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death and rebirth governs almost all of Eliot's poems on the symbolic level. The pattern persists throughout Time, and it is common to all men, irrespective of the degree of their consciousness of it. If Prufrock may be said to be the «objective correlative» for the idea of the «finite centre» then, it may also be said that the consciousness that governs most of Eliot's poems through the imagery and symbolism is the «objective correlative» for the idea of the divine pattern, the still Word, the common Centre.

As the poetry progresses, it will be observed that the persona's stance in relation to Time becomes clearer and his consciousness of his relation to others becomes more established; in other words he develops a higher consciousness. An awareness of the true self is the result of perceiving one's relationship to others, and to oneself, in time, in its proper perspective, as an integral part of a harmonious whole. However Eliot's method of dealing with the persona may differ from poem to poem, essentially the persona was the mask that enabled him to speak in unsurpassable poetry of the more importunate aspect of experience.

Thus the persona's experience can only be determined from the outside, i.e., by the poet. The above passage presents a definition of the persona's point of view. The poet's point of view is destined to be different. Clearly the poet tries to establish a critical position in relation to the persona; his consciousness acts upon and relates to the persona. To take the poem «Prufrock,» for example, in the epigraph Eliot quotes Dante who evidently believes in the notion that the soul is capable of redeeming itself through suffering and purgation. The epigraph is a piece of conversation between a sinful man and Dante, the purpose of which is to communicate a moral. Eliot's aim in affixing the epigraph is to put forward a view of reality, namely the Dantesque system of values, which contrasts directly with contrasts directly with the values represented by Prufrock. Indeed there are similarities; Prufrock inhabits the inferno of introspective and subjective experience, Guido da Montefeltro inhabits a real inferno, and both make a confidential confession. Yet the scheme of values each of them is «placed» in is quite different from the other. The difference is essentially that between a religious and an agnostic view of life. Although Eliot himself may have been an agnostic at the time he wrote «Prufrock», nevertheless, he was aware of the necessity of the other view of reality, a view that was.

«irreconcilable» with the view the persona projected, yet a view that necessarily complemented it, as a positive relief complements a negative relief in sculpture. Prufrock's experience is unredeemable, because he is incapable of consciousness or action that can change his condition within the limits of the poem. All the personae of the early period share with him this limitation. The epigraph to «Gerontion» reads :

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

Gerontion has missed an entire life owing to his incapacity to act, and he remains trapped in his impotent condition throughout the poem. It is the poet's consciousness that glimpses this truth about him in the epigraph. Eliot writes quoting Bradley : «The finite content is necessarily determined from the outside». <sup>10</sup> »

Essentially the poet prepares the mind of his reader for the experience of the poem by choosing the title and the epigraph. In «The Hollow Men», for example, the title and the epigraph collaborate to place the reader in a particular frame of mind thus enabling him to perceive the poet's real intent and message in the poem. Obviously it is the poet who believes the persona is hollow and dead.

The use of myth as an underlying moral, thematic and symbolic structure was, in fact, Eliot's most significant method of presenting an alternative perspective of vision contrasting with and explaining the limitations of the persona's perspective of vision. By combining and juxtaposing the mythical underlying structure (or scheme of symbols and values) with the nihilistic nature of the persona's experience in the poem, he succeeded in casting the persona in a human mould, as he explored and probed Man's unconscious mind. This in turn gave the poems a universally symbolic import. The pattern of life

One can think of Prufrock's identity in the same terms with which Eliot defines the «finite centre», although strictly speaking, the «finite centre» may be an absolute impossibility in reality. For, since it has no relation with anything outside it, it follows that it has no consciousness :

That objects are dependent upon consciousness, or consciousness upon objects, we most resolutely deny.

Consciousness, we shall find, is reducible to relations between objects, and objects we shall find to be reducible to relations between different states of consciousness; and neither point of view is more nearly ultimate than the other.<sup>8</sup>

But whether Prufrock possesses any degree of consciousness is rather difficult to prove, and in the final analysis remains debatable. For him the evening «spread out against the sky / Like a patient etherized upon a table» and the «streets that follow like a tedious argument / Of insidious intent» are, in effect, his feelings etherized and his thought tedious and insidious. Prufrock does not stand in time. He eludes all comparison and denying all definite relation to any person, he refuses to make a statement; he therefore escapes his own consciousness of himself and is reduced to a mere two dimensional existence. The persona of the early poems is static and extremely lonely and isolated. In *The Waste Land* Eliot describes the persona's isolation most poignantly :

*Dayadhvam* : I have heard the key  
Turn in the door once and turn once only  
We think of the key, each in his prison  
Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison  
Only at nightfall, aetherial rumours  
Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus<sup>9</sup>

In the Notes to the poem Eliot quotes Bradley as a comment on this passage :

«My external sensations are no less private to myself than are my thoughts or my feelings.

In either case my experience falls within my own circle, a circle closed on the outside; and with all its elements alike, every sphere is opaque to the others which surround it. ... In brief, regarded as an existence which appears in a soul, the whole world for each is peculiar and private to that soul».

(80)

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8. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (London : Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 29-30.

9. Eliot, *The Complete Poems and Plays of T. S. Eliot* (London : Faber and Faber, 1969) , p. 74. This edition will be used for all the quotations from Eliot's poems and plays. Subsequent quotations will be followed in the text by a page reference to this edition.

In those early years Eliot was not intent on emulating Dante; expressing the negative was indeed the more importunate. Many years later, Eliot recalled his decisive and youthful encounter with the poetry of Baudelaire whose impact he summed up in the lines :

*Fourmillante Cité, cité pleine de rêves,  
Ou le spectre en pliant jour raccroche le passant...*  
I knew what that meant, because I had lived it before  
I knew that I wanted to turn it into verse on my own  
account.<sup>6</sup>

These are clear statements that Eliot like every true artist had known and lived though the experiences he recounts .

Eliot wrote his most significant poems of the early period («Portrait of a Lady», «Rhapsody on a windy Night», «Preludes» I, II, and III, and «The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock»), between 1909–1911; shortly afterwards he began his study of F. H. Bradley and his essay «Leibnitz Monads and Bradley's Finite Centres» appeared in October 1916.

Bradley's philosophy confirmed the view of reality which his early poems had explored. Furthermore, through his study of Bradley he established theoretically and philosophically the annihilation to which this view of reality led. He writes :

The finite centre, so far as I can pretend to understand it, is immediate experience. It is not in time, though we are more or less forced to think of it under temporal conditions. «It comes to itself as all the world and not as one world among others. And it has properly no duration through which it lasts. It can contain a lapse and a before and after, but these are subordinate.» The finite centre in a sense contains its own past and future.

«It has, or it contains, a character, and on that character its own past and future depend.» This is more clearly the case with the soul. But it would be untrue to go on and declare that the soul «bears traces» of everything that happens to it. It would be a mistake to go on, holding this view of the soul, and distinguish between various grades of soul, according to faculty. This would be to confuse the soul which is a whole world, to which nothing comes except as its own attribute and adjective, with the soul which can be described by its way of acting upon an environment. In this way Leibnitz thrusts himself into a nest of difficulties. The concepts of centre, of soul, of self and personality must be kept distinct. The point of view from which each soul is world in itself must not be confused with the point of view from which each soul is only the function of a physical organism, a unity perhaps only partial, capable of alteration and development, having a history and a structure, a beginning and apparently an end. And yet these two souls are irreconcilable, yet on the other hand neither would exist without the other, and they melt into each other by a process which we cannot grasp.<sup>7</sup>

6. Eliot, *To Criticize the Critic* (London : Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 127.

7. Eliot, *Knowledge and Experience in the Philosophy of F. H. Bradley* (London : Faber and Faber, 1964), pp. 205-06.

two works which he must have contemplated deeply in the years between 1927 and 1930.<sup>3</sup>

The Self's journey from Prufrock's «certain half - deserted streets,» and «muttering retreats,» through the winding staircase of hope and despair in *Ash Wednesday* to the «rose garden» where «the pool was filled with water out of sunlight / And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,» in «Burnt Norton» is depicted through separate, distinct and progressively improving states of consciousness, and not through the continuously flowing movement of progress and development. Even Becket's vanquishing his last and most dangerous temptation is an experience which is achieved off-stage; all the audience sees is Becket's emergence from his crisis an accomplished harmonious Self ready yet not seeking martyrdom. Eliot does not demonstrate convincingly the psychological process which accounts for change. He presents the Self in a particular condition of crisis but mystery that reveals the secret of resolving the crisis is absent from his poetry. In the words of John Lynen : «Eliot cannot achieve psychological change because he shares Becket's belief that what we see as action is an experience emanating from the eternal order of things. The human deed is secondary, derivative. The real event is God's willing, an action both beyond experience and not, in itself, an event.<sup>4</sup>

Eliot's poetry is not poetry of action, nor of experience, it is the poetry of the Self's anguished Song seeking internal harmony within and external harmony with the universe.

«In my end is my beginning» : for Eliot the awareness and consciousness of the sordid and the negative aspects of experience was never an end in itself, rather it was a dialectical and necessary part of the total experience of knowing Good and Evil. An awareness of the negative implies by its very nature an awareness of the possibility of the positive, and of the total scheme of change and redemption. Eliot demonstrates his consciousness of the dialectical necessity of Evil for Good by taking the epigraph for «The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock», for example, from the *Inferno*, a passage where the speaker's experience is too shameful to be confessed to the living. Eliot chooses it to introduce the poem only to emphasize the necessity of descending lower in the dark caverns of the self in order to induce a higher state of consciousness of his persona's destitute condition. The epigraph identifies Prufrock's world as infernal, and thereby admits the at least potential existence of a *Paradiso*. A passage from Eliot's 1919 essay «Dante», written during his «negative» phase, provides a striking analogue to Eliot's moral scheme :

A disgust like Dante's is no hypertrophy of a single reaction : it is completed and explained only by the last canto of the *Paradiso* ... The contemplation of the horrid or sordid or disgusting, by an artist, is the necessary and negative aspect of the impulse toward the pursuit of beauty. But not all succeed as did Dante in expressing the complete scale from negative to positive. The negative is the more importunate.<sup>5</sup>

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3. T.S. Eliot's essay on Dante (1929) indicates the scope and nature of Dante's influence upon him. In that essay Eliot defines his concept of the relationship between earthly and divine love.

4. Lynen, p. 406

5. Eliot, *The Sacred Wood*, 7th ed. (London : Methuen, 1950), pp. 168-69.

There are three distinct periods that can be discerned in Eliot's poetic career. The poems of the early period, those of the volume «*Prufrock and Other Observations*,» «*Gerontion*,» *The Waste Land* and «*The Hollow Men*» convey an antithetically polarized dichotomy between two perspectives of vision. In these poems the persona's point of view of reality is totally negative, it reflects on squalid, the emotionally depraved and spiritually nihilistic aspects of reality. The «implied author's» point of view points mainly to the necessity for an alternative mode of perception of reality. In John Lynen's words: «for Eliot experience is never just parody, since even the most disorganized experience points, by its very mistakenness, to the truth it fails to reach.»<sup>2</sup>

In Eliot's second period, which encompasses the poems *Ash Wednesday* and the *Ariel Poems*, the two perspectives of vision assume a complementary relationship. While in his third period, which includes *Murder in the Cathedral* and the *Four Quarters*, the dichotomy between the two perspectives of vision disappears and the persona's voice merges with the «implied author's» voice. Although it should be maintained that in the case of the play different standards of aesthetic judgement determine the relationship between the various characters. Eliot's «implied-author» and main persona seem to be clearly projected in the figure of Becket, contrary to Eliot's own expressed opinion that he personally identified with the character of the Fourth Tempter.

One may safely state that Eliot's persona is an externalized Self in quest of its real spiritual counterpart - Self, although it often appears, particularly in the poetry of the early period, that the quest is self defeating, and the reason for this discrepancy lies mainly in the essential and basic human shortcomings of the persona, namely in its emotional impotence, its neglect to concede a metaphysical order of time and reality beyond its own circle of immediate awareness. The persona deliberately attempts to escape a confrontation with the present issues at hand, consequently avoids a more agonized engagement with reality, a reality which is itself darkened and defiled by the lack of human love and communication amongst men. Eliot allows the persona to contemplate his anguished state of existence, thus drawing upon the reader's sympathy for the persona's human condition, yet he allows the poem or the «implied author» to pronounce judgement on his experience. *Gerontion*, for example, manifests a higher consciousness of the negativity and depravity of his own moral, emotional and spiritual condition than does *Prufrock*, yet he is incapable of escaping his damnation and through the consciousness of his ineptness and helplessness in the face of history, time, and the presence of «Christ the tiger» he communicates his anguish more poignantly. The hollow men's spiritual predicament is stated by the speaking persona of the poem, and at the same time as the implied author shares their suffering, he pronounces his judgement on the Self that has made its journey to the end of the waste land by saying «Mistah Kurtz - he dead».

Eliot's Lenten period symbolized by the poems *Ash Wednesday* and the *Ariel Poem* presents the case of the emergence and convergence of two levels of consciousness, the earthly and the spiritual. The two perspectives of vision complement each other largely through Eliot's *coup de force* as he demonstrates Dante's influence upon his own poetic style and poetic temperament during that period. Dante's *Vita Nuova* and *Purgatorio* as

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2. John F. Lynen, *The Design of the Present* (New Yale Univ Press)

**The Development of the Relationship  
Between the Persona's and the Poem's  
Perspective of Vision in the Poetry  
of T. S. Eliot from Prufrock to  
Burnt Norton**

*Kawther al-Jezairi*

*To see the unreal is boredom,  
to see boredom is horror,  
to see the horror is glory.*

*Leonard Unger  
Moments and Patterns*

In Eliot's poetry there exists a vital relationship between two perspectives of vision, that of the persona, the speaking «I» in the poem, and that of the poem, which we shall refer to as the «implied-author's» «voice».<sup>1</sup> By perspective of vision we mean the particular consciousness and point of view of reality manifested by both poem and persona. The persona's perspective of vision is often the result of construing reality from a merely subjective, solipsistic and therefore limited point of view. The poem's or the «implied-author's» perspective of vision expresses a higher more objective consciousness which includes but transcends the persona's point of view, therefore implicitly commenting upon it. Eliot uses various techniques to convey the «implied-author's» perspective of vision. The title and the epigraph are among the most obvious and direct indications of his determinate purpose. Imagery and mythical symbolism are the more subtle means he uses, along with «tone» «style» and the particular manner through which he unfolds the poem's sequence of passages, these comprise in their totality the design of the «implied-author's» perspective of vision.

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1. Wayne C. Booth defines the idea of the «implied author» thus :

*«Our sense of the implied author includes not only the extractable meanings but also the moral and emotional content of each bit of action and suffering of all the characters. It includes, in short, the intuitive apprehension of a completed artistic whole ; the chief value to which this implied author is committed , regardless of what party his creator belongs to in real life, is that which is expressed by the total form.» Wayne C. Booth, The Rhetoric of Fiction (Chicago : University of Chicago Press, 1961), Pp. 73-74.*  
*The term Voice is a term used in criticism to signify :*

*«a voice beyond the fictitious voices in a work, and a person behind all the dramatis personae , including even the first person narrator persona. We have the sense of an all-pervasive presence, a determinate intelligence and moral sensibility, which has selected, ordered, rendered and expressed these literary materials in just this way.» M.H. Abrams, A Glossary of Literary Terms, 3rd ed. (New York: Reinhart and Winston, 1971), 125.*