis on the Spirit of Becoming, however, Vitalism serves Underhill as a useful contemporary subject by which to introduce the sympathetic and, in Underhill's opinion, more spiritually sophisticated subject of mysticism. Underhill, then, in recalling Bergson and Vitalist philosophy in general, not for the sake of its philosophical validity, but for the sake of its spiritual validity, thus ensured that she would attract Eliot's attention, for the latter unconsciously digested Bergsonism in the same way.

Mysticism, according to Underhill, is the art of establishing man's conscious relation with the Absolute.<sup>22</sup> The metaphor of the mystic as artist, moreover, is extended and emphasized throughout the book. The artist is a mystic in that he is a "mediator between his brethren and the divine, for art is the link between appearance and reality."<sup>23</sup> Similarly, Underhill describes the

mystic as an artist in his attempts to communicate his vision--  
 an artist, in fact, who recalls the artist described by Hulme  
 and Bergson:

The mystic, as a rule, cannot wholly do without  
 symbol and image, inadequate to his vision though  
 they must always be: for his experience must be  
 expressed if it is to be communicated, and its  
 actuality is inexpressible except in some side-long  
 way, some hint or parallel which will stimulate the  
 dormant intuition of the reader, and convey, as all  
 poetic language does, something beyond its surface  
 sense.<sup>24</sup>

Furthermore, the violent swings from pleasure to pain, from  
 rapture to despair, and from rest to unrest, mark another  
 similarity between artist and mystic; Underhill suggests that  
 the mystical consciousness belongs "to that mobile or 'unstable'  
 type in which the artistic temperament also finds a place."<sup>25</sup>  
 Not only, however, do the artist and mystic share a psychic  
 or mental instability, but they also share an extreme sensitive-  
 ness in respect of things both material and spiritual. Further-  
 more, the artist and mystic share the experience of ecstasy: "all  
 real artists, as well as all pure mystics, are sharers to some  
 degree in the Illuminated Life: are sojourners in, if not true  
 citizens of, the land of heart's desire."<sup>26</sup> The artist, that is,  
 during the brief moments of his genuinely creative activity,  
 is able for that time to experience a glimpse of the reality which  
 is the goal of the mystic's life-process. The artist's moment  
 of ecstasy is cut short, however, for "the senses have somewhat  
 hindered the perfect inebriation of [his] soul."<sup>27</sup> Nevertheless,  
 as Underhill explains, the ecstatic state--in which contact with  
 reality occurs--"does appear in a less violent form, acting



healthily and normally, wherever we have the artistic and creative personality in a complete state of development."<sup>28</sup>

According to Underhill, then, there is a very real, and not merely superficial or coincidental, relationship between the artistic and mystic consciousnesses. Mysticism is actually a "life-struggle": the "struggle of the self to disentangle itself from illusion and attain the Absolute . . . "; therefore, "it will and must exhibit in every case something of the freedom and originality of life: will, as a process, obey artistic rather than scientific laws."<sup>29</sup> In other words, the eccentricities of mystic and artist alike are both a necessary response to the vagaries of illusion and a condition of the perception of the Absolute, for, as Bergson points out, the scientific approach to life is not flexible enough to do it the least justice. Furthermore, art is the only means of communication which the heart possesses:

When essential goodness, truth, and beauty--Light, Life, and Love--are apprehended by the heart, whether the heart be that of lover, painter, saint, that apprehension can only be communicated in a living, that is to say, an artistic form.<sup>30</sup>

This living, artistic means of the heart's communication, moreover, more often than not derives from the language of the mystic's faith, for he finds in the language of his faith metaphors perfectly suited to the description of his mystical life-process.

In Underhill's Mysticism, therefore, Eliot first encountered a perspective from which mysticism and art seemed necessarily related. Eliot later came to maintain a similar perspective in

respect of religion and literature in general. To suggest at this point, however, that Eliot's reading of Underhill's Mysticism in his final years at Harvard not only influenced, but to a certain extent determined, his mature, anglo-catholic perception of the relationship between religion and literature may seem premature. The degree to which Underhill's work pervades Eliot's early critical prose, however, makes this suggestion seem quite plausible.

Underhill's most marked influence upon Eliot's early prose concerns personality. Mysticism, she argues, is an intensely personal experience. Consequently, mysticism has found its best means of communication, its surest metaphors, in the language of the Christian faith, for Christian philosophy "supports and elucidates the revelations of the individual mystic as no other system of thought has been able to do."<sup>31</sup> Christianity begins, that is, by restating "the truths of metaphysics in terms of personality"--the personality of Christ--and so necessarily maintains a sympathy with the mystic whose life-struggle is a struggle to overcome his own personality in favour of the divine personality.<sup>32</sup> In short, "the essence of the mystic life consists in the remaking of personality: its entrance into a conscious relation with the Absolute."<sup>33</sup> To remake his personality, however, the mystic must give it up; that is, he must deny his self. The self "has got to learn to cease to be its 'own centre and circumference': to make that final surrender which is the price of final peace."<sup>34</sup> Underhill continues:



So long as the subject still feels himself to be somewhat he has not yet annihilated selfhood and come to that ground where his being can be united with the Being of God.

Only when he learns to cease thinking of himself at all, in however depreciatory a sense; when he abolishes even such selfhood as lies in a desire for the sensible presence of God, will that harmony be attained. This is the "naughting of the soul," the utter surrender to the great movement of the Absolute Life, which is insisted upon at such length by all writers upon mysticism.<sup>35</sup>

With each concession, with each movement towards the act of utter surrender,

the Transcendental Self, that spark of the soul which is united to the Absolute Life, has invaded more and more the seat of personality; advanced in that unresting process which involves the remaking of the self in conformity with the Eternal World.<sup>36</sup>

The mystic, therefore, must serve without hope of reward; not only must his self become nothing, but his will must become quiet, for to will his spiritual reward is to assert his personality. Paradoxically, then, the mystic "obtains satisfaction because he does not seek it; completes his personality because he gives it up."<sup>37</sup> Here, then, one finds another source for Eliot's early critical concepts in respect of poetry and personality: the poet makes "a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable"; the "progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality"; poetry "is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality"; the "poet cannot reach this impersonality without surrendering himself wholly to the work to be done."<sup>38</sup> Images of self-sacrifice and surrender, if they do not derive exclusively from Underhill's Mysticism,

are at least strongly reinforced by her work.

Similarly, Underhill seems to have influenced Eliot's articulation of the concept of tradition as it appears in "Tradition and the Individual Talent." In the Preface to her work she declares that "mysticism avowedly deals with the individual not as he stands in relation to the civilization of his time, but as he stands in relation to truths that are timeless."<sup>39</sup> Adjusted slightly to serve as a preface to Eliot's essay, Underhill's words here would prove more than adequate. Furthermore, Underhill's description of mystical writing proves at least as clear an explanation of the historical sense as Eliot's discussion of it in terms of "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together":<sup>40</sup>

Each mystic, original though he be, yet owes much to the inherited acquirement of his spiritual ancestors. These ancestors form his tradition, are the classic examples on which his education is based; and from them he takes the language which they have sought out and constructed as a means of telling their adventures to the world. It is by their help too, very often, that he elucidates for himself the meaning of the dim perceptions of his amazed soul. From his own experiences he adds to this store; and hands on an enriched tradition of the transcendental life to the next spiritual genius evolved by the race.<sup>41</sup>

In other words--in Eliot's words concerning the traditional poet, that is--"not only the best, but the most individual parts of his work may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."<sup>42</sup> Underhill expresses a similar thought in respect of the immortality of the great mystics: "Strange and far away though they seem, they are not



cut off from us by some impassable abyss. They belong to us. They are our brethren; the giants, the heroes of our race."<sup>43</sup> Underhill concludes, then, that in mysticism, "as in all the other and lesser arts which have been developed by the race, education consists largely in a humble willingness to submit to the discipline, and profit by the lessons, of the past." In short, "Tradition runs side by side with experience; the past collaborates with the present."<sup>44</sup> Once again, then, Eliot found in Underhill the very concepts and phrases by which to articulate the poetic of his early years.

In addition to such major areas as these, Underhill's influence appears in miscellaneous aspects of Eliot's prose. She quotes St. John of the Cross to the effect that though many visions, sensations, or illusions "may happen to the bodily senses in the way of God, we must never rely on them nor encourage them; yea, rather we must fly from them, without examining whether they be good or evil."<sup>45</sup> Underhill goes on to claim that vision

is recognized by the true contemplative as at best a very imperfect, oblique, and untrustworthy method of apprehension: it is ungovernable, capricious, liable to deception, and the greater its accompanying hallucination the more suspicious it becomes.<sup>46</sup>

Eliot himself shares such a healthy scepticism concerning automatic writing; no doubt with Yeats in mind, he writes:

I have no good word to say for the cultivation of automatic writing as the model of literary composition; I doubt whether these moments can be cultivated by the writer; but he to whom this happens assuredly has the sensation of being a vehicle rather than a

maker. No masterpiece can be produced whole by such means: but neither does even the higher form of religious inspiration suffice for the religious life; even the most exalted mystic must return to the world, and use his reason to employ the results of his experience in daily life.<sup>47</sup>

Not only the scepticism about manual or scriptural "vision," but the related remarks about mystical vision, demonstrate Eliot's debt here to Underhill's Mysticism. One can see as well, given this attitude, why Eliot should criticize the early Yeats for trying to "take heaven by magic," that is, by "self-induced trance states, calculated symbolism, mediums, theosophy, crystal-gazing, folklore and hobgoblins."<sup>48</sup> Magic, Underhill argues, "is an individualistic and acquisitive science: in all its forms an activity of the intellect, seeking Reality for its own purposes, or for those of humanity at large."<sup>49</sup> Mysticism, however, although often confused with magic, is actually non-individualistic--in fact, radically non-individualistic:

It is essentially a movement of the heart, seeking to transcend the limitations of the individual standpoint and to surrender itself to ultimate Reality; for no personal gain, to satisfy no transcendental curiosity, to obtain no other-worldly joys, but purely from an instinct of love.<sup>50</sup>

Magic, then, because of Underhill's harsh exposure of its radically defective religious nature, served Eliot as a suitable term of critical opprobrium for Yeats's early poetry. Moreover, Underhill's distinction between magic and mysticism may have proved useful to Eliot in his accommodation of Frazer, who was happy to make little, if any, distinction between magic and mysticism--dismissing both as primitive and outmoded ways of thought.



Furthermore, just as Underhill's use of Bergson reinforced Eliot's experience of Bergsonism, so certain phrases and concepts used to explain mysticism reinforce, or perhaps even modify, Eliot's understanding of Bradley. Underhill notes, for instance, that mystics believe that "life as perceived by the human mind shows an inveterate tendency to arrange itself in triads. . . ."<sup>51</sup> She adds that "Even the separation of things into Subject and Object implies a third term, the relation between them, without which no thought can be complete."<sup>52</sup> Essentially, this is a summary of Bradley's triadic logic. This logic applies, in the end, to God Himself--at least according to Underhill's account of the matter. She describes God as extended in two directions--the directions of Being and Becoming; but these directions are merely opposites "which ecstasy will carry up into a higher synthesis."<sup>53</sup> God, that is, forms a triad with Being and Becoming, transcending them in a synthesis which yet allows their continued existence apart. In the end, however, Bradley proves as inadequate to mysticism as Bergson; whereas Bergson leaves only Becoming, Bradley leaves only Being. Neither is sufficient for mysticism: "Neither the utter transcendence of extreme Absolutism, not the utter immanence of the Vitalists will do. Both these, taken alone, are declared by the mystics to be incomplete."<sup>54</sup> Interestingly enough, Eliot eventually reached the same conclusion.

That Eliot's early prose demonstrates certain general mystical characteristics, however, does not mean that he was influenced exclusively by Underhill's Mysticism. To say that there is "something outside of the artist to which he owes

allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position" is but to speak as all mystics speak of their spiritual obligations to God; the influence in this case might derive from Underhill, St. John of the Cross, St. Teresa, or a variety of others.<sup>55</sup> Here, however, Eliot merely adapts the language of mystical experience to his own poetic; there is no obvious emotional commitment to mysticism in this way of speaking. But in reviewing a book, in 1916, which purported to make easier the following of Christ, Eliot remarked that "certain saints found the following of Christ very hard, but modern methods have facilitated everything"; his sarcasm here shows how deeply he had been affected by his reading of the lives of St. Teresa, Dame Julian of Norwich, Mme Guyon, Walter Hilton, St. John of the Cross, Jacob Böhme, and St. Bernard.<sup>56</sup> One finds as well that there is a great deal of emotion in Eeldrop of the "Eeldrop and Appleplex" stories. Note that "Eeldrop was a sceptic, with a taste for mysticism . . ." and "was learned in theology"--in short, he was very much like Eliot.<sup>57</sup> Eeldrop's complaint that, with "the decline of orthodox theology and its admirable theory of the soul, the unique importance of events has vanished," is really a complaint that the redemption of time made possible by the Incarnation--in according a unique importance to every moment of time--is no longer understood.<sup>58</sup> It thus foreshadows similar complaints in The Rock that man now only alternates "Between futile speculation and unconsidered action"<sup>59</sup> (154). Eeldrop's complaint also shows that Eliot, as Eeldrop, feels a real sense of loss in comparing the present with the past.



Something has vanished. People are no longer aware of the significance of a spiritually successful or spiritually ruined life: "The awful importance of the ruin of a life is overlooked."<sup>60</sup> Whereas, in Eeldrop's view, the modern world tends to conceive of evil as something which will disappear after suitable reforms, "the mediaeval world, insisting on the eternity of punishment, expressed something nearer the truth."<sup>61</sup> That is, the mediaeval world--the world of Eliot's saints and mystics--perceived the spiritual significance of decisions made in the material world, a significance which Eliot, having read about the lives of these saints and mystics, not only recognized, but felt. Years later, therefore, he rephrased Eeldrop's observations in his own words in After Strange Gods: "It is in fact in moments of moral and spiritual struggle depending upon spiritual sanctions, rather than in those 'bewildering minutes' in which we are all very much alike, that men and women come nearest to being real."<sup>62</sup> From his early readings about the ordeals of saints and mystics, therefore, Eliot came to appreciate the emotional struggle of mysticism as a life-process.

Not surprisingly, then, Eliot's emotional reaction to his early readings in mysticism appears in the poetry of this period. Taking to heart, for instance, the warnings by all mystics against any dependence upon the senses, the body, or the flesh, Eliot exhibits an attitude of fascinated repugnance and fear towards women--his symbol of the senses, the body, and the flesh. The laughing woman in "Hysteria" and the epileptic in "Sweeney Erect" demonstrate Eliot's ambiguous perspective; he is at once fascinated and frightened by the shaking of a woman's breasts

and the general "promise of pneumatic bliss" (52). Such is the fear of Grishkin in "Whispers of Immortality" that "even the Abstract entities / Circumambulate her charm" (53). Woman, in short, is "The eternal enemy of the absolute" (33). In "Conversation Galante"--where "galante" seems to mean "attentive to women, complimentary, or flattering"--the woman, in a mere two lines, manages to confute the speaker's "mad poetics" (33) and, in her final line--"Are we then so serious?" (33)--manages to confute the previous confutation. If nothing else, "Conversation Galante" compliments woman in so far as it proves she is a serious threat to man. The desire to murder women, therefore, is a metaphor for the desire to overcome the corrupt body; thus a variety of characters in Eliot's prose and poetry--from the Gopsum Street man in "Eeldrop and Appleplex" to Sweeney in Sweeney Agonistes and Harry in The Family Reunion--actually kill or want to kill a woman: "Any man might do a girl in / Any man has to, needs to, wants to / Once in a lifetime, do a girl in" (124). From his earliest poetry, then, Eliot conceived of the body as a real threat to the spirit.

Similarly, one finds throughout Eliot's poetry the recurring images of steps and stairs. These images derive ultimately from the description by several mystics of the degrees of love, or the degrees of prayer, along the spiritual way to mystical vision. Walter Hilton, for instance, wrote a work called The Ladder of Perfection which Eliot read in his final years at Harvard. Years later, in Burnt Norton, one finds Eliot alluding to this mystical image in his reference to "the figure of the ten stairs" (175), but this is by no means his first use of the image. Even in



"Prufrock," written before Eliot had seriously begun his study of the lives of saints and mystics, he shows a predisposition towards interpreting the secular by images of the spiritual--and thus implying the spiritual in the secular--as he reveals Prufrock, in a moment of spiritual crisis, thinking that there is yet "Time to turn back and descend the stair" (14). In "Rhapsody on a Windy Night" one finds the observation that "The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair" is followed by the command to "Mount" (26). Similarly, in "The Boston Evening Transcript," one finds the speaker "mount the steps and ring the bell, turning / Wearily" (28), much as in Ash-Wednesday the speaker pauses, and turns to look below him, "At the first turning of the second stair" (93). In "La Figlia Che Piange" the poem begins with the command "Stand on the highest pavement of the stair" (34). And in "Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar," "Princess Volupine extends / A meagre, blue-nailed, phthisic hand / To climb the waterstair" (41). Similarly, in The Waste Land, "Footsteps shuffled on the stair" (64); and later, the young man carbuncular groped his way--up or down--"finding the stairs unlit" (69). Though none of these characters is a saint--"Not for me the martyrdom, the ecstasy of thought and prayer, / Not for me the ultimate vision" (105)--the stair upon which Eliot has them mounting or descending is "the saints' stair" (105).

The influence of Eliot's readings in mysticism upon his later major poetry is quite marked. Dame Julian of Norwich is quoted directly in Four Quartets: "All shall be well, and / All manner of thing shall be well" (195).<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, whereas

Christ appears in a vision to Julian and declares "I am Ground of thy beseeching . . . ," Eliot combines this with the previous quotation in the lines "All manner of thing shall be well / By the purification of the motive / In the ground of our beseeching" (196).<sup>64</sup> The anchorite in The Rock, therefore, is Julian of Norwich: "Even the anchorite who meditates alone, / For whom the days and nights repeat the praise of GOD, / Prays for the Church, the Body of Christ incarnate" (152). Similarly, the fructifying moment in The Dry Salvages may derive from mystical writings. The fructifying moment here is the moment of death; it depends, in the end, "on whatever sphere of being / The mind of a man may be intent / At the time of death" (188). Essentially, this is what Walter Hilton means when he states that they "shall be saved and come to the full reforming in the bliss of heaven" who are found in a reforming spirit at "the hour of their death."<sup>65</sup> Therefore, the "most sinful man that liveth in earth, if he turn his will through grace from deadly sin with soothfast repentance to the service of God, he is reformed in his soul, and if he die in that state he shall be saved."<sup>66</sup> Similarly, the way toward peace and fulfilment in Four Quartets is the way advocated by St. John of the Cross. Eliot learned from him that "In order to possess what you do not possess / You must go by the way of dispossession" (181). One must, as in the church at Little Gidding, "put off / Sense and notion" (192). One must seek "The inner freedom from the practical desire, / The release from action and suffering, release from the inner / And the outer compulsion" (173). Salvation is to be found "not in movement / But abstention from movement; while the world



moves / In appetancy" (174), for "the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting" (180). The way of dispossession--involving the rejection of the bodily appetites, the rejection of the individual will, and the acceptance of a passive and quiet attendance upon God's grace--constitutes the mystical way.

The same mystical perspective appears in Ash-Wednesday and The Rock. The lines from Ash-Wednesday, "Teach us to care and not to care / Teach us to sit still" (90), show the mystic's efforts to overcome his individual will; he must await God's will in rest and quiet, that is, in stillness. These same lines are expanded later in the poem:

Teach us to care and not to care  
Teach us to sit still  
Even among these rocks,  
Our peace in His will. . . . (98)

Similarly, in the first "Chorus" of The Rock, one encounters the following questions: "Where is the Life we have lost in living? / Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? / Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?" (147). The society which inspires these questions has not got beyond what Hilton describes as the first stage of the contemplative life; this "lieth in knowing of God and of ghostly things, gotten by reason, by teaching of man, and by study in Holy Writ; without ghostly affections and inly savour felt by the special gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>67</sup> This ghostly--that is, spiritual--affection, which is the love of God through the grace of God, is the way back to the Life lost in living. And the way to ghostly affection, as every mystic knows, and as "The Rock" commands, is to "Make

perfect your will" (148). Nothing must be done but for God's greater glory: "Shall we not bring to Your service all our powers / For life, for dignity, grace and order, / And intellectual pleasures of the senses?" (164). After all, "The Lord who created must wish us to create / And employ our creation again in His service / Which is already His service in creating" (165). In The Rock and Ash-Wednesday, then, Eliot displays the mystical frame of mind which had developed in both his religious and poetic beliefs. In short, one can see in The Rock, Ash-Wednesday, and Four Quartets--not to mention Murder in the Cathedral, The Family Reunion, and The Cocktail Party--that there is indeed a divine something "outside of the artist to which he owes allegiance, a devotion to which he must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position."<sup>68</sup>

But that Eliot should have recalled his early readings in mysticism, and studied them again after his conversion, is no more surprising than that his early minor poetry should show the immediate influence of this early reading. The image of woman as the symbol of the corrupt body, and the various images of steps and stairs, are significant mystical aspects of the early poetry, and demonstrate the influence of Underhill and the saints and mystics which Eliot read, but, though previously unacknowledged, this influence is not unexpected, given Eliot's reading-list of mystics. Similarly, images of sacrifice and surrender, and mystical concepts such as the way of dispossession, the perfection of the will, and spiritual quietude, seem natural developments in the poetry of a convert who, like Eeldrop, was from the beginning a man "with a taste for mysticism" and a man



"learned in theology"; thus the prevalence of these mystical images and concepts throughout Eliot's mature poetry. More interesting, however, is the question as to the mystical influence in the major poems between Eliot's readings in mysticism at Harvard and his conversion in 1927. That is, what residual mysticism is there to be found in "Gerontion" and The Waste Land--poems written at a time when Eliot, rightly or wrongly, is assumed to have been at his most sceptical? Should not only a residual mysticism be discovered in these poems, but a still strong emotional sympathy with mysticism as a life-struggle and life-process, then the mysticism in Eliot's early prose and poetry need not be considered distinct from the mysticism of his post-conversion prose and poetry. Rather, the mystical dimension of Eliot's spiritual development would be another part of that continuum wherein Eliot's end is in his beginning.

The dominant image in "Gerontion" is the image of a decayed house: "My house is a decayed house . . ." (37). But, as J.S. Brooker points out, there is more than one house in the poem.<sup>69</sup> First, of course, there is the literal house in which the old man actually lives. But his body is also a house--a house for his dry brain--and his dry brain serves as a house for his dry thoughts. Moreover, as Brooker observes, "Gerontion's brain, of course, is a very inclusive house, for the poem is an interior monologue, and all of its houses are contained in his mind."<sup>70</sup> The literal decayed house, then, "is occupied by decayed tenants who themselves become, as the reader re-focuses, decayed houses containing decayed tenants."<sup>71</sup> The image of the decayed house, however, culminates, by way of contrast, in the image of Christ:

"In the case of Jesus of Nazareth, the tenant of the body is a god; the house, therefore, is much more than a house--it is a temple."<sup>72</sup> The idea of Christ as "the temple" is, of course, Biblical. So is the idea of the soul as God's dwelling-place. The religious dimensions of these Biblical images of houses, however, are confirmed and reinforced by Eliot's readings in mysticism. In her Revelations of Divine Love, Dame Julian of Norwich suggests:

Highly ought we to rejoice that God dwelleth in our soul, and much more highly ought we to rejoice that our soul dwelleth in God. Our soul is made to be God's dwelling-place; and the dwelling-place of the soul is God, which is unmade.<sup>73</sup>

And presumably, being unmade, it will not decay. Similarly, Walter Hilton places Christ and man in the same house:

See now then the courtesy and the mercy of Jhesu. Thou hast lost Him, but where? Soothly in thine house, that is in thy soul. If thou haddest lost Him out of thine house, that is to say, if thou haddest lost all the reason of thy soul by the first sin, thy soul should never have found Him again; but He left to thee reason, and so He is in thy soul and never shall be lost out of it.<sup>74</sup>

The decayed houses of "Gerontion," therefore, serve as images of the spiritual alienation which the speaker in particular, and mysticism in general, struggle to overcome.

Similarly, the Biblical images of dryness and rain assume a wider spiritual significance when interpreted in the light of certain mystical writings. The poem begins by describing "an old man in a dry month, / Being read to by a boy, waiting for rain" (37) and ends with Gerontion's own conclusion that the poem



presents but the "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season" (39). This dryness, and the anxiety which accompanies it, has a spiritual explanation; St. John of the Cross, in The Dark Night of the Soul, explains dryness as the anxious fear of God which usually precedes the love of God:

love, in general, is not felt at first, but only the dryness and emptiness of which I am speaking: and then, instead of love, which is afterwards enkindled, what the soul feels in the dryness and the emptiness of its faculties is a general painful anxiety about God, and a certain painful misgiving that it is not serving Him.<sup>75</sup>

To be "waiting for rain" (37), then, is to be waiting for the love of God. But more than this, it is to be waiting for the grace of God, for the love of God is impossible except by God's grace. St. Teresa thus acknowledges that "we know that no efforts of ours are availing if God withholds from us the water of grace, and we must despise ourselves as nothing and as less than nothing."<sup>76</sup> Dryness, water, and waiting, then, are combined in the spiritual imagery of St. Teresa:

one must never be depressed or afflicted because of aridities or unrest or distraction of the mind. If a person would gain spiritual freedom and not be continually troubled, let him begin by not being afraid of the Cross and he will find that the Lord will help him to bear it; he will then advance happily and find profit in everything. It is now clear that, if no water is coming from the well, we ourselves can put none into it. But of course we must not be careless: water must always be drawn when there is any there, for at such a time God's will is that we should use it so that He may multiply our virtues.<sup>77</sup>

Water drawn from a well, however, is but one method of watering the soul as God's garden. One may also draw water, given God's

grace, by means of a water-wheel, or by the diversion of a stream or brook. But the garden is most thoroughly saturated "by heavy rain, when the Lord waters it with no labour of ours, a way incomparably better than any of those which have been described."<sup>78</sup> From Eliot's early readings in mysticism, then, come images of dryness, representing the spiritual state in which the love of God is not yet actual but nonetheless possible, and images of rain, representing God's grace. The opening lines of "Gerontion," therefore, suggest that mysticism is an important element in the poem.

Not surprisingly, then, mystical patterns of thought inform the key central passages of "Gerontion." The question with which this section begins--"After such knowledge, what forgiveness?" (38)--recalls Walter Hilton's definition of the first part of the contemplative life. This "lieth in knowing of God and of ghostly things, gotten by reason, by teaching of man, and by study in Holy Writ; without ghostly affections and inly savour felt by the special gift of the Holy Ghost."<sup>79</sup> Gerontion's question, then, is "What forgiveness results from the knowledge that 'In the juvenescence of the year / Came Christ the tiger . . . ' (37)?" The question, of course, is rhetorical, for Gerontion has such knowledge and knows as well that no forgiveness results from it. The passage continues, then, as a revelation of the vanity of human knowledge: "History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions, / Guides us by vanities" (38). Human knowledge, in the form of history, can never satisfy the heart's desire for transcendental knowledge or the mystical experience of union with God:



Think now  
 She gives when our attention is distracted  
 And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions  
 That the giving famishes the craving. (38)

The knowledge, moreover, that "In the juvenescence of the year /  
 Came Christ the tiger . . ." (37), is given too late. Even so,  
 however, this knowledge is "not believed in, or if still be-  
 lieved, / In memory only, reconsidered passion" (38). This,  
 then, is the inadequate knowledge of God and ghostly things  
 described by Hilton. In his knowledge of Christ's crucifixion,  
 Gerontion lacks the "ghostly affections and inly savour felt  
 by the special gift of the Holy Ghost." But whereas this know-  
 ledge is, in any event, given too late to be believed in, the  
 disposition toward belief is given too early. History gives  
 "too soon / Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed  
 with / Till the refusal propagates a fear" (38). In other  
 words, behind Gerontion's complaint here is the apologetic  
 Eliot explaining why belief was not possible in 1914. It is  
 still not possible for either Gerontion or Eliot, but the re-  
 fusal--either their refusal to believe, or God's refusal of the  
 grace which would make belief possible--has begun to propagate  
 a fear, that is, the fear that the individual is not serving  
 God. The old man realizes, however, that he is dependent upon  
 God's grace; through his own will he can accomplish nothing:  
 "Neither fear nor courage saves us" (38). Ironically, to seek  
 salvation by one's own will becomes a vice: "Unnatural vices /  
 Are fathered by our heroism" (38). The activity of the individual  
 will in seeking salvation therefore frustrates itself, for the  
 individual must give up his impudent will in order to experience

union with God. In the end, the inevitable frustration of the impudent individual will force those seeking salvation to await the grace of God. In short, "Virtues / Are forced upon us by our impudent crimes" (38). Ultimately, then, although knowledge comes too late, and the disposition to believe too soon, "an old man in a dry month" (37) still manages, through the tears "shaken from the wrath-bearing tree" (38) of the crucifixion, to deepen his understanding of the fact that salvation depends, not upon knowledge, but upon the grace of God. And note, moreover, that according to St. Teresa "tears achieve everything: one kind of water attracts another."<sup>80</sup> This passage, then, contrasting the deliberate, active search for forgiveness with waiting in quiet and stillness for grace, does not end without hope.

Grace, in fact, appears in the next passage in the devouring form of Christ the springing tiger. This image, according to Underhill, is common amongst mediaeval mystics who speak of the human soul pursued by the Hound of Heaven, or the Green Lion, in a spiritual love-chase: the "idea of the love-chase, of the spirit rushing in terror from the overpowering presence of God, but followed, sought, conquered in the end, is common to all mediaeval mystics."<sup>81</sup> Far from having reached conclusion when his body stiffens "in a rented house" (38), Gerontion will but be beginning the real life of the spirit. This "show" (38)--referring to both the poem and the life which it discusses--has not been made purposelessly, for it discovers and demonstrates the necessity of waiting for God's grace. Gerontion, that is, has realized, through the activity of writing the poem, that he



cannot achieve his own salvation. Instead, he must give himself up to God and await God's will. He perceives a purpose, therefore, in his alienation from God: "I that was near your heart was removed therefrom / To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition" (38). The loss of whatever beauty he possessed--or believed himself to possess--leads through terror, propagated by his inability to believe, to the equanimical reflections which constitute the poem. In discovering that he cannot produce his own salvation, Gerontion loses his passion. The resignation which results is the necessary first step in opening the self to the grace of God, for, so long as the individual will is maintained, it is stained by its human limitations. In short, what is kept by the individual "must be adulterated" (38). Having lost not his senses, but his dependence upon his senses, Gerontion is then able to offer his will to God: "I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch: / How should I use them for your closer contact?" (38). Like Madame Guyon, therefore, Gerontion discovers that suffering is not only a manifestation of God's will, but also a manifestation of His grace.<sup>82</sup>

In the end, what Gerontion has lost is his passion for created things. He is thus commencing a mystical approach to God. Though still far from the mystic's perfect contemplative cognition and affection, Gerontion has, through the poem, got beyond the stage of simple knowledge. He is on the verge of what Hilton calls "ghostly affections." The dryness and disillusion with which the poem concludes are, in fact, consistent with the mystical experience described by St. John of the Cross:

The cause of this dryness [of the senses] is that God is transferring to the spirit the goods and energies of the senses, which, being now unable to assimilate them, become dry, parched up, and empty; for the sensual nature of man is helpless in those things which belong to the spirit simply. Thus the spirit having tasted, the flesh shrinks and fails.<sup>83</sup>

Ironically, then, the "Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season" (39) suggest not despair, but hope.

Furthermore, just as "Gerontion" demonstrates Eliot's continuing preoccupation with mysticism, so The Waste Land, for which "Gerontion" was at one time to serve as an introduction, displays a mystical influence. Certain of the influences upon imagery, of course, are the same as in "Gerontion." Dryness, for instance, is the image underlying not only the title, but the entire poem. In "The Burial of the Dead," "the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief, / And the dry stone no sound of water" (61). The result is "fear in a handful of dust" (61). In "What the Thunder said," the poet is still waiting for the sound of water: "If there were the sound of water only . . ." (72). But there is no water:

Here is no water but only rock  
 Rock and no water and the sandy road  
 The road winding above among the mountains  
 Which are mountains of rock without water  
 If there were water we should stop and drink. . . . (72)

These images of drought and wilderness--popular throughout English literature--ultimately derive, of course, from the Bible. But in Eliot's case, these images are reinforced--if not originally suggested--by his readings in mysticism. Dryness, according to St. John of the Cross, is merely a stage in the mystic's struggle



to overcome his senses and give himself to God: "instead of love, which is afterwards enkindled, what the soul feels in the dryness and emptiness of its faculties is a general painful anxiety about God, and a certain painful misgiving that it is not serving Him."<sup>84</sup> In this respect, the dryness in The Waste Land is similar to the dryness in "Gerontion."

In The Waste Land, however, dryness appears in the form of a desert. But even here Eliot is guided to some extent by his readings in mysticism. A passage in Mysticism, for instance, in which Underhill quotes Johann Tauler's description of the desert as the meeting-place between God and the self, suggests a source for Eliot's imagery:

Says Tauler of this ineffable meeting-place, which is to the intellect an emptiness, and to the heart a fulfilment of all desire, "All there is so still and mysterious and so desolate: for there is nothing there but God only, and nothing strange. . . . This Wilderness is the Quiet Desert of the Godhead, into which He leads all who are to receive this inspiration of God, now or in Eternity." From this "quiet desert," this still plane of being, so near to her though she is far from it, the normal self is separated by all the "unquiet desert" of sensual existence.<sup>85</sup>

Similarly, one finds in The Dark Night of the Soul a passage describing the desert as the way to God. Quoting the Psalmist, St. John of the Cross argues that the spiritual desert is preferable to sweetness and delight:

"In a desert land, and inaccessible, and without water; so in the holy have I appeared to Thee, that I might see Thy strength and Thy glory." The Psalmist does not say here--and it is worthy of observation--that his previous sweetness and delight were any dispositions or means whereby he might come to the knowledge of the glory of God, but rather that it

was through an aridity and emptying of the powers of sense, spoken of here as the barren and dry land.<sup>86</sup>

According to certain mystics, then, dryness--representing the desert in which the senses must languish if one is to give oneself up to God--is a hopeful spiritual development. Whereas in the natural world, a waste land such as Eliot's represents sterility, in the spiritual world, with which Eliot is more concerned, it represents potential spiritual fertility. Images of dryness and desert, therefore, are consistent with a positive spiritual interpretation of The Waste Land. As St. John of the Cross notes, the Psalmist

does not say that his reflections and meditations on divine things, with which he was once familiar, had led him to the knowledge and contemplation of God's power, but, rather, his inability to meditate on God, to form reflections by the help of his imagination; that is the inaccessible land.<sup>87</sup>

In the end, this inability to form reflections on God by the help of the imagination is the inaccessible waste land of Eliot's poem.

Other images in The Waste Land may also derive from Eliot's mystical readings. Madame Sosostriis, for instance, seems to derive in part from The Story of My Heart, the spiritual autobiography of the pseudo-mystic Richard Jeffries. In Eliot's ironic caricature, one finds not just clairvoyance, but the greatest wisdom in Europe. Yet, through allusions to the figures of a "drowned Phoenician Sailor" (62) and a "Hanged Man" (62), one also finds in Sosostriis a suggestion of the present relevance of ancient fertility rituals. Similarly, Jeffries' Sesostriis



is associated with the consciousness of past and present:

"Sesostris on the most ancient sands of the south, in ancient, ancient days, was conscious of himself and of the sun. This sunlight linked me through the ages to that past consciousness."<sup>88</sup> Jeffries continues:

With all the energy the sun-beams had poured unwearied on the earth since Sesostris was conscious of them on the ancient sands; with all the life that had been lived by vigorous man and beautiful woman since first in dearest Greece the dream of the gods was woven; with all the soul-life that had flowed a long stream down to me, I prayed that I might have a soul more than equal to, far beyond my conception of, these things of the past, the present, and the fulness of all life.<sup>89</sup>

Jeffries, then, connects the present with the past through sun-beams. In The Waste Land, however, the sun is blocked by "the brown fog of a winter dawn" (62) and "the brown fog of a winter noon" (68). Not surprisingly, then, the speaker "can connect / Nothing with nothing" on the fine modern sands of "Margate Sands" (70). Not just Sesostris, then, but The Waste Land itself, owes something to Jeffries' Sesostris.

Similarly, Eliot finds in Jeffries an account of a vision which the latter experienced as he was crossing one of London's bridges:

From the stone bridges I looked down on the river; the gritty dust, the straws that lie on the bridges, flew up and whirled round with every gust from the flowing tide; gritty dust that settles in the nostrils and on the lips, the very residuum of all that is repulsive in the greatest city of the world. The noise of the traffic and the constant pressure from the crowds passing, their incessant and disjointed talk, could not distract me. One moment at least I had, a moment when I thought of the push of the great sea forcing the water to flow under the feet of these

crowds, the distant sea strong and splendid. . . . 90

Just as Jeffries' vision focuses upon one of London's bridges as an example of "the very residuum of all that is repulsive in the greatest city of the world," so Eliot focuses upon London Bridge itself as an image of the death-in-life suffered by modern man in the modern city:

Unreal City  
 Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,  
 A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,  
 I had not thought death had undone so many.  
 Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,  
 And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.  
 Flowed up the hill and down King William Street,  
 To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours  
 With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine. (62)

In Jeffries, then, Eliot finds not only the image of the bridge itself, but the image of the oppressive crowd crossing the bridge. Although the one crowd exhales sighs "short and infrequent" (62), and the other passes with "incessant and disjointed talk," Eliot and Jeffries react to the crowds with the same attitude of wonder and sadness. Furthermore, Eliot follows Jeffries in making the connection between the crowds on the bridge and the flowing tide beneath. Although, then, The Waste Land's picture of London owes something to the opening of Conrad's Heart of Darkness, it also owes something to the visions of Richard Jeffries.

The reference to chess in "A Game of Chess" is also evidence of the influence of Eliot's readings in mysticism. Underhill, for instance, mentions St. Teresa's "game of chess" as a version of what the mediaeval mystic called Ludus Amoris, the game of



love. In this game, which represents "the characteristic intermediate stage between the bitter struggles of pure Purgation, and the peace and splendour of the Illuminative Life," God plays with the soul, alternately granting and withdrawing rapturous vision.<sup>91</sup> St. Teresa, however, simply compares the learning of prayer with the learning of chess. In both prayer and chess, one must know the beginning and end of the exercise if there is to be any hope of success. In The Way of Perfection, St. Teresa explains her metaphor:

I am but (as they say) setting the men for a game at chess. Ye desired me to tell you the beginning of prayer; I, daughters, though God conducted me not by this beginning, for I certainly have scarce the beginning of these virtues, do know no other. Believe then that whoever knows not how to rank the men at chess will be able to play but ill; and if he know not how to give check, he will not know how to give the mate.<sup>92</sup>

The distressed woman in "A Game of Chess" clearly does not know the rules of the game if she must ask, "What shall I do now? What shall I do?" (65). Her very preoccupation with the necessity of doing something shows that she does not understand that the game of spiritual chess demands, as check, the giving up of the individual will, and, as mate, the waiting for God's grace, that is, the "waiting for a knock upon the door" (65).

The woman's preceding questions thus prove ambiguous and rhetorical. That is, when she asks "Do / You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you remember / Nothing?" (65), she means to imply by this rhetorical question that her companion deserves contempt on account of his passivity. She interprets the passivity, which the state of individual nothingness represents, as death:

"Are you alive, or not? Is there nothing in your head?" (65)

But the mystic regards the state of individual nothingness as a spiritually healthy condition. Indeed, the naughting of the soul is a precondition of receiving God's grace. Ironically, the image of "nothing" with which the woman taunts her companion represents the very object of his moves in this spiritual game of chess. Here, then, the hysterical woman, as in the early poetry, represents the senses; she demands constant stimulation, ranging from the "glitter of her jewels" (64), and her perfumes which trouble, confuse, and drown the sense "in odours" (64), to the imaginary noises prompted by "The wind under the door" (65). All is well in this world of the senses if "still the world pursues" (64) the beauty and passion represented by Philomel. Satisfaction with nothing, however, is the greatest possible threat to this material world. In "The Fire Sermon," then, the conflict between the spiritual worlds is made explicit: "My people humble people who expect / Nothing" (70). "My people" may refer to the bankers who provided Eliot's paid leave during his convalescence at Margate. If so, they serve as a fine example of the material world. Or "my people" may refer to the speaker's companions in adversity. But whoever the humblers of those who expect nothing may be, they unintentionally perform the greatest service in forcing humility upon those who seek it. The goal of the mystic, after all, is to dispossess himself of his material possessions. Underlying much of The Waste Land, then, is a rhetorical confusion between the conflicting values of the material and spiritual worlds; the apparent ascendance of material values often only masks a spiritual



potential on the point of becoming actual.

This spiritual potential, in fact, seems to become actual in the exclamation, "O Lord Thou pluckest me out / O Lord Thou pluckest" (70). In short, the poet claims to have been chosen to receive the grace of God. In "What the Thunder said," however, he returns to the desert and dryness which have been present from the beginning, indicating, perhaps, that he is still playing that game of chess in which rapturous vision is alternately given and withdrawn. The question which mystics must ask themselves at this point is, "what have we given?" (74). In order to obtain grace, one must give up one's individual will in "The awful daring of a moment's surrender" (74). Only by this extinction of personality can the life of the spirit begin: "By this, and this only, we have existed . . ." (74). The poet speaks here as though he has actually experienced this awful moment. He claims: "I have heard the key / Turn in the door once and turn once only . . ." (74); thus he waits, in this game of chess, "for a knock upon the door" (65). He waits, thinking of the grace which alone will open the door. He thus recognizes the impotence of his own will: "We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison" (74). The poem concludes, then, with the poet apologizing for not having responded properly to the earlier instance in which the key turned in the door during that awful daring of a moment's surrender. He seems to think that grace was given "too soon / Into weak hands" (38); it would have been accepted had his faith been stronger: "your heart would have responded / Gaily, when invited, beating obedient / To controlling hands . . ."

(74). In the end, Eliot's poetic persona is left waiting for the waters of grace in the knowledge that, as St. Teresa affirms, "water must always be drawn when there is any there, for at such a time God's will is that we should use it so that He may multiply our virtues."<sup>93</sup>

The Waste Land, then, whatever else it may be, and however much criticism may tend to ignore the fact, is very much a spiritual poem. As R.L. Brett observes, critical attention has only been deflected from the poem's spiritual content because of the accident of Eliot's over-emphasis upon his anthropological concerns:

The emphasis in the Notes on Frazer's Golden Bough, Jessie Weston's From Ritual to Romance and the remark that Tiresias is the central character of the poem . . . have turned our attention away from the spiritual to the anthropological, and have tended to concentrate the reader's mind not on the progress of the soul, but on the decay and death of civilization.<sup>94</sup>

The Waste Land, in short, shows "that salvation cannot come from culture, intelligence, or any other product of man's mind."<sup>95</sup>

That is,

Man cannot construct a tower which will reach Heaven, nor contrive a ladder which will enable him to climb out of the 'foul rag-and-bone shop' of his heart. The ladder when it comes will not be erected by those on earth, it will descend from Heaven.<sup>96</sup>

But Eliot's spiritual concern is not simple; it is articulated in a language which suggests that his concern has advanced beyond that of the average layman. That is, he speaks the language of the mystics--a language he learned from his early readings in mysticism. These readings thus prove an active and



enduring poetic and spiritual influence through the years which pass between Eliot's study at Harvard and the period of the composition of The Waste Land.

In general, the influence of Underhill's Mysticism, appearing more often in the prose, and the influence of the saints and mystics that Eliot read at Harvard, appearing more often in the poetry, demonstrate within Eliot an active spiritual debate far in advance of his 1927 conversion. From his first vision in 1910, at the age of twenty-one, to the publication of The Waste Land, in 1922, this spiritual debate is continuous, as examples from Eliot's prose and poetry show. It seems, then, that from that awful daring of a moment's surrender in 1914, when he was circling on the edge of conversion, to his actual conversion in 1927, Eliot was waiting for grace to knock upon the door once more. He was waiting, that is, as his experience of mysticism had taught him that he must. Moreover, in articulating his experiences during this period of waiting by means of a poetry which uses the images and ideas of mysticism, Eliot is true to both the mystic tradition and his own sense of the poetic tradition. Underhill's explanation of the mystical tradition in general thus applies to Eliot in particular: from his spiritual ancestors,

he takes the language which they have sought out and constructed as a means of telling their adventures to the world. It is by their help too, very often, that he elucidates for himself the meaning of the dim perceptions of his amazed soul. From his own experiences he adds to this store; and hands on an enriched tradition of the transcendental life to the next spiritual genius evolved by the race.<sup>97</sup>

The spiritual struggle of Eliot's early years, then, is actually continuous with the relative spiritual calm which follows his conversion. The distinctions in spiritual sensibility which mark the intervening years merely reflect Eliot's progress up the ladder of perfection. In short, in his beginning is his end.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Yeats," in On Poetry and Poets (London: Faber and Faber, 1957), p. 252.
- <sup>2</sup> F.O. Matthiessen, The Achievement of T.S. Eliot, 3rd ed. revised and enlarged with a chapter on Eliot's later work by C.L. Barber (1935; rpt. London: Oxford University Press, 1959), p. 9.
- <sup>3</sup> Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 15.
- <sup>4</sup> L. Gordon, p. 32.
- <sup>5</sup> L. Gordon, p. 1.
- <sup>6</sup> L. Gordon, p. 60.
- <sup>7</sup> L. Gordon, p. 58.
- <sup>8</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Thoughts After Lambeth," in Selected Essays, 3rd enlarged ed. (1932; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1951), pp. 365-6.
- <sup>9</sup> T.S. Eliot, After Strange Gods: A Primer of Modern Heresy (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 59.
- <sup>10</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, p. 398.
- <sup>11</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," p. 392.
- <sup>12</sup> Helen Gardner, The Limits of Literary Criticism: Reflections on the Interpretation of Poetry and Scripture (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 16.
- <sup>13</sup> T.S. Eliot, "On the Metaphysical Poetry of the Seventeenth Century," as quoted by A.D. Moody in Thomas Stearns Eliot: Poet (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), p. 128.
- <sup>14</sup> R.L. Brett, "Mysticism and Incarnation in Four Quartets," English, 16 (1966), 95.
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## Chapter Six: Anglican Divines

Eliot emphasized his interest in sixteenth and seventeenth-century theology by dedicating his 1928 collection of essays to Lancelot Andrewes. The title essay, "Lancelot Andrewes," actually appeared in The Times Literary Supplement in 1926.<sup>1</sup> At this time, according to Robert Sencourt, "This interest in the writings of Anglican divines in the seventeenth century was very much at the forefront of Tom's mind. . . ." <sup>2</sup> In fact, as a prospective candidate for a Research Fellowship at All Souls, Eliot's "proposed line of research was to investigate the theory that the writings of seventeenth-century Anglicanism did not lead to any theological outcome."<sup>3</sup> But Eliot had revealed his interest in this subject many years earlier; his 1919 review of Logan Pearsall Smith's selections from the sermons of John Donne showed that he had been reading a great deal of sixteenth and seventeenth-century theology. Those to whom he makes reference in this review, "The Preacher as Artist," include: John Donne, Lancelot Andrewes, Hugh Latimer, Jeremy Taylor, Sir Thomas Browne, and Richard Hooker.<sup>4</sup> This particular theological preoccupation, however, can be traced back even further. In the 1918 Syllabus for a Tutorial Class in Modern English Literature--lectures sponsored by the University of London's Joint Committee for the Promotion of Higher Education for Working People--one finds Eliot's outline of the beginnings of Tudor prose: "How English prose grew up: effect of theological writing, books of travels, history. The



Prayer Books of Edward VI."<sup>5</sup> He refers specifically to Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity and Sir Thomas Browne's Religio Medici; the latter, in fact, is "not exactly in the period, but may well be read in connection with it."<sup>6</sup> By 1918, then, Eliot was well enough read in this theological prose to include it in his comprehensive and coherent programme of study concerning Elizabethan literature.

Eliot seemed glad of the opportunity to study this literature. A letter he wrote to his mother in May, 1918 reveals a renewed interest in the class at Southall:

My Southall people want to do Elizabethan Literature next year which would interest me more than what we have done before, and would be of more use to me too, as I want to write some essays on the dramatists who have never been properly criticized.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, according to Ronald Schuchard, by the time Eliot was faced with the cancellation of the class because of an insufficient enrolment, he had become so "absorbed in the material that he wrote to the Joint Committee requesting permission to continue the course for a reduced fee if the Board of Education refused to pay grant on it."<sup>8</sup> Eliot made this offer despite the fact that he could not actually afford the reduced fee. It seems, then, that the literature of this period exerted a firm grip on Eliot's imagination.

As Northrop Frye observes, Eliot regarded the seventeenth century as a period which contained "in embryo all the disintegrating tendencies of our time."<sup>9</sup> In its poetry, for instance, he found the beginnings of the dissociation of sensibility which troubled the English mind from Milton and Dryden to Eliot's own

day. Dryden and Milton had each "performed certain poetic functions so magnificently well that the magnitude of the effect concealed the absence of others." As a result, the language improved in some respects, "But while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude."<sup>10</sup> Eventually, however, "poets revolted against the ratiocinative, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalanced; they reflected."<sup>11</sup> In general, however, "the decay of the senses is not inconsistent with a greater sophistication of language. But every vital development in language is a development of feeling as well."<sup>12</sup> From Eliot's perspective, therefore, sixteenth and seventeenth-century developments in prose, just as much as developments in poetry, must be developments of feeling. So Eliot notes that Andrewes, Donne, and Taylor "had the sensitiveness necessary to record and to bring to convergence on a theological point a multitude of fleeting but universal feelings."<sup>13</sup> Just, then, as Eliot looked to the poetry of this period for an explanation of the subsequent splitting up of what he calls the English mind, so he must have studied the prose of this period with the expectation, or hope, of finding in it a further explanation of the development of that English mind he was adopting and adapting to be his own.

But regardless of Eliot's conscious intentions in pursuing his studies in sixteenth and seventeenth-century theological prose, one has every right--according to Eliot himself--to expect an influence or effect greater than, and different from, the one intended. As human beings, he argues, we are affected by our reading "whether we intend to be or not," just as we are



affected by the food we eat, whether we intend to be or not:

I suppose that everything we eat has some other effect upon us than merely the pleasure of taste and mastication; it affects us during the process of assimilation and digestion; and I believe that exactly the same is true of anything we read.<sup>14</sup>

Given, then, Eliot's early reading in the sermons of John Donne, Lancelot Andrewes, Hugh Latimer, and Jeremy Taylor, his study of Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, Browne's Religio Medici, and The First and Second Prayer-Books of King Edward VI, one must determine the influence of this reading and study upon the whole man--not just upon Eliot the extension lecturer, that is, but upon Eliot the poet, critic, and Christian.

Eliot reveals that he first encountered John Donne in a 1906 Freshman English class at Harvard in which Professor Briggs read the verses of Donne "with great persuasiveness and charm":

I confess that I have now forgotten what Professor Briggs told us about the poet; but I know that whatever he said, his own words and his quotations were enough to attract to private reading at least one Freshman who had already absorbed some of the Elizabethan dramatists, but who had not yet approached the metaphysicals. I can from that point trace uncertainly the progress of my own relations with Donne. . . .<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, when Eliot arrived in London in 1914, Herbert J.C. Grierson had just brought out his edition of Donne's poems; Donne was thus a popular subject of conversation: "I know that when I came to London I heard more of Donne, in social conversation, than I had heard before."<sup>16</sup> Donne, then, is a factor in the beginning of Eliot's intellectual life in America and England.

But the relationship between Eliot and Donne, begun so early, was by no means a simple one. In "The Preacher as Artist" (1919), Eliot finds Donne's prose worth reading because it is a "significant moment in the history of English prose, and because it has at its best uncommon dignity and beauty--a style which gives at times what is always uncommon in the sermon, a direct personal communication."<sup>17</sup> This style, furthermore, makes him a better sermon writer than Latimer or Andrewes; or so Eliot declares in his review of Logan Pearsall Smith's selections from Donne's sermons: "many of the passages of Donne given by Mr. Pearsall Smith can be paralleled from Latimer or Andrewes; paralleled in such a way as to leave it open to us to think Donne better, but better only in the same kind."<sup>18</sup> In short, as Eliot reiterates in "The Prose of the Preacher: The Sermons of Donne" (1929), "The truth is that Donne's sermons are brilliantly written throughout, and brilliantly constructed, with a beginning, a middle and an end."<sup>19</sup> And yet, just two years later, Eliot criticizes the attention paid to Donne's sermons: "I feel, myself (it is perhaps to-day an heretical sensation), that the essential originality of Donne is rather in the Songs and Sonets, in the Elegies, and in the Satires, than in the Sermons."<sup>20</sup> As though sensitive to his apparent change of mind here, but unwilling to acknowledge it, Eliot continues somewhat defensively:

But actually (I for one have always been convinced) in the history of English Theology it is not Donne, but Cranmer and Latimer and Andrewes, who are the great prose masters; and for the theologian even the high-sounding Bramhall and the depressive Thorn-dike are more important names than Donne's. His



sermons will disappear as suddenly as they have appeared.<sup>21</sup>

On the one hand, then, Eliot feels that Donne's sermons are well worth reading, while, on the other hand, he feels that they will--and perhaps ought--to disappear as suddenly as they have appeared.

The contradiction here, however, is only apparent. John Bramhall is not more important than Donne in terms of style, for, as Eliot notes, "we forget Bramhall's phrases the moment we turn away from Bramhall's subject."<sup>22</sup> Rather, Bramhall is more important than Donne in respect of theology; Eliot argues, for instance, that Bramhall's Just Vindication of the English Church "is a work which ought to be studied by anyone to whom the relation of Church and State is an actual and importunate problem."<sup>23</sup> When, therefore, Eliot remarks that "in the history of English Theology it is not Donne, but Cranmer and Latimer and Andrewes, who are the great prose masters . . . ," he means that they are greater than Donne not in respect of their prose, but their theology. In other words, given Donne, Cranmer, Latimer, and Andrewes as great prose masters, Cranmer, Latimer, and Andrewes are the great prose masters in respect of theology. There is no contradiction in logic, then, between Eliot's statements concerning the value of Donne's sermons. There is, however, a contradiction in Eliot's emotional attitude, for his initial enthusiasm for Donne's sermons in 1919 has dissipated by 1931. Perhaps he merely reacted against a social and literary milieu already over-saturated with Donne:

I know that by 1926, when I gave some lectures on Donne, the subject was already popular, almost topical; and I know that by 1931 the subject has been so fully treated that there appears to me no possible justification of turning my lectures into a book.<sup>24</sup>

It is more likely, however, that Eliot's change in attitude towards Donne's sermons between 1919 and 1931 mirrors the change in Eliot from a largely literary perspective to a more religious or theological perspective. During these years, that is, Eliot came to discern a significant difference between Donne's rather fervid imagery and the cool, contemplative piety of certain other Anglican writers. In short, Eliot's enthusiasm for Donne's sermons varies inversely according to Eliot's theological concern.

Essentially, Eliot regarded Donne as a man to whom "le goût pour la vie spirituelle" was not native.<sup>25</sup> He was not a mystic; he was "primarily interested in man."<sup>26</sup> In short, Eliot felt that Donne was not so much theologically or spiritually unsound, as unreliable:

About Donne there hangs the shadow of the impure motive; and impure motives lend their aid to a facile success. He is a little of the religious spell-binder, the Reverend Billy Sunday of his time, the flesh-creeper, the sorcerer of emotional orgy. We emphasize this aspect to the point of the grotesque. Donne had a trained mind; but without belittling the intensity or the profundity of his experience, we can suggest that this experience was not perfectly controlled, and that he lacked spiritual discipline.<sup>27</sup>

But though his motive might be impure, it was not intentionally or consciously so. Eliot believed that Donne was genuinely devout; "But he was a sincere churchman not because he had passed through the doubt which his type of mind finds congenial (I say his type



of mind), but because in theology he had not yet arrived there."<sup>28</sup> In other words, Donne had not experienced doubt as the modern knows it, but he had the type of mind which might have done had it been placed in the modern world. And so Eliot explains that Donne "has many means of appeal, and appeals to many temperaments and minds, and, among others, to those capable of a certain wantonness of the spirit."<sup>29</sup> That is, among others, Donne may appeal to the sceptical, or spiritually wanton, modern mind. Moreover, since Eliot, in 1926, singles out the spiritually wanton from amongst the "many temperaments and minds" to whom Donne may appeal, one might find therein an unconscious criticism of the Eliot of 1919 as spiritually wanton, for Donne's sermons certainly appealed to Eliot at this time.

But whether attracted by him or repelled by him, Eliot found Donne's means of appeal to consist primarily in his personality. In "The Preacher as Artist" (1919), Eliot notes:

Donne was an Egoist, but not an egoist of the religious, the mystical type. Perhaps he was something less important. At all events he was something else; and it was an Ego which nowhere in his works finds complete expression, and only furtively in his sermons.<sup>30</sup>

Similarly, in "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926), he adds: "Donne is a 'personality' . . . his sermons, one feels, are a 'means of self-expression.' He is constantly finding an object which shall be adequate to his feelings. . . ." <sup>31</sup> Or if not, in fact, finding an object adequate to his feelings, he was at least always searching for one; thus his recourse to religion:

Donne had a genuine taste both for theology and for religious emotion; but he belonged to that class of persons, of which there are always one or two examples in the modern world, who seek refuge in religion from the tumults of a strong emotional temperament which can find no complete satisfaction elsewhere.<sup>32</sup>

Eliot seems to imply that even Donne's formal conversion represents an attempt by Donne to find an object adequate to his feelings. In short, Eliot analyzes Donne's personality, and the latter's attempts to express it, in terms reminiscent of the definition of the "objective correlative" in "Hamlet and His Problems"; in fact, substitute "life" for "the form of art" in this definition and one finds an explanation of Eliot's perspective on Donne:

The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an "objective correlative"; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked.<sup>33</sup>

According to Eliot, Donne treated life as a form of art; his religion was an expression of his own personality. Perhaps, then, Eliot not only used the terms of his definition of the objective correlative to explain his impressions of Donne's sermons, but actually derived the concept of the objective correlative in part from his early reading of these sermons. But whereas Donne represented his personality dramatically in its wayward obedience to God, Eliot sought to objectify his subjectivity and thus make his personality disappear. Nonetheless, however, Eliot's tendency to regard Donne's religion as in some way an objective correlative of John Donne may have



facilitated his recognition of anglo-catholicism as the objective correlative of certain aspects of T.S. Eliot.

One also finds that Eliot attributes to Donne a confusion of sensibility which later comes to be expressed in his theory of the general dissociation of sensibility. He writes: "In Donne, there is a manifest fissure between thought and sensibility . . . . His learning is just information suffused with emotion, or combined with emotion not essentially relevant to it." This was a chasm, however, which "in his poetry he bridged in his own way."<sup>34</sup> In his poetry, Eliot argues, Donne possessed a unified sensibility: "A thought to Donne was an experience; it modified his sensibility. When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience. . . ."<sup>35</sup> But in his sermons, Donne's sensibility remained dissociated, for here his mind could not amalgamate information and emotion, but only combine it--often irrelevantly. In short, one finds in Donne's sermons a "reasoning in emotion."<sup>36</sup> But this reasoning in emotion, although betraying a dissociated sensibility, at least led to "a curious knowledge of the human heart, and a stateliness of phrase and image hitherto possible only in art."<sup>37</sup> Yet, Eliot argues, not until Donne is compared with other sermon writers can one appreciate "the difference between Donne as an artist doing the traditional better than any one else had done it, and Donne putting into the sermon here and there what no one else had put into it."<sup>38</sup> In other words, only then can one appreciate the relation between tradition and the individual talent. And so, once again, one might argue that these famous--or infamous--concepts, that is, the concept of the

objective correlative and the concept of the relation between tradition and the individual talent, not only serve to analyze Donne's sermons, but actually derive in part from Eliot's early experience of these sermons.

One has authority from Eliot himself, of course, for supposing that his early reading of Donne's sermons may have influenced him more than he was consciously aware. The ambiguous psychological relationship between Eliot and Donne, moreover, indicates a strong attachment on Eliot's part. Having criticized Donne's sermons for their appeal to a certain wantonness of spirit, and thereby criticizing his own enthusiasm for Donne's sermons as spiritually wanton, Eliot thus exhibits what seem to be feelings of guilt over his early attachment to Donne. Yet he also seems to feel uneasy in criticizing Donne: he acknowledges that his dismissive attitude towards Donne's sermons "is perhaps to-day an heretical sensation" and makes the claim for his own critical and emotional integrity that he, for one, has "always been convinced" of the inferiority of Donne's sermons.<sup>39</sup> Surprisingly, however, running counter to this increasing critical detachment from Donne's sermons, and running parallel to Eliot's unease--and perhaps even guilt--at this process of detachment, is an increasing identification between Eliot and Donne. Superficially, certain events in their lives correspond. Each, as young poets, led lives perceived by their audience to be radically different from--and even spiritually wanton when compared to--their mature adult years. In each case this perception seems inaccurate. Moreover, at approximately the same age--that is, about their fortieth year--each experienced



and expressed a formal and public conversion to the Anglican faith. These correspondences, of course, are simple coincidences and would have no meaning here but for the fact that Eliot himself seems to notice them. In "Donne in Our Time" (1931), for instance, Eliot notes the misconception concerning Donne's early life and dismisses it:

Nobody now, I suppose, divides Donne's life into two periods, one dissolute and irreligious, the other a revulsion to intense and austere piety, a division so complete as to suggest an alternation of personality. We agree that it is one and the same man in both early and later life.<sup>40</sup>

Agreement on this point, however, was not, and never has been, as unanimous as Eliot suggests. Eliot himself, moreover, was at this time still experiencing the contempt of those who dismissed his 1928 conversion as a radical alternation of personality. In defending Donne's intellectual, spiritual, and personal integrity, therefore, Eliot is effectively--though perhaps not consciously--defending his own. For the sake of the argument, then, Eliot cannot allow Donne to concede a dissolute and irreligious youth, but must explain away the apparent concession:

It is pleasant in youth to think that one is a gay dog, and it is pleasant in age to think that one was a gay dog; because as we grow old we all like to think that we have changed, developed and improved; people shrink from acknowledging that they are exactly the same at fifty as they were at twenty-five--sometimes, indeed, men alter in order to congratulate themselves that they have altered, and not out of inner necessity.<sup>41</sup>

Donne and Eliot did not alter at the age of forty, therefore,

however much they may have appeared to alter, for the apparent change was the result of inner necessity and so was necessary to maintain their identity and integrity. Thus, whether attracted or repulsed by Donne's personality, or the sermons through which he expressed this personality, Eliot could not resist Donne's appeal. It is the voice of experience speaking in the "Lancelot Andrewes" essay of 1926, then, when Eliot observes that Donne and his sermons have "many means of appeal."<sup>42</sup>

One finds more evidence of Donne's appeal in Eliot's early poetry. In Donne's description of the goal of spiritual liberality, for instance, one discovers an explanation of Eliot's poetic goal in "Gerontion":

To finde a languishing wretch in a sordid corner,  
 not onely in a penurious fortune, but in an oppressed  
 conscience, His eyes under a diverse suffocation,  
 smothered with smoake, and smothered with teares, His  
 eares estranged from all salutations, and visits, and  
 all sounds, but his owne sighes, and the stormes and  
 thunders and earthquakes of his owne despaire, To  
 enable this man to open his eyes, and see that Christ  
 Jesus stands before him, and sayes, Behold and see,  
if ever there were any sorrow, like my sorrow, and  
my sorrow is overcome, why is not thine?<sup>43</sup> (14-15)

Gerontion represents for Eliot the Job-like wretch of Donne's sermon. He has his own sordid corner in his decayed and "draughty house / Under a windy knob"<sup>44</sup> (38). In the end, it proves, at most, to be a "sleepy corner" (39). Moreover, just as Donne's wretch has been "smothered with smoake, and smothered with tears," while his ears have become estranged from all sounds except his own sighs, so Gerontion has lost "sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch" (38). And like Donne's wretch, Gerontion must use his suffering and loss as a means of coming to know Christ; thus,



threatened with the loss of his physical senses, he asks: "How should I use them for your closer contact?" (38). But why is this suffering and loss necessary? Donne suggests an answer:

God, who, when he could not get into me, by standing, and knocking, by his ordinary meanes of entring, by his Word, his mercies, hath applied his judgements, and hath shaken the house, this body, with agues and palsies, and set this house on fire, with fevers and calentures, and frighted the Master of the house, my soule, with horrors, and heavy apprehensions, and so made an entrance into me. . . . (209-10)

Gerontion requires just this course of treatment in order to make him receptive to God's grace. It seems, then, that the plot of "Gerontion"--if the search for redemption can properly be called the plot--derives in part from ideas found in Donne's sermons.

But these sermons provide particular images as well as general ideas. The image of "the house, this body, with agues and palsies" is common to Donne and "Gerontion." Donne further explains that a house occupied by quarreling tenants proves an obstacle to prayer: "I began to think, how many roofs, how many floores of separation, were made between God and my prayers in that house" (31). Gerontion, between his memory, reconsidered passion, and weak hands--"Tenants of the house / Thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season" (39)--discovers just as many obstacles to a relation with God in his own house, his soul. Similarly, a knowledge of Donne's sermons increases the allusiveness of the act of "waiting for rain" (37). Gerontion appears to be a second Noah, waiting for the rains which will bring the flood of repentance--an image one finds in Donne:

And as fish, when they mud themselves, have no hands to make themselves cleane, but the current of the waters must worke that; So have the men of this world no means to cleanse themselves from those sinnes which they have contracted in the world, of themselves, till a new flood, waters of repentance, drawne up, and sanctified by the Holy Ghost, worke that blessed effect in them. (73)

Perhaps it would have been better for Gerontion, then, to have been claimed by the waters of "the Gulf" (39) than to have been "driven by the Trades / To a sleepy corner" (39) of that decayed house. A knowledge of Donne's sermons, furthermore, suggests the reason for Gerontion's scepticism about the value of knowledge. Gerontion asks and warns:

After such knowledge, what forgiveness? Think now  
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors  
And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions,  
Guides us by vanities. (38)

This view of knowledge may in part derive from Donne, who warns that "All knowledge that begins not, and ends not with his [Christ's] glory, is but a giddy, but a vertiginous circle, but an elaborate and exquisite ignorance" (105). Only this knowledge gives forgiveness, the rest is vain and vertiginous history.

Reference to images in Donne's sermons, furthermore, increases the allusiveness of the imagery of The Waste Land. Donne's observation that man was made from "the great field of clay, or red earth" (1) echoes in The Waste Land. First, there is the red rock: "There is shadow under this red rock, / (Come in under the shadow of this red rock) . . ." (61). Then there is the red human mud: "red sullen faces sneer and snarl /



From doors of mudcracked houses . . . " (72). But Eliot has not just borrowed Donne's image, he has also borrowed his pun. According to a note in Donne's Sermons, "Donne was extremely fond of this pun on the Hebrew word Adam or red earth. . . ." <sup>45</sup> The red human mud, therefore, represents Adam and his descendents, that is, mankind in general. The red rock, however, represents Christ, for Christ is the second Adam--and so red--as well as the rock upon which the Church is founded. But that The Waste Land's images of red rock and red mud derive from Donne's pun upon Adam and red earth seems all the more likely, given that Eliot's first reference to the rock in question, in "The Death of Saint Narcissus," shows it to be gray: "Come under the shadow of this gray rock-- / Come in under the shadow of this gray rock . . ." (605). The one red rock mentioned in "The Death of Saint Narcissus," in fact, is simply the gray rock turned red by the red light of the fire or the red of the Saint's blood. The rock in The Waste Land, however, is red for a reason.

Similarly, Donne seems to contribute to other Waste Land images. Although the reference to "Son of man" (61), for instance, is ultimately an allusion to Ezekiel, as Eliot points out in the notes to the poem, it may come to Eliot by way of a Donne sermon: "As God said to Ezekiel, when he brought him to the dry bones, Fili hominis, Sonne of Man, doest thou thinke these bones can live?" (68). Donne also reinforces the religious connotations of that "game of chess" which involves "waiting for a knock upon the door" (65): "Imagine God, as the Poet saith, Ludere in humanis, to play but a game at Chesse with this world . . ." (140). Donne's explanation that "God hath made

this life a Bridge to Heaven . . . " (165), furthermore, provides Eliot with another reason for including London Bridge in The Waste Land. Life in the modern city of London provides no bridge to heaven; thus: "London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down . . . " (74). Moreover, the wonder with which the speaker in the poem regards the crowd of people flowing over the bridge, and the frenzied and fearful questioning with which he confronts Stetson, reinforce Donne's claim that "it is but a giddy, and a vertiginous thing, to stand long gazing upon so narrow a bridge, and over so deep and roaring waters, and desperate whirlpools, as this world abounds with . . . " (165). Similarly, a Donne sermon suggests The Waste Land connection between hearing and the key to heaven: "I have heard the key / Turn in the door . . . " (74). Donne argues that there is "no salvation but by faith, nor faith but by hearing, nor hearing but by preaching; and they that thinke meanliest of the Keyes of the Church . . . will yet allow, That those Keyes lock, and unlock in Preaching . . . " (18). In the end, then, not only do Eliot's particular images agree with Donne's, but so does his use of them. The voice of Eliot in The Waste Land agrees with the voice of Donne in the sermons: "when all is done, the hell of hels, the torment of torments is the everlasting absence of God, and the everlasting impossibility of returning to his presence . . . " (208).

Donne's place in Eliot's affections--theological and literary--was eventually taken by Lancelot Andrewes. Initially, however, Eliot seems to have had a very low opinion of Andrewes. In "The Preacher as Artist" (1919), for instance, Eliot writes



that Donne "is no Buddha, but certainly not an Andrewes either."<sup>46</sup> The compliment to Donne is at the expense of Andrewes. According to Robert Sencourt, however, Eliot's friend, William Force Stead, "from their first meeting in 1923, steadily drew Tom towards the writings of seventeenth-century Anglicanism, and especially those of Lancelot Andrewes."<sup>47</sup> By the time of the "Lancelot Andrewes" essay of 1926, then, Eliot is writing that "among persons interested in devotion his [Lancelot Andrewes'] 'Private Prayers' are not unknown."<sup>48</sup> Presumably, the phrase "among persons interested in devotion" includes Eliot himself. Eliot's opinion of Andrewes has shifted so much by 1929, in fact, that in "The Prose of the Preacher: The Sermons of Donne" he can claim--as though he, for one, had always believed it--that "Donne was by no means either the first or the last of the great English preachers; I believe that his contemporary, Bishop Andrewes, is greater. . . ." <sup>49</sup> Andrewes, Eliot argues, simply "rose to greater heights" than Donne.<sup>50</sup> As Eliot's esteem for Donne on theological and literary grounds declined, then, so his esteem for Andrewes grew. But although Andrewes may not have exerted a conscious influence upon Eliot until 1923 or later, the effect of Eliot's early reading of Andrewes' sermons makes itself evident from a much earlier period.

Andrewes, Eliot feels, "has the gôût pour la vie spirituelle, which is not native to Donne."<sup>51</sup> Andrewes was interested in the Church; Donne was interested in man:

Of the two men, it may be said that Andrewes is the more medieval, because he is the more pure, and because his bond was with the Church, with tradition. His intellect was satisfied by theology and his

sensibility by prayer and liturgy. Donne is the more modern--if we are careful to take this word exactly, without any implication of value, or any suggestion that we must have more sympathy with Donne than with Andrewes. Donne is much less the mystic; he is primarily interested in man. He is much less traditional.<sup>52</sup>

Regardless, then, of Eliot's apparently dismissive attitude towards Andrewes in 1919, Andrewes--given that he is more traditional than Donne--was always the more likely to have influenced the Eliot of "Tradition and the Individual Talent." The voice of Andrewes, Eliot writes in 1926, "is the voice of a man who has a formed visible Church behind him, who speaks with the old authority and the new culture."<sup>53</sup> In other words, Andrewes possesses something of the historical sense; he writes "not merely with his own generation in his bones," but with a knowledge of previous theological generations as well.<sup>54</sup> Eliot's experience in reading Andrewes' sermons in 1918 or 1919 (or perhaps even earlier) may, therefore, have contributed significantly to his thought concerning the relation between tradition and the individual talent.

In Andrewes' sermons, moreover, Eliot found the same discipline with words that he sought in his own writing. Andrewes demonstrates

that determination to stick to essentials, that awareness of the needs of the time, the desire for clarity and precision on matters of importance, and the indifference to matters indifferent, which was the general policy of Elizabeth.<sup>55</sup>

The discipline that Eliot admired, of course, was not just in Andrewes' words, but in his thought:



To persons whose minds are habituated to feed on the vague jargon of our time, when we have a vocabulary for everything and exact ideas about nothing--when a word half-understood, torn from its place in some alien or half-formed science, as of psychology, conceals from both writer and reader the utter meaninglessness of a statement, when all dogma is in doubt except the dogmas of sciences of which we have read in the newspapers, when the language of theology itself, under the influence of an undisciplined mysticism of popular philosophy, tends to become a language of tergiversation--Andrewes may seem pedantic and verbal. It is only when we have saturated ourselves in his prose, followed the movement of his thought, that we find his examination of words terminating in the ecstasy of assent.<sup>56</sup>

In this ecstasy, Eliot assented to the beliefs about which Donne was sceptical, that is, "that there was a unity in existence, a relation of real to ideal, which was not beyond the mind of man to trace in its outlines."<sup>57</sup> Andrewes' use of words leads inevitably to this belief: "Andrewes takes a word and derives the world from it; squeezing and squeezing the word until it yields a full juice of meaning which we should never have supposed any word to possess."<sup>58</sup> As Northrop Frye observes, Eliot starts "with what he calls, quoting Andrewes, 'The word within the word, unable to speak a word,' at the hidden centre of reality" and ends "with the Word as the circumference of reality."<sup>59</sup> In Donne then, Eliot found "hardly any attempt at organisation; rather a puzzled and humorous shuffling of the pieces," whereas in Andrewes' tradition, respect for authority, and discipline, Eliot found much of the classicism, royalism, and anglo-catholicism of his For Lancelot Andrewes declaration.<sup>60</sup>

But Eliot also finds in Andrewes' sermons more particular influences. Andrewes' attitude toward the authority of the Gospel, for instance, is similar to Eliot's attitude toward the

authority of the Bible. Andrewes writes:

Gospel it how we will, if the Gospel hath not the legalia of it acknowledged, allowed, and preserved to it; if once it lose the force and vigour of a law, it is a sign it declines, it grows weak and unprofitable . . . and that is a sign it will not long last.<sup>61</sup>

Similarly, Eliot, considering the Bible as literature, asserts:

the Bible has had a literary influence upon English literature not because it has been considered as literature, but because it has been considered as the report of the Word of God. And the fact that men of letters now discuss it as 'literature' probably indicates the end of its 'literary' influence.<sup>62</sup>

Not only is the attitude toward the authority of Scripture the same, then, but so is the argument and conclusion concerning the neglect of this authority.

In Andrewes' sermons, moreover, as distinct from Donne's sermons, Eliot particularly appreciates the proper subordination of the preacher's personality to the spiritual task at hand: "Andrewes's emotion is purely contemplative; it is not personal, it is wholly evoked by the object of contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotion is wholly contained in and explained by its object."<sup>63</sup> Here, then, is something of the impersonality that Eliot demands from the artist. In "Tradition and the Individual Talent," he writes that what happens to an artist "is a continual surrender of himself as he is at the moment to something which is more valuable. The progress of an artist is a continual self-sacrifice, a continual extinction of personality." Similarly, "Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but



an escape from personality."<sup>64</sup> Here, moreover, there is also something of Eliot's objective correlative in the account of how the contemplative emotion of Andrewes' sermons is adequate to the object of contemplation: "his emotion is wholly contained in and explained by its object." And in Andrewes, finally, Eliot finds a unified sensibility: "Intellect and sensibility were in harmony; and hence arise the particular qualities of his style."<sup>65</sup> There was food, then, in Andrewes, as well as Donne, for Eliot's thought on the dissociation of sensibility. Given Eliot's analysis of Andrewes' sermons in the language of his concepts of the objective correlative, the impersonality of the artist, and the dissociation of sensibility, one cannot help but suspect that these concepts not only accurately reflect Eliot's early experience in reading these sermons--an experience which predates his articulation of the concepts themselves--but also derive in part from this very experience.

Eliot's early reading of Andrewes' sermons, however, also left its mark in his poetry. As early as 1919, in "The Preacher as Artist," Eliot had noted a passage from Andrewes which was similar to--and, in the text, right next to--the passage from Andrewes which begins "Journey of the Magi":

Our fashion is to see and see again before we stir a foot, specially if it be to the worship of Christ. Come such a journey at such a time? No; but fairly have put it off to the spring of the year, till the days longer, and the ways fairer, and the weather warmer, till better travelling to Christ.<sup>66</sup>

In the poem of 1928, Eliot actually quotes from the following passage:

A cold coming they had of it at this time of the year, just the worst time of the year to take a journey, and specially a long journey in. The ways deep, the weather sharp, the days short, the sun farthest off, in solstitio brumali, 'the very dead of winter.'<sup>67</sup>

But although this is the passage quoted in "Journey of the Magi," it actually suggests, by contrast, the conclusion of the passage quoted in the 1919 review--that is, that modern magi would not make such a journey; instead, they would procrastinate. Eliot also notes phrases of special poetic interest in "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926): "Phrases such as 'Christ is no wild-cat. What talk ye of twelve days?' or 'the word within a word, unable to speak a word', do not desert us. . . ." <sup>68</sup>

Indeed, many phrases from the sermons of Andrewes--in addition to these--did not desert Eliot in the course of his early poetry.

"The word within a word, unable to speak a word" (37) of "Gerontion" derives from Andrewes' Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity. Andrewes returns again and again to the irony that "the Word be not able to speak a word"; he exclaims: "What, Verbum infans, the Word an infant? The Word, and not be able to speak a word? How evil agreeth this!" <sup>69</sup> Similarly, in the same stanza, Eliot's phrases--"Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'" (37)--are taken from Andrewes: "Signs are taken for wonders. 'Master, we would fain see a sign. . . ." <sup>70</sup>

The reference to Matthew (Matt. xii. 38), borrowed from Andrewes, is particularly appropriate to a poem conceived as an introduction to The Waste Land, for the next verse continues: "An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign . . ." (Matt. xii. 39). And similarly, in a stanza largely given over to Andrewes,



"Christ the tiger" (37) may not only allude to Blake's image of Christ as a tiger, but may also allude to Andrewes' "wild-cat"--one of those phrases which "do not desert us."

One also finds in Andrewes' sermons further sources for the images in "Gerontion" concerning houses and knowledge. Gerontion's claim that his house "is a decayed house" (37) and "a draughty house / Under a windy knob" (38) is one way of expressing the feelings of inadequacy before God which Andrewes expresses in his Preces Privatae:

I am not worthy, neither sufficient  
that Thou shouldest enter beneath the filthy roof  
of the house of my soul,  
seeing it is all desolate and downfallen,  
and Thou hast not with me a worthy place  
to lay thy head.<sup>71</sup>

Similarly, Gerontion's account of the efficacy and value of historical knowledge--with its "many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues," deceptive "whispering ambitions," and vain guidance (38)--finds its counterpart in Andrewes' account of the difficulties in attaining self-knowledge:

A good man had liefer know his own infirmity than  
know the foundations of the earth and the top-  
most heights of heaven.  
But that knowledge of a man's own infirmity is not  
procured save by diligent inquisition, without  
the which the mind is many times blind and  
seeth nought in its own concerns.  
There are many lurkingplaces in the mind and many nooks.  
You must detect yourself or ever you amend yourself.  
A sore unknown waxeth worse and worse and getteth past  
cure.  
The heart is deceitful above all things:  
the heart is deep and full of windings:  
the old man is covered up in a thousand wrappings.  
Therefore take heed to thyself.<sup>72</sup>

Instead of "cunning passages" and "contrived corridors," Andrewes warns against the "many lurkingplaces" and "many nooks" of the mind. And whereas history deceives with "whispering ambitions," the heart, according to Andrewes, "is deceitful above all things." Granting their slightly different perspectives, however, Eliot and Andrewes agree on their final advice--"take heed to thyself"--for "the old man is covered up in a thousand wrappings."

Other of Eliot's poems, of course, also suggest the influence of Andrewes' sermons. Andrewes uses the same Hebrew pun that Donne uses--the pun that lies behind the red rock and red mud images in The Waste Land: "He that raised Jesus . . . shall by Jesus raise us up from the Adama of Edom, the redd mould of the earth, the power of the grave. . . ." <sup>73</sup> Similarly, the twisting and turning in Ash-Wednesday--"At the second turning of the second stair / I left them twisting, turning below . . ." (93)--recalls Andrewes' explanation of repentance:

Repentance it selfe is nothing els, but redire ad principia, a kind of circling; to returne to Him by repentance, from whom, by sinne, we have turned away. . . .

First, a turne, wherein we looke forward to God, and with our whole heart resolve to turne to Him. Then, a turne againe, wherein we looke backward to our sinnes. . . . <sup>74</sup>

Similarly, certain lines from Four Quartets--"In my beginning is my end" (177) and "In my end is my beginning" (183)--may derive in part from Andrewes. Concerning St. Matthew's description of Christ as Dux qui pascet, Andrewes writes:

'Leading He feeds us, and feeding He leads us' till He bring us whither? Even to a principio, back again



to where we were at the beginning; and at the beginning we were in Paradise. That our beginning shall be our end.<sup>75</sup>

With For Lancelot Andrewes (1928), then, Eliot once again confirms his admiration for Andrewes' sermons. In the Introduction, however, he not only gives "an indication of what may be expected" of him in his future work, but also gives "an indication of what may be expected" of him in his past work, for, in the end, Andrewes' presence in Eliot's poetry and criticism dates from the beginning of Eliot's experience in reading Andrewes' sermons.<sup>76</sup>

Another preacher whose influence appears in Eliot's early poetry and prose is Hugh Latimer. But whereas Donne's personality originally fascinated Eliot, and Andrewes' subordination of his personality to the object of contemplation later gained Eliot's respect, Latimer's personality seems to have had no impact upon him. Eliot, however, had read Latimer's sermons at the same time as he was reading those of Donne and Andrewes. He devoted enough attention to them, in fact, to be able to cite in "The Preacher as Artist" (1919) a passage which he regarded as particularly noteworthy: "Now turn up your trump, your heart (hearts is trump, as I said before), and cast your trump, your heart, on this card; and upon this card you shall learn what Christ requireth of a christian man. . . ." <sup>77</sup> Eliot draws attention to the method of Latimer's preaching: "The method--the analogy, and the repetition--is the same as that once used by a greater master of the sermon than either Donne or Andrewes or Latimer: it is the method of the Fire-Sermon preached by the Buddha." <sup>78</sup> It is strictly as a writer of sermons, then, and not

as a personality, that Latimer holds importance for Eliot. But even so, "As a writer of sermons, Donne is superior to Latimer. . . ." <sup>79</sup> Theologically, moreover, Latimer's sermons rank well below those of Andrewes:

Compare a sermon of Andrewes with a sermon by another earlier master, Latimer. It is not merely that Andrewes knew Greek, or that Latimer was addressing a far less cultivated public, or that the sermons of Andrewes are peppered with allusion and quotation. It is rather that Latimer, the preacher of Henry VIII and Edward VI, is merely a Protestant; but the voice of Andrewes is the voice of a man who has a formed visible Church behind him, who speaks with the old authority and the new culture. It is the difference of negative and positive. . . . <sup>80</sup>

If in nothing more, then, "Hugh Latimer was adept in homely illustrations to drive a point home to an unlettered audience. . . ." <sup>81</sup> Given, then, that Eliot regarded Donne as a more interesting personality and a better writer than Latimer, and Andrewes as a very much more important writer theologically, one might suspect that Latimer's sermons made no impact upon Eliot. The evidence of his poetry, however, proves otherwise, for, in the terms of Eliot's metaphor, having swallowed Latimer's sermons, he was then affected by the unconscious process of digestion and assimilation.

Latimer's influence appears primarily in The Waste Land. The "wicked pack of cards" (62) of Madame Sosostriis, for instance, seems a parody of Latimer's cards--cards which, as a metaphor, had caught Eliot's attention in 1919. Latimer used his sermons on cards to declare Christ's rule:

And for because I cannot declare Christ's rule unto you at one time, as it ought to be done, I will apply



myself according to your custom at this time of Christmas: I will, as I said, declare unto you Christ's rule, but that shall be in Christ's cards. And whereas you are wont to celebrate Christmas in playing at cards, I intend, by God's grace, to deal unto you Christ's cards, wherein you shall perceive Christ's rule.<sup>82</sup>

Although, then, a mere parody of Latimer's dealing, the picture of Madame Sosostriis, the cards she deals, and the advice that follows therefrom, is made all the more decadent and impotent by the contrast.

Similarly, Eliot associates the city of London with the decadent sexuality of The Waste Land just as Latimer associates London with whoredom. Latimer complains that "There is more open whoredom, more stewed whoredom, than ever was before" and exclaims: "O Lord, what whoredom is used now-a-days . . . how God is dishonoured by whoredom in this city of London. . . ." <sup>83</sup> So, in the London of The Waste Land, women threaten to "walk the street" (65), take pills "to bring it off" (66), and think only "Well now that's done: and I'm glad it's over" (69). In The Waste Land's sigh, "O City city" (69), and especially in The Rock's warning, "Oh London, London, repent, repent," <sup>84</sup> there is something of Latimer's lament: "Oh London, London! repent, repent; for I think God is more displeased with London than ever he was with the city of Nebo." <sup>85</sup> Moreover, in reading the Everyman edition of Latimer's sermons--as it seems likely that he did--Eliot would have discovered a further meaning to which he might allude in The Waste Land reference to "Leman" (67). <sup>86</sup> Leman, of course, is another name for Lake Geneva. Eliot attended a clinic here during his breakdown. Weeping by these waters

alludes to weeping by the waters of Babylon, a city of exile, infidelity, and harlotry for the Jews. Leman is also the Anglo-Saxon word for lover. Its connotation, according to the Everyman editor of Latimer's sermons, is usually negative: "Leman, properly, [is] a sweetheart of either sex, but the word was commonly used in a bad sense."<sup>87</sup> Here, then, in this explanation of Latimer's allusion to the begetting of the world from Envy, the devil's "well beloved Leman," is a further source of The Waste Land's sexual ambiguity and ambivalence.<sup>88</sup> Given these associations, the speaker's tears "By the waters of Leman" (67) are entirely justified.

Latimer's influence is also evident in "The Hollow Men," although Eliot does not quote directly from Latimer's sermons. In periods of spiritual dryness, as illustrated in "Gerontion," The Waste Land, and "The Hollow Men," Latimer's advice is to say the Lord's Prayer: "and specially now at this time let us resort unto God; for it is a great drought, as we think, and we had need of rain."<sup>89</sup> From Latimer's perspective, then, the concluding reference to the Lord's Prayer in "The Hollow Men" is the logical spiritual conclusion not only of this particular poem, but of the series of three "dry" poems running from "Gerontion" through The Waste Land to "The Hollow Men." Furthermore, that the prayer should end in an inconclusive and incoherent whimper also follows from Latimer's preaching:

For there is no word nor letter contained in this prayer [the Lord's Prayer], but it is of great importance and weight; and therefore it is necessary for us to know and understand it thoroughly, and then to speak it considerately with great devotion: else it is to no purpose to speak the words without



understanding; it is but lip-labour and vain babbling,  
and so unworthy to be called prayer. . . . 90

The spiritual state of the speaker in "The Hollow Men" is represented literally by the vain and laboured babbling of the Lord's Prayer--"For Thine is / Life is / For thine is the" (86)--which Latimer suggests is the spiritual effect, if not actually the verbal effect, of spiritually uncomprehending prayer. The conclusion to "The Hollow Men," then, bearing Latimer in mind, is ironically positive; for the speaker, though still spiritually dry, and so unable to say the Lord's Prayer with meaning, at least recognizes that the prayer is the appropriate response to his dilemma, and the poet, as distinct from the speaker, recognizes that the Lord's Prayer, although the appropriate response to this dilemma, ought not to be articulated until known and understood fully.

In addition to the influence of Latimer, Andrewes, and Donne, however, one might also argue that Eliot's poetry shows a certain influence of Jeremy Taylor. But as with Latimer, Taylor's personality made no great impression upon Eliot. Instead, Eliot was concerned to evaluate him merely as a preacher: "Donne was by no means either the first or the last of the great English preachers; I believe that his contemporary, Bishop Andrewes, is greater, and Jeremy Taylor certainly must take an equal rank."<sup>91</sup> Taylor, however, "has a sweetness and purity of tone unknown to Donne."<sup>92</sup> With Donne and Andrewes, furthermore, he shared a poetic sensibility; that is, he "had the sensitiveness necessary to record and to bring to convergence on a theological point a multitude of fleeting but universal

feelings."<sup>93</sup>

Aware, then, not only of Taylor's sensitiveness to theology and feeling, but also of Eliot's sensitiveness to Taylor, one is not surprised to find something of The Waste Land's spiritual rationale in one of Taylor's sermons:

He that accuses himself of his crimes . . . means to forsake them, and looks upon them on all sides, and spies out his deformity, and is taught to hate them; he is instructed and prayed for, he prevents the anger of God and defeats the devil's malice, and by making shame the instrument of repentance, he takes away the sting, and makes that to be his medicine which otherwise would be his death. And concerning this exercise, I shall only add what the patriarch of Alexandria . . . told an old religious person in his hermitage: having asked him what he found in that desert, he was answered only this, Indesinenter culpare et judicare meipsum, 'to judge and condemn myself perpetually, that is the employment of my solitude;' the patriarch answered, Non est alia via, 'there is no other way.'<sup>94</sup>

Here, then, one finds not only an explanation of The Waste Land's strategy of confession and self-accusation, but one also finds another reason for the waste land imagery: in the waste land, the speaker can judge and condemn himself and his society perpetually. Similarly, another passage from a Taylor sermon adds to the allusiveness of Eliot's images of rocks and shadows.

Taylor writes:

even the most innocent person hath great need of mercy, and he that hath the greatest cause of confidence, although he runs to no rocks to hide him, yet he runs to the protection of the cross, and hides himself under the shadow of divine mercies. . . .<sup>95</sup>

Whereas, then, even the most innocent seek to hide under the shadow of the cross, the guilty, by implication, seek to hide under the shadow of rocks. The Waste Land's invitation to "Come



in under the shadow of this red rock . . . " (61) thus exhorts the guilty, who might otherwise seek the shelter of a physical rock, to join the innocent in the shadow of the spiritual rock--that is, Christ the "red rock."

Eliot was also influenced by Thomas Cranmer. Cranmer--and most other Anglican preachers of the time, according to Eliot in 1931--was greater even than Donne: "in the history of English Theology it is not Donne, but Cranmer and Latimer and Andrewes, who are the great prose masters. . . ." <sup>96</sup> His great works were The First and Second Prayer-Books of King Edward VI, which Eliot had read by 1918. "[I]n his great prayer-book," Eliot writes in "The Prose of the Preacher" (1929), Cranmer "rose to greater heights" than Donne. <sup>97</sup> Given this early reading, one ought not to be surprised to find certain liturgical allusions in the early poetry. In "Gerontion," for instance, one finds an echo of the Communion ritual in the statement that Christ came "To be eaten, to be divided, to be drunk / Among whispers" (37). The communicants themselves, however, seem to represent the ritual's decline into unmeaning in post-war Europe: Hakagawa partakes of the sacraments "bowing among the Titians" (37), and perhaps even bowing to them; Madame de Tornquist does so while somewhat darkly and uncertainly "Shifting the candles" (37); Fräulein von Kulp, moreover, adds to the variety and uncertainty of the ceremonies catalogued by turning and pausing, "one hand on the door" (38). The communicants' prayers are thus but "Vacant shuttles" which "Weave the wind" (38). "The Burial of the Dead," of course, is full of echoes of the funeral service in the Prayer Book--including the title itself. In "The Hollow Men,"

furthermore, one finds a liturgy without life. In the hollow men's "Shape without form, shade without colour, / Paralysed force, gesture without motion" (83), Karen T. Romer rightly draws attention to certain liturgical allusions:

"Shape," "shade," "gesture"--these words are highly suggestive of the Mass, in which through gesture, through the ever strengthening force of worship, shape and shade are materialized in the body and blood of Christ. The liturgy, here, then, is without life; worship is without life; the Mystic Body of Christ is incorporate rather than corporate, a mere scarecrow of straw on crossed staves, while Christ, the Head of the Church, is a mere "Headpiece filled with straw."<sup>98</sup>

The hollowness of these men, then, stems from the loss of the form, colour, force, and motion of real prayer. Their prayers are "As wind in dry grass"; thus: "Our dried voices, when / We whisper together / Are quiet and meaningless . . ." (83). They are not, then, as lost "Violent souls, but only / As the hollow men / The stuffed men" (83); that is, the hollow men do not even have the merit of those lost, violent souls who at least affirm the possibility of belief by their radical unbelief. Instead, the hollow men are lost in a hollow liturgy between belief and unbelief.

In addition to particular liturgical influences, however, Eliot was also influenced in his appreciation of tradition, and the past in general, by Cranmer's argument against the abolition of ancient Church ceremonies. Cranmer opposed proposals to abolish certain ceremonies for no other reason than their antiquity:

But nowe as concernyng those persones, whiche per-  
adventure will bee offended for that some of the



olde Ceremonies are retayned styll: Yf they consyder, that wythoute some Ceremonies it is not possible to kepe anye ordre or quyete dyscyplyne in the churche: they shall easilye perceyue iuste cause to refourme theyr iudgements. And yf they thynke muche that anye of the olde dooe remayne, and woulde rather haue all deuised anewe: then such menne (grauntyng some Ceremonyes conueniente to bee hadde), surelye where the olde maye bee well used: there they cannot reasonablye reprove the olde (onelye for theyr age) withoute bewraiynge of theyr owne folye. For in suche a case they oughte rather to haue reuerence unto them for theyr antyquitye, yf they wyll declare themselues to bee more studious of unitie and concorde, then of innouacions and newefanglenesse, whiche (as muche as maye bee wyth the trewe setting foorthe of Christes religion) is alwayes to bee eschewed.<sup>99</sup>

Here, then, in Eliot's early reading, is another source for his thought concerning the classical virtues of order and discipline, and a hint as well of his picture of the cultural and religious "unitie and concorde" fostered by the historical imagination. The service of the Eucharist itself, however, presupposes a more important relationship between past and present, for Christ, who as a man once lived in this world, is eternally present in the act of Communion--present spiritually, if not physically, in the symbols of his body and blood. The Anglican liturgy, then, as Romer suggests, was ready-made for Eliot:

To a man fascinated with the relationship of the individual to his tradition, with the loneliness and estrangement of men, with the complexities of time, with symbolism, and with exploring the weight of associative context that could be born by words or a group of words, the Christian faith as expressed in the liturgy was ready-made for Eliot's special concerns.<sup>100</sup>

Cranmer's prayer-book, therefore, was not only ready-made to absorb Eliot's special concerns, but ready-made to help him

articulate these concerns from a very early time.

Similarly, Richard Hooker helped Eliot to articulate some of his early critical concerns. Hooker's Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity, though not in the sermon form which so preoccupied Eliot in 1919, nonetheless impressed him in several respects. In respect of structured argument, Hooker was supreme: "for ordonnance, logical arrangement, for mastery of every fact relevant to a thesis, Bramhall is surpassed only by Hooker. . . ."101 In Hooker, Eliot writes, "we find what we may call 'reasoning in tranquillity'; in Donne we find 'reasoning in emotion'."102 Eliot argues, furthermore, that the prose itself is noteworthy: "Without Hooker, the prose of the philosopher, the jurist, even of the scientist, would not have developed so rapidly. . . ."103 Eliot analyzes this prose, moreover, in terms which suggest its relevance to the modern poet:

The writings of both Hooker and Andrewes illustrate that determination to stick to essentials, that awareness of the needs of the time, the desire for clarity and precision on matters of importance, and the indifference to matters indifferent, which was the general policy of Elizabeth. These characteristics are illustrated in the definition of the Church in the second book of the 'Ecclesiastical Polity'.104

Eliot's emphasis on Hooker's "clarity and precision" concerning matters of importance is Poundian. But setting aside the nuances of his prose style, Hooker was also important theologically. One ought to show Donne, Hooker, and Andrewes, Eliot writes, "among the great divines of the English Church of that period . . . and remark upon the extent to which not the Church only, but the



whole of English civilisation, is indebted to those men."<sup>105</sup>

To a certain extent, this is the purpose of Eliot's remarks in "Lancelot Andrewes" (1926):

The intellectual achievement and the prose style of Hooker and Andrewes came to complete the structure of the English Church as the philosophy of the thirteenth century crowns the Catholic Church. To make this statement is not to compare the 'Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity' with the 'Summa'. The seventeenth century was not an age in which the Churches occupied themselves with metaphysics, and none of the writings of the fathers of the English Church belongs to the category of speculative philosophy. But the achievement of Hooker and Andrewes was to make the English Church more worthy of intellectual assent.<sup>106</sup>

Such, in any event, was their effect upon Eliot.

Hooker's greatest influence upon Eliot's thought was in the shaping of his understanding of tradition and the individual talent, and in relating this understanding to Anglican theology. In a 1926 review, for instance, Eliot makes it clear that he finds in Hooker a mind with the historical sense: according to Eliot, one of the author's comments is particularly noteworthy:

Dr. Norman Sykes's lecture on Hooker is . . . an admirable piece of appreciation, and . . . one wishes that the author might develop it into a separate treatise; and one of his statements about Hooker especially is worth pondering:--

Upon a general reading of the Ecclesiastical Polity, perhaps the most striking characteristic which impresses itself upon the student is the author's gift of historical thinking. Few have had a finer sense of the value of historical tradition than Hooker. To him the unity and continuity of history was neither a phrase nor a fallacy, but a practical truth as well as an inspiration.<sup>107</sup>

Hooker argued, like Cranmer, that the Church would not survive if it were to forsake its traditions in favour of an absolute scriptural authority; the effect of the radical Protestant's pleading against man's authority, as developed and embodied within Church traditions, would be to overthrow "such orders, laws, and constitutions in the Church, as depending thereupon if they should therefore be taken away, would peradventure leave neither face nor memory of Church to continue long in the world. . . ."<sup>108</sup> Moreover, man's traditional authority within the Church is not only necessary--though by no means sufficient--for the Church's existence, but it is also a prerequisite, Hooker claims, for any salvation depending upon scriptural authority:

whatsoever we believe concerning salvation by Christ, although the Scripture be therein the ground of our belief; yet the authority of man is, if we mark it, the key which openeth the door of entrance into the knowledge of the Scripture. The Scripture could not teach us the things that are of God, unless we did credit men who have taught us that the words of Scripture do signify those things. Some way therefore, notwithstanding man's infirmity, yet his authority may enforce assent.<sup>109</sup>

Yet despite his respect for tradition, Hooker could also see merit in the Protestant's claim to an individual relationship with God through a revealed and authoritative Scripture. Hooker was concerned not so much to decide for one or the other of these extreme interpretations of authority, but rather to promote the Anglican claim to be the proper synthesis of these extremes:

Two opinions therefore there are concerning sufficiency of Holy Scripture, each extremely opposite unto the other, and both repugnant unto truth. The schools of



Rome teach Scripture to be so insufficient, as if, except traditions were added, it did not contain all revealed and supernatural truth, which absolutely is necessary for the children of men in this life to know that they may in the next be saved. Others justly condemning this opinion grow likewise unto a dangerous extremity, as if Scripture did not only contain all things in that kind necessary, but all things simply, and in such sort that to do any thing according to any other law were not only unnecessary but even opposite unto salvation, unlawful and sinful.<sup>110</sup>

In Hooker's treatment, then, the general themes of the Reformation serve as well in an inquiry into the relation between tradition and the individual talent in religion as they do in an inquiry into the proper definition of the Church. Hooker's Ecclesiastical Polity thus serves to help Eliot in articulating his critical conception of the relation between tradition and the individual talent in art. But it also serves, later, to bring him to his anglo-catholic faith, for Hooker's definition of the Anglican Church was ready-made for Eliot. As Lyndall Gordon points out,

Eliot felt that Anglo-Catholicism, unlike Roman Catholicism, would allow his mind scope. The Anglican Church acknowledges that the truth of the scriptures is only dimly traced and must be verified by individual judgement.<sup>111</sup>

In Anglicanism, therefore, Eliot found room both for religious tradition and individual religious talent; in Gordon's words once more, "He saw means of support and self-correction within the English traditions; at the same time he brought something of himself to the Anglican Church, a spirit more vehement, more dogmatic and zealous."<sup>112</sup> Hooker's influence upon Eliot is thus both literary and religious, for the aspects of his work which

first help Eliot to articulate his literary criticism are the same aspects which later help him to accept and articulate his anglo-catholic faith. Once again, then, literary digestion and assimilation produce an effect beyond that expected in the act of reading.

Sir Thomas Browne--whose Religio Medici, according to Eliot, though not exactly in the Elizabethan period, might "well be read in connection with it"--also proved an influence upon the early Eliot, particularly with reference to the latter's conceptions of time and history.<sup>113</sup> Browne's analysis of the concept of time, for instance, foreshadows Bergson's treatment of the problem:

to speak like a Philosopher, those continued instances of time which flow into a thousand years, make not to Him [God] one moment: what to us is to come, to His Eternity is present, His whole duration being but one permanent point, without Succession, Parts, Flux, or Division.<sup>114</sup>

The chief distinction is that Browne places in God what Bergson places in the individual man. When Eliot came later to read Browne, then, the latter not only echoed and reinforced Eliot's early experience of Bergsonism, but also suggested to Eliot how Bergsonism might be redeemed by adding God to the philosophical equation.

Similarly, Browne's conception of time as history leaves its mark upon Eliot. According to Browne, time has no beginning or end; it is inconceivable "to retire so far back as to apprehend a beginning, to give such an infinite start forwards as to conceive an end, in an essence that we affirm hath neither



the one nor the other."<sup>115</sup> Time, he feels, is a circle upon which the participants in history rise and fall like the sun:

the lives, not only of men, but of Commonwealths, and the whole world, run not upon an Helix that still enlargeth, but on a Circle, where, arriving to their Meridian, they decline in obscurity, and fall under the Horizon again.<sup>116</sup>

Not surprisingly, then, Browne feels that history repeats itself: "men are liv'd over again, the world is now as it was in Ages past; there was none then, but there hath been some one since that parallels him, and is, as it were, his revived self."<sup>117</sup> Even "Opinions do find, after certain Revolutions, men and minds like those that first begat them."<sup>118</sup> Something of Browne's notion of the eternal return of the persons of the past is found in Eliot's claim, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," that the most individual parts of a poet's work "may be those in which the dead poets, his ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously."<sup>119</sup> Similarly, Browne's claim that "the world is now as it was in Ages past" is reflected in Eliot's explanation of the historical sense, "which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together."<sup>120</sup> So too Eliot's concepts of a simultaneous order amongst the literatures of the past, and an ideal order amongst the existing monuments of these literatures, echo Browne's claims for the eternal presence--the timelessness--of the past. Browne, moreover, like Eliot, conceives of the historical sense as an active element in the creative mind:

We have enough to do to make up ourselves from present and passed times, and the whole stage of things scarce

serveth for our instruction. A compleat peece of vertue must be made from the Centos of all ages, as all the beauties of Greece could make but one handsome Venus.<sup>121</sup>

History, however, is neither simple nor trustworthy. And so, just as Eliot warns that "History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors / And issues, deceives with whispering ambitions, / Guides us by vanities" (38), so Browne explains the origin of his sceptical attitude toward history in his knowledge of "what counterfeit shapes and deceitful vizards times present represent on the stage things past. . . ." <sup>122</sup>

In the end, however, Browne's most important influence is in helping to turn Eliot from a philosophical perspective on Bradley's Absolute to a religious perspective. Just as Browne's discussion of time foreshadows Bergson, so his analysis of difference and identity within relations foreshadows Bradley's philosophical emphasis. Bradley, for instance, feels that a relation is necessarily contradictory, for it "implies always two terms which are finite and which claim independence. On the other hand a relation is unmeaning, unless both itself and the relateds are the adjectives of a whole."<sup>123</sup> In short, a relation attempts to unite differences by means of an underlying identity and so asserts simultaneously difference and identity. Browne was aware of the same problem:

even in things alike there is diversity; and those that do seem to accord do manifestly disagree. . . . There was never anything so like another as in all points to concur: there will ever some reserved difference slip in, to prevent the identity; without which, two several things would not be alike, but the same, which is impossible.<sup>124</sup>



In other words, "contraries, though they destroy one another, are yet the life of one another."<sup>125</sup> Bradley's solution to the dilemma is to posit an Absolute which unites in itself every possible difference. There can be no relational appeal beyond the Absolute, for that ultimate reality would actually be the Absolute. The Absolute, then, is reality; appearance is but a relational differentiation within it. Browne, in fact, reaches the same conclusion, but refers ultimately to God, not an abstract Absolute, as reality:

He [God] onely is, all others have an existence with dependency, and are something but by a distinction. And herein is Divinity conformant unto Philosophy, and generation not onely founded on contrarities, but also creation; God, being all things, is contrary unto nothing, out of which were made all things, and so nothing became something, and Omneity informed Nullity into an Essence.<sup>126</sup>

Even more so than in respect of Bergson, then, Eliot's early experience of Browne's theological thought confirmed and reinforced his Bradleyan cast of mind. But more importantly, Browne made it clear to Eliot how this Bradleyan philosophical sensibility might be made compatible with an increasingly orthodox attitude towards the anglo-catholic faith; one need only convert a philosophical reverence of the Absolute to a religious reverence of God.

In the end, then, Eliot's early reading experience of Donne, Andrewes, Latimer, Taylor, Cranmer, Hooker, and Browne produced a variety of effects which he could not have foreseen during his research for his extension lectures concerning Elizabethan literature. So great an impact did these writers

have upon his imagination that they came to serve Eliot as Aquinas served Dante: "Dante's poetry receives a boost which in a sense it does not merit, from the fact that the thought behind it is the thought of a man as great and lovely as Dante himself: St. Thomas."<sup>127</sup> So Eliot received a boost in his poetry and criticism in proportion to the impact--largely unconscious--of these early Anglican writers. He seems almost aware of this relationship in his claim that "The intellectual achievement and the prose style of Hooker and Andrewes came to complete the structure of the English Church as the philosophy of the thirteenth century crowns the Catholic Church."<sup>128</sup> One might argue, in fact, that Eliot devoted so much study to the Anglican divines with the intention--in part--of creating just such a relationship as Dante had with Aquinas. After all, Dante was born into his relationship with Aquinas, whereas Eliot had to strive to acquire a relationship with the Anglican Church. But whatever his conscious intention during this early reading experience, Eliot's subsequent digestion and assimilation of sixteenth and seventeenth-century Anglican writing created a relationship between Eliot and these writers as real and as enduring--if not as deep and as radical--as that between Dante and Aquinas.



## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," TLS, 23 Sept. 1926, 621-2.
- <sup>2</sup> Robert Sencourt, T.S. Eliot: A Memoir, ed. Donald Adamson (London: Garnstone Press, 1971), p. 101.
- <sup>3</sup> R. Sencourt, pp. 100-1.
- <sup>4</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," rev. of Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages With an Essay by Logan Pearsall Smith, by John Donne, Athenaeum, 28 Nov. 1919, 1252-3.
- <sup>5</sup> Ronald Schuchard, "T.S. Eliot as an Extension Lecturer, 1916-1919," RES, NS 25 (1974), 300.
- <sup>6</sup> R. Schuchard, p. 302.
- <sup>7</sup> T.S. Eliot, The Waste Land: A Facsimile and Transcript of the Original Drafts, ed. Valerie Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1971), p. xiv.
- <sup>8</sup> R. Schuchard, p. 297.
- <sup>9</sup> Northrop Frye, T.S. Eliot (Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1963), p. 19.
- <sup>10</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," in Homage to John Dryden: Three Essays on Poetry of the Seventeenth Century (London: Hogarth Press, 1924), p. 30.
- <sup>11</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," p. 31.
- <sup>12</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Philip Massinger," in The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism, 7th ed. (1920; rpt. London: Methuen, 1950), p. 129.
- <sup>13</sup> T.S. Eliot, "John Bramhall," in For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order (London: Faber and Gwyer, 1928), p. 47.
- <sup>14</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, 3rd enlarged ed. (1932; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 394.
- <sup>15</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," in A Garland for John Donne 1631-1931, ed. Theodore Spencer (1931; rpt. Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1958), p. 3.
- <sup>16</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 3. See also Herbert J.C. Grierson, The Poems of John Donne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1912).

- 17 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 18 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 19 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher: The Sermons of Donne," Listener, 3 July 1929, 22.
- 20 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 18.
- 21 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 19.
- 22 T.S. Eliot, "John Bramhall," p. 47.
- 23 T.S. Eliot, "John Bramhall," p. 48.
- 24 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 4.
- 25 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," in For Lancelot Andrewes, p. 30.
- 26 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 31.
- 27 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 20.
- 28 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 9.
- 29 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 32.
- 30 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1253.
- 31 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 30.
- 32 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 30.
- 33 T.S. Eliot, "Hamlet and His Problems," in The Sacred Wood, p. 100.
- 34 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 8.
- 35 T.S. Eliot, "The Metaphysical Poets," p. 30.
- 36 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 22.
- 37 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 22.
- 38 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 39 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," pp. 18, 19.
- 40 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 9.
- 41 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," pp. 10-11.
- 42 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 32.



43 John Donne, Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages With an Essay by Logan Pearsall Smith, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920). All quotations from Donne's sermons derive from this edition. Page references (within parentheses) follow each quotation.

44 T.S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1969). Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from Eliot's poems and plays derive from this edition. Page references (within parentheses) follow each quotation.

45 Notes, Donne's Sermons: Selected Passages With an Essay by Logan Pearsall Smith, by John Donne, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1920), p. 243.

46 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1253.

47 R. Sencourt, p. 105.

48 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 13.

49 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 22.

50 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 23.

51 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 30.

52 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 31.

53 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 18.

54 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," in The Sacred Wood, p. 49.

55 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 17.

56 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 24.

57 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 9.

58 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," pp. 24-5.

59 N. Frye, pp. 45-6.

60 T.S. Eliot, "Donne in Our Time," p. 8.

61 Lancelot Andrewes, Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity (London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1887), p. 284.

62 T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, p. 390.

63 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," pp. 29-30.

64 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," pp. 52-3, 58.

- 65 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 20.
- 66 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 67 L. Andrewes, Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity, p. 253.
- 68 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 27.
- 69 L. Andrewes, Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity, pp. 29, 91.
- 70 L. Andrewes, Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity, p. 200.  
The references to Matthew which follow derive from the Revised Version of the Bible.
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- 72 L. Andrewes, The Preces Privatae of Lancelot Andrewes, p. 107.
- 73 Lancelot Andrewes, Sermons, ed. G.M. Story (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 236.
- 74 L. Andrewes, Sermons, p. 122.
- 75 L. Andrewes, Seventeen Sermons on the Nativity, pp. 171-2.
- 76 T.S. Eliot, For Lancelot Andrewes, p. ix.
- 77 Hugh Latimer, as quoted by T.S. Eliot in "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 78 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 79 T.S. Eliot, "The Preacher as Artist," p. 1252.
- 80 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 18.
- 81 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 23.
- 82 Hugh Latimer, Sermons by Hugh Latimer Sometime Bishop of Worcester, introd. by Canon Beeching (London: J.M. Dent, 1906), p. 6.
- 83 H. Latimer, pp. 114, 170.
- 84 T.S. Eliot, The Rock (London: Faber and Faber, 1934), p. 72.
- 85 H. Latimer, p. 59.
- 86 In "The Prose of the Preacher" (p. 22), Eliot refers readers to the Everyman edition of Latimer's sermons. Moreover,



he recommends Everyman editions in connection with his Extension Lectures--see Schuchard (p. 302)--and writes to John Middleton Murry, 30 September 1927--see John D. Margolis, T.S. Eliot's Intellectual Development 1922-39 (London: University of Chicago Press, 1972), pp. 148-9--that "These 'Everyman' editions are the only form in which a good number of important books reach the large public, and . . . this public may be influenced in reading them by the Introductions."

87 Note, Sermons by Hugh Latimer Sometime Bishop of Worcester, by Hugh Latimer (London: J.M. Dent, 1906), p. 39.

88 H. Latimer, p. 39.

89 H. Latimer, p. 349.

90 H. Latimer, p. 272.

91 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 22.

92 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 23.

93 T.S. Eliot, "John Bramhall," p. 47.

94 Jeremy Taylor, Sermons, Vol. IV of The Whole Works of the Right Rev. Jeremy Taylor, revised and corrected by the Rev. Charles Page Eden (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, etc., 1850), p. 33.

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98 Karen T. Romer, "T.S. Eliot and the Language of Liturgy," Renaissance, 24 (1972), 130.

99 The First Prayer-Book of King Edward VI, 1549 (1549; rpt. London: Griffith, Farran, Okeden & Welsh, 1889), p. 267.

100 K.T. Romer, p. 120.

101 T.S. Eliot, "John Bramhall," pp. 47-8.

102 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 22.

103 T.S. Eliot, "The Prose of the Preacher," p. 23.

104 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 17.

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- 107 T.S. Eliot, "Hooker, Hobbes and Others," rev. of The Social and Political Ideas of Some Great Thinkers of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries, A Series of Lectures, ed. F.J.C. Hearnshaw, TLS, 11 Nov. 1926, 789.
- 108 Richard Hooker, "The Second Book," in Of the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity: Books One to Four, introd. by the Rev. Ronald Bayne (London: J.M. Dent, 1907), p. 264.
- 109 R. Hooker, p. 267.
- 110 R. Hooker, p. 281.
- 111 Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 127.
- 112 L. Gordon, pp. 132-3.
- 113 R. Schuchard, p. 302.
- 114 Sir Thomas Browne, The Religio Medici and Other Writings of Sir Thomas Browne, introd. by C.H. Herford (London: J.M. Dent, 1906), p. 13.
- 115 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 12.
- 116 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 21.
- 117 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 8.
- 118 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 8.
- 119 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 48.
- 120 T.S. Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," p. 49.
- 121 Sir Thomas Browne, "Hydroptaphia: Urne Buriall," in The Religio Medici and Other Writings of Sir Thomas Browne, introd. by C.H. Herford (London: J.M. Dent, 1906), p. 94.
- 122 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 34.
- 123 Francis Herbert Bradley, Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay, 2nd ed., 9th impression corrected (1893; rpt. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1930), p. 394.
- 124 T. Browne, Religio Medici, pp. 68-9.
- 125 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 71.
- 126 T. Browne, Religio Medici, p. 40.
- 127 T.S. Eliot, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca," in Selected Essays, p. 136.
- 128 T.S. Eliot, "Lancelot Andrewes," p. 16.



## Conclusion

Given the Puritan background of the Eliot family in general, and the Unitarian background of T.S. Eliot's own family in particular, it is not surprising to find a strong religious element in Eliot's early reading. Eliot was always likely to develop an acute sensitivity to religion, if not a deeply religious sensibility. Even though he had lost his faith by the time he entered university, his mind was still alive to religious experiences and ideas. As Lyndall Gordon observes, although Eliot "had become completely indifferent to the Church" by the time he enrolled at Harvard, he had by no means become indifferent to religion:

Eliot's Notebook and other manuscript poems show that he began to measure his life by the divine goal as far back as his student days, in 1910 and 1911, and that the turning-point came not when he was baptized in 1927 but in 1914 when he first interested himself in the motives, the ordeals, and the achievements of saints.<sup>1</sup>

On the one hand, his religious sensibility led him to an early reading of certain religious writings, which included works by, and about, mystics, saints, and Anglican divines. On the other hand, however, such was his religious sensitivity that works on philosophy, anthropology, politics, and aesthetics--appearing to have no more than a tangential religious reference--affected his religious development profoundly. Such, in part, was the influence of Babbitt, Maurras, and Hulme in aesthetics and politics, Frazer in anthropology, and Bergson and Bradley in

philosophy.

On reading Babbitt, Maurras, and Hulme, Eliot found within their classical respect for discipline and authority in general a particular respect for spiritual discipline and authority. Babbitt and Maurras saw the Catholic Church as a cultural curator. According to Lyndall Gordon, Babbitt suggested to his Harvard students "that the Catholic Church might perhaps be the only institution left in the West that might be counted on to preserve the treasures of the past."<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, behind this pragmatic attitude toward the Church one finds a genuine nostalgia for religious feeling, "that true humility--the inner obeisance of the spirit to something higher than itself--that has almost become one of the lost virtues."<sup>3</sup> Babbitt's humanism, Maurras' royalism, and Hulme's classicism, therefore, helped to lay the conceptual and emotional foundation upon which Eliot later placed the discipline and authority of his anglo-catholic faith. Similarly, Eliot realized the religious--as opposed to the sceptical--potential of his anthropological studies. The Golden Bough suggested to Eliot that the Christian Incarnation was the culmination of a universal religious pattern in time--not, as Frazer implied, that it was merely a sophisticated derivative of ancient vegetative rituals. In reflecting upon the problems of anthropology in general, moreover, Eliot concluded that one must believe a certain point of view before one can understand it. He thus became, in turn, a passionate convert of Bergson and Bradley. Bergson emphasized becoming; Bradley emphasized being; but it was Evelyn Underhill who brought being and becoming together in



Eliot's mind as a relation dependent upon God:

On the one hand is his [man's] ineradicable intuition of a remote, unchanging Somewhat calling him: on the other there is his longing for and as clear intuition of an intimate, adorable Somewhat, companioning him. Man's true Real, his only adequate God, must be great enough to embrace this sublime paradox, to take up these apparent negations into a higher synthesis. Neither the utter transcendence of extreme Absolutism, nor the utter immanence of the Vitalists will do. Both these, taken alone, are declared by the mystics to be incomplete.<sup>4</sup>

From his study of Underhill and mysticism, Eliot proceeded to read certain Anglican divines. Donne served him as an example of both the theologian indulging his personality and the poet indulging his theology. As such, he was the figure with whom the "spiritually wanton" young Eliot tended to identify himself. Andrewes, however, served as the antithesis of Donne, and so, to some extent, as the antithesis of Eliot as well. But in the end, Eliot came to regard him as a pattern for himself, that is, as an example of a personality properly subordinated to the service of God. Just as Andrewes had sacrificed his personality to God in the discipline and order of his impersonal sermons, so Eliot wished to serve the "something outside of the artist" to which he owed allegiance, the devotion to which he felt the poet "must surrender and sacrifice himself in order to earn and to obtain his unique position."<sup>5</sup> But all the while he was reading Donne, Andrewes, Latimer, Taylor, Cranmer, Hooker, and Browne, Eliot was digesting and assimilating--according to his religious sensibility and sensitivity--the ideas of his earlier reading. The Anglican divines, therefore, brought together in Eliot's mind the past and present, God and art, and

England and the Church:

A people without history  
Is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern  
Of timeless moments. So, while the light fails  
On a winters's afternoon, in a secluded chapel  
History is now and England.<sup>6</sup> (197)

Clearly enough, then, there is a pattern of religious development throughout Eliot's early life, poetry, and thought--a pattern which Eliot can later attribute to the influence of the Holy Spirit. The immediate impact of Babbitt, Maurras, and Hulme, however, was not religious; Eliot regarded them as philosophers, not preachers. Similarly, Eliot treated Frazer as an anthropologist; indeed, Frazer's religious influence depended upon Eliot's acceptance of his work as legitimate anthropology. The influence of Bergson and Bradley, of course, was not at first religious. Even his initial reading of the Anglican divines lacked a religious dimension, for Eliot was at first more concerned with style than content. But in addition to the particular philosophical, anthropological, and theological pleasures that he sought in these particular acts of literary "taste and mastication," Eliot also experienced the largely unconscious, and often unforeseeable, effects of the "process of assimilation and digestion."<sup>7</sup> That is, during the twenty years between reading Babbitt and making his For Lancelot Andrewes declaration, Eliot gradually apprehended and synthesized the religious elements of his early reading. In the end, then, the theology of the Anglican divines became as important to him as the experiences of the saints and mystics with whom he had identified as a young student at Harvard.



This confirmation of the religious pattern of development in Eliot's early life, poetry, and thought--a pattern deriving from his early reading, and, for Eliot himself, from the Holy Spirit--helps to confirm Eliot's conclusion in Four Quartets: "In my beginning is my end" (177) and "In my end is my beginning" (183). Eliot not only read the authors in question as a sceptical young man, but also re-read most of them after his formal confirmation as a member of the Church of England. Hulme's work came to the notice of the general reading public in 1924 with the publication of Speculations, but Eliot returned to Hulme often in the following years.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, for the March 1928 issue of The Criterion, Eliot himself translated an early essay by Charles Maurras.<sup>9</sup> Eliot also remembered Babbitt, in "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt" (1928), and Bradley, in "Francis Herbert Bradley" (1927).<sup>10</sup> From "Journey of the Magi" to the completion of Four Quartets, moreover, Eliot quoted the same saints, mystics, and Anglican divines that he had first read many years before. In this respect, Eliot's end is very much in his beginning. To neglect the early influence of his first reading of these authors, therefore, is also to ignore the end to which this early reading leads. That is, one cannot fully appreciate Eliot's religious end in Four Quartets unless one understands its development from his religious beginning in Babbitt, Maurras, and Hulme, Frazer, Bergson, Bradley, and various saints, mystics, and Anglican divines. This study of the religious dimensions of Eliot's early reading, and the influence of this reading upon his early life, poetry, and thought, thus provides the key to a fuller understanding of Eliot's major poetry.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Lyndall Gordon, Eliot's Early Years (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), pp. 11, 1.

<sup>2</sup> L. Gordon, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Irving Babbitt, The New Laokoon: An Essay on the Confusion of the Arts (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1910), p. 211.

<sup>4</sup> Evelyn Underhill, Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness, 11th ed. (1911; rpt. London: Methuen, 1926), p. 49.

<sup>5</sup> T.S. Eliot, "The Function of Criticism," in Selected Essays, 3rd enlarged ed. (1932; rpt. London: Faber and Faber, 1951), p. 24.

<sup>6</sup> T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets, in The Complete Poems and Plays of T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1969). All quotations from Eliot's poems derive from this edition. Page references (within parentheses) follow each quotation.

<sup>7</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Religion and Literature," in Selected Essays, p. 394.

<sup>8</sup> See T.E. Hulme, Speculations: Essays on Humanism and the Philosophy of Art, ed. Herbert Read (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1924). See also T.S. Eliot, The Use of Poetry and the Use of Criticism (London: Faber and Faber, 1933), p. 149; T.S. Eliot, "Second Thoughts About Humanism," in Selected Essays, pp. 489-90; T.S. Eliot, "Baudelaire," in Selected Essays, p. 430; and T.S. Eliot, "The 'Pensées' of Pascal," in Selected Essays, p. 416.

<sup>9</sup> Charles Maurras, "Prologue to an Essay on Criticism," II, trans. by T.S. Eliot, The Criterion, 7 (1928), 204-18.

<sup>10</sup> See T.S. Eliot, "The Humanism of Irving Babbitt," in For Lancelot Andrewes: Essays on Style and Order (London: Faber and Faber, 1928), pp. 126-43; and T.S. Eliot, "Francis Herbert Bradley," in For Lancelot Andrewes, pp. 67-85.



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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Ezra Pound, "Arnold Dolmetsch," in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, ed. T.S. Eliot (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p. 431. See also E. Cassirer, Language and Myth, trans. by S.K. Langer (1924; rpt. New York: Dover Publications, 1946).
- <sup>2</sup> E. Pound, "Rémy de Gourmont," in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, p. 343.
- <sup>3</sup> E. Pound, "Rémy de Gourmont," p. 343.
- <sup>4</sup> E. Pound, "Date Line," in Literary Essays of Ezra Pound, p. 85.
- <sup>5</sup> E. Pound, The Cantos of Ezra Pound, revised collected ed. (London: Faber and Faber, 1975), p. 438.
- <sup>6</sup> E. Pound, The Cantos of Ezra Pound, p. 467.
- <sup>7</sup> R.L. Brett, Fancy and Imagination (London: Methuen, 1969), p. 8.
- <sup>8</sup> T.S. Eliot, "Tarr," rev. of Tarr, by Wyndham Lewis, Egoist, 5 (1918), 106.
- <sup>9</sup> James George Frazer, The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, abridged ed. (London: MacMillan, 1922), p. 2.
- <sup>10</sup> J.G. Frazer, The Golden Bough, abridged ed., p. 711.
- <sup>11</sup> J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion, Part IV, Vol. II of The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, 3rd ed. (1906; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1914), p. 128.
- <sup>12</sup> J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris: Studies in the History of Oriental Religion, Part IV, Vol. I of The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, 3rd ed. (1906; rpt. London: MacMillan, 1914), p. 22.
- <sup>13</sup> J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, I, p. 107.
- <sup>14</sup> J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, I, p. 308.
- <sup>15</sup> J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, I, pp. 309-10.
- <sup>16</sup> J.G. Frazer, Adonis, Attis, Osiris, I, p. 41.
- <sup>17</sup> J.G. Frazer, The Dying God, Part III of The Golden Bough: A Study in Magic and Religion, 3rd ed. (London: MacMillan, 1911) p. v.