

The change of ideals

A study of sample poems of T.S. Eliot's

Early and later poetry

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Abstract

The subject of the present paper is the change of ideals in Eliot's poetry. By the word "ideal", the researcher means the identity of modern man which Eliot perceives at different periods of development in the poet's literary career. The researcher would like to add to this meaning the imagery Eliot uses to denote that identity. "Ideal" may mistakenly be understood to be the optimum feature or fit image that the poet wishes for his characters and situations. The meaning of the word can be better understood in relation to the sample poems chosen for this paper against which other poems of similar periods can be studied.

Reading carefully Eliot's early poems will immediately yield the idea that the ideals imaged in those poems are not chosen solely by the poet to describe his society and its inhabitants. Rather, Eliot just exposes—not imposes—those ideals, adopted by his society, and criticizes them bitterly as his contemporary poets do. Eliot seeks out those ideals and finds them abiding in defeatism, withdrawal, irresponsibility, down to earth...etc.

While the case is as such for that early poetry, Eliot's later poetry brings a new different idea about modern man's inevitable identity. This time, it is Eliot who chooses the ideals to be identified by his society. He finds those ideals always abiding in the lost—but not unapproachable—realm of moral and spiritual values.

The paper, therefore, falls into three sections:

Section One whose title is derived from *The Waste Land* studies "*The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*" (1917) to stand as a representative poem of Eliot's early poetry. *The Waste Land* (1922) and *The Hollow Men* (1925) are excluded here for questions related to space and time. Here the reader will meet defeatist characters and anti-heroic situations. This, of course, has been due to the surrounding milieu ruled by war, bloodshed and economic and political setbacks which are unveiled between the lines of *The Waste Land*-- the manifesto of that period of sheer degradation and dissolution.

Section Two whose title is taken from a phrase mentioned by Eliot in *Four Quartets* (1942) sheds light upon the four poems making up the version of *Four Quartets*. These poems are *Burnt Norton* (1935), *East Coker* (1942), *The Dry Salvages* (1941) and *Little Gidding* (1942). *Four Quartets* represents a daring return to spirituality and human fullness as elements for identifying man as a master being worth. Instead of the strategy of rebuke and disgust, Eliot adopts the strategy of a responsible poet guiding his fellow men towards light, or into "the rose garden" of *Four Quartets*.

Section Three is a conclusion summing up the findings of this paper.

الملخص باللغة العربية

ان موضوع البحث الحالي هو تغير المثل في شعرات س اليوت . وتشير كلمة " مثل " هنا كما استخدمها الباحث الى هوية الانسان الحديث والتي فهمها اليوت بصور مختلفة في فترتين مختلفتين من فترات تطوره الادبي. ويود الباحث اضافة معنى اخر الى تلك الكلمة لتنظم منظومة الصور الشعرية التي يسوقها اليوت للاحاطة بهوية الانسان الحديث تلك. ربما يفهم البعض بشكل مغاير ان كلمة "ideal" تعني الصفة الامثل او الصورة الاكثر ملاءمة لهوية الانسان الحديث والتي قد يكون اليوت تمناها لشخصياته ومواقفه. على اية حال ان معنى الكلمة يتجلى باوضح صوره عبر دراسة نماذج من قصائد كتبها اليوت بين فترتين مختلفتين تمثل احدهما شعره المبكر والاخرى شعره المتأخر.

ان القراءة المتأنية لشعر اليوت المبكر في هذا المجال تشير الى ان المثل التي يصورها الشاعر في تلك القصائد لم تكن محض اختاره هو ليلصقها افتراءً بمجمعه وسكان ذلك المجتمع، انما الحقيقة هي ان اليوت حاول فقط عرض وتعرية تلك المثل التي تبناها المجتمع ثم انتقادها بشدة كما دأبه في ذلك دأب الكثير من معاصريه من الكتاب.

وبينما نقرأ هذه المعاني في ذلك الشعر المبكر ، يفاجئنا شعر اليوت المتأخر بعرض المثل الجديدة التي يجب ان تصوغ هوية الانسان الحديث. اننا نجد اليوت في هذه القصائد هو الذي يختار تلك المثل لكي يتم تقبلها من قبل مجتمعه والانصهار فيها فيما بعد. لقد وجد اليوت مثله تلك متجسدة في عالم القيم الروحية والاخلاقية التي طالما كان هناك امل لاستعادتها وان كانت قد ضاعت بين اوساط الناس.

ينقسم البحث الحالي الى ثلاث اقسام يتناول الاول منها والذي اخذ عنوانه من قصيدة *The Waste Land* يتناول قصيدة "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock" ك نموذج لشعر اليوت المبكر. ويود الباحث ارجاع اسباب استبعاد قصيدتي *The Waste Land* و *The Hollow Men* من البحث الحالي لضيق ما يسمح به هذا البحث علما ان الباحث قد جمع مادتي هاتين القصيدتين فعلا. ففي هذا القسم يلتقي القاريء شخصيات انهزامية ومواقف لا بطولية مجسدة بذلك البيئة المحيطة والتي غلبتها الحروب واراقة الدماء والنكسات السياسية والاقتصادية والتي ناقشتها قصيدة *The Waste Land* على نحو من التفصيل والنقد باعتبارها القصيدة التي اعلنت عن روح الانحلال والانحطاط الذين اغرقا تلك الفترة من بداية القرن العشرين. اما القسم الثاني والذي استأثر بعنوانه من قصيدة *Four Quartets* فانه يسلط الضوء على القصائد الاربعة المكونة لتلك القصيدة الطويلة والقصائد هي *East Coker* ، *Burnt Norton* ، *The Dry Salvages* و *Little Gidding* بالترتيب. تمثل هذه القصيدة عودة جريئة من قبل اليوت الى الغنى الروحي والاخلاقي باعتبارهما عنصريين مهمين لصياغة هوية الانسان – سيد المخلوقات. فبدلا من الية او استراتيجية التعنيف والامتعاض ، يتبنى اليوت الية الشاعر المسؤول الذي يتوجب عليه ايجاد مجتمعه الى النور او ما يصطلح عليه هو (حديقة الزهور) في قصيدة *Four Quartets* اما الجزء الاخير او الثالث فيعرض ما توصل اليه البحث من نتائج.

Introduction

Eliot is so well known for his early poetry that some critics often describe the 20th century as the Age of *The Waste Land*. This is so because the ultimate identity of the world described in modern poetry in general is almost always referred to in terms of a waste land inhabited by "hollow men". This had long ago been the vogue of Eliot's contemporary poets with Ezra Pound ahead of them. Nevertheless, Eliot wrote another type of poetry which is essentially different as far as themes and imagery are concerned.

Eliot's poetry passes through two stages of development regarding the theme of the search for satisfying ideals for the character of modern man. The first stage starts with the publication of " *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and Other Observations*" (1917) which is crowned with *The Waste Land* (1922) and

virtually brought to an end by *The Hollow Men* (1925). This group of poems marks Eliot's achievement as a modern poet. Here, Eliot adopts one ruling ideal in his search for modern man's identity: that ideal revolves around the pivot of the loss of human personality. Almost all Eliot's contemporaries share with him the same or at least similar feelings. Thus , in Eliot's early poetry, humanity is introduced as having had lost faith in whatever may sustain or define a dignified personal and social identity.

This outlook continues up to the publication of *The Hollow Men* which represents a sudden turning point preceding another much significant turning point in Eliot's personal life as well as his literary career. That second turning point is his naturalization into a British citizen in 1927. Eliot personally, it seems, had also travelled to the land of Europe in search of something more meaningful and satisfactory for his identity as a human being and as a poet as well. This painstaking search is referred to, albeit indirectly, in his poem of that same year "*Journey of the Magi*". With this poem, the poetry of the first stage yields place to the new one which is distinguishably different from the earlier one.

Eliot's new poetry initiated by "*Journey of the Magi*" and culminated in *Four Quartets*(1935-1942) keeps no room for the imagery of a world which is always described as in abeyance. This poetry stresses the necessity to revive the lost Christian moral and spiritual values. Here, the majority of modern poets have shown very little interest in that peculiarly individual

return to those lost realm of spiritual and moral values of the human society. In his later poetry, Eliot abandons what Martin Traverse describes as the " iconoclastic Modernist idiom" of *The Waste Land* for the sake of a new "vision of the ethical importance of human action and ideals"(Marti Traverse,1998,85). This importance of human action and ideals as definitive sources of the social as well as the individual's own identity is of a prime interest to the present paper.

Section One: The Poetry of the "Stone Images"

" *The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock*", which underlines Eliot's early identity as a modern poet, raises several subjects ranging from " despair, hopelessness, paralysis, angst and a sense of meaninglessness" to "chaos and fragmentation of material reality", to use Freidman's words(Susan Friedman,1981,98). The poem opens with an elegiac scene—which recurs later in several of Eliot's early poems. The "hero"—if at all—is looking in a pensive mood through a window which overlooks a long empty street. The scene is a melancholic nocturnal one with Prufrock inviting the "you" of the poem for a walk:

Let us go then, you and I,
When the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table; (ll, 1-3)

This opening scene foreshadows the later imagery of the poem. Looking still through his window, Prufrock feels dejected, for everything around him is boring and meaningless. That meaninglessness and lack of any purpose is drawn through the image of the streets that look like a " tedious argument/ Of insidious

intent". Prufrock gives his addressees a condensed pre-thought of what they may meet outside. He mentions something about a hotel and streets that are full of dirt and unfeeling inhabitants who speak about Michelangelo as if the latter were nothing:

In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo. (13-14)

Anyhow, this casual mentioning of Michelangelo may not only mean the crudity of modern man in understanding such a big name, but that name alongside others like Hamlet and Lazarus refer to civilizations that have had no place in modern western society. Such civilizations are easily neglected by the 20th century society to the extent that they are turned into a side dish rather than a main meal for man's culture. Such is the status quo surrounding Prufrock whose song is never sung because it is a love song with love missing in his time. the poem as such, is a lamentation of a lost realm of cultural and traditional values. Prufrock, as an Eliot's persona, is "an over-civilized intellectual" trying to bridge a great gap between him and "the ugliness and spiritual emptiness of the machine age" around him(quoted in Michael Hamburger,1982,125—cf Hamburger ,115).

Through his attempts for reconciling himself with his reality, Prufrock receives several blows that push him back into a regressive situation. One of those blows is his discovering that his society is not only unfeeling and down-to-earth but a desperately hypocrite one. For instance, Prufrock conceives life as a sort of deception as it is turned into a masquerade where everybody is nobody at all. One has to wear a "face" different from the real face which one naturally has:

There will be time, there will be time

To prepare a face to meet the faces that you meet; (ll, 26-27)

This very dehumanizing way to cope with the life around Prufrock adds a lot to the question of the loss of personal identity to the sense of defeatism as two ideals ruling the atmosphere of the poem.

The inability to decide what to do next is also a central problem in this poem which sheds light on the volatile modern personality embodied in Prufrock. He decides and goes

back to revise and ultimately reverses his same decisions: he is never certain of what is going to happen even a minute ahead:

In a minute there is time

For decisions and revisions which a minute will reverse. (ll, 47-48)

This sense of uncertainty leaps later from Prufrock's inward revisions of his own mind to his outward appearance. He finds himself unwillingly fighting with a new problem which is others' criticism of his scragginess. The question is plainly whether he should change his whole appearance this time:

They will say: " How his hair is growing thin!"

.....

.....

They will say: " But how his arms and legs are thin!" (ll, 41-44)

Prufrock is now struggling for a wish to act freely albeit it is a hard task to carry out. He is now being acted upon by "social" and "psychological" complexes that are provoked just when he is among his fellow men (Peter Childs, 1999,63). Prufrock cannot think of or ever imagine people looking at him or whispering something even if unnecessarily about him; he seems like his author "... too deeply occupied with horror and boredom", to use Boris Ford words (Boris Ford, 1961, 340) He receives their looks, voices and the subjects they discuss --like Michelangelo—are all meant to look down upon him as an intellectual man. He is neither convinced of what they may do or discuss nor can he convince them of what he has in mind. This lack of communication is stressed throughout the poem. The wish to bridge the gap between the intellectual individual and the spiritually empty society fails recurrently in the poem and is never achieved. Hillis Miller summarizes this struggle describing Prufrock and other characters in the poem as "soap bubbles. ... Each impenetrable to the other." (cf, <http://www.coldbacon.com/poems/eliot.html#>).

Prufrock's diffidence and inferiority complex are later exaggerated to result in his reduction into a mere dirty low insect, pinned on a wall by those looking at him: "sprawling" and "wriggling" are exactly the successive reactions which an insect--like beetle--passes through when it is nailed with a pin. Nevertheless, that insect tries its best to free itself from that great pain to resume its former activities—though vainly. Hence, any resumption for the "insect-Prufrock" is just impossible because the society around him has already given its verdict which is just like a pin:

The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how shall I begin

.....
And how shall I presume? (ll, 56-61)

This question of self-awareness and the attempt to find a certain ideal for oneself is a central argument in the poem. Each time Prufrock tries to find his true self as a modern character, he ends up with retreat. The reason behind that complex, Boris Ford says is "definite consciousness" from which Prufrock always "shrinks" (Boris Ford, 1961, 341).

So far, the reader can notice that Eliot's ideals have ranged from defeatist characters to merely low insects. At its best, this gradual stepping down of those ideals takes place at the closing part of the poem: that gradual stepping down from Prince Hamlet—a "historic splendour of the great individual" (F.O. Mattheissen, 1959,138)—into a mere fool is a catastrophic self-awareness for Prufrock. Prufrock – with his tidy appearance at the beginning, keen view of his time and authoritative voice of Lazarus who knows the mysteries of

death—denies any possible relation to whatsoever significant . He is nothing, a mere fool at whom an audience may laugh for amusement:
No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Politic, cautious, and meticulous.
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool. (ll, 11-19)

The poem closes with Prufrock's uncertainty of who he really is. Such a defeatist character as well as his surrounding anti-heroic situations keep showing up in the majority of Eliot's poems written in this period, definitely from 1917 up to 1925. For instance, the reader can read poems like, " The Portrait of A Lady" , *The Waste Land* and *The Hollow Men* in a similar way. These poems follow the same main trajectory drawn in " the Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock": they altogether pinpoint the ideals Eliot uses to describe modern man and his life as " moments of deterioration, danger and mental decay portraying a desensitized, routine life surrounded by debris and pollution" (Peter Childs ,1999,87).

It is noteworthy that this series of early poems was written while the poet was American surrounded by the 1920s American scene of wholesale failure . And this adds to the glaring difference between this type of poetry and the poetry of the 1930s written after the poet's immigration to Britain and his naturalization into a British citizen. For the purpose of clarifying the different ideals the poet uses to define modern man and his life, the paper discusses Eliot's famous and lengthy poem *Four Quartets* (1935-1942).

Section Two: The Poetry of the " Rose Garden"

T.S. Eliot's later poetry, initiated by " Journey of the Magi" (1927), marks an end of a period ruled by images of destruction and darkness and foretells a new different one in Eliot's literary development. Eliot himself approves of such development in the poet's techniques and themes and he calls it a progress in that poet's artistic life. In his comment on Ezra Pound's poetry, Eliot stresses that the poet should progress artistically in accordance with his\ her own time and needs. Hence, such a progress should come from

" his [the poet's] normal human experience . . .
and by experience I mean the results of reading
and reflecting, varied interests of all sorts,
contents and acquaintances, as well as passion
and adventure." (quoted in F. O. Matthiessen,1959,133)

A similar view can be found earlier in *The Egoist* of 1918 (cf, Peter Childs,1999,11)

This necessity for the poet's development is actually embodied in "Journey of the Magi", the transitional point where Eliot's mind is undergoing a travail to give birth to something new. In this poem, older ideals of the early poetry still linger but simultaneously juxtaposed with ideals of the new poetry. For example, a reader may meet images of those "Six hands.../ And feet kicking wine skins" ("Journey of the Magi" ll,27-28), and those who still clutch to a much brighter turn of life. Therefore, one can say that in this poem as well as in his later masterpiece *Four Quartets*, Eliot is voicing an appeal for the rebirth of spiritual values because the modern world is seen as "a land in need of spiritual reawakening" (Peter Childs, 1999, 76).

The year of writing "Journey of the Magi" is to be allotted a special attention as it dates a new phase in Eliot's personal life and literary career as well. Eliot's conversion to Anglo-Catholicism and his announcement of becoming Royalist in politics and Classicist in literature in 1927 are but beginnings for a search of an ideal which can be complacently accepted by Eliot himself. These new moves may have taken place in Eliot's mind as a reaction against the cosmopolitan life of his time which he rejects once and for all in his early poetry. Hence, the poetry which is unveiled between the lines of *Four Quartets* stands for a new experience in the poet's search for satisfactory ideals.

Four Quartets is a poem of four parts; namely, they are *Burnt Norton* (1935), *East Coker* (1942), *The Dry Salvages* (1941) and *Little Gidding* (1942). The poem as one entity stands for the poet's attempts to review the spiritual realm of his ancestors so that he can "set [his] land in order"—the promise which he advocates in *The Waste Land*. In *Four Quartets*, Eliot avoids the elitist voice for the alternative of what Corcoran describes as the "public discourse" (Corcoran, 1993, 6). Being public does not mean vulgar here, but it means being understood by the average not the highly intellectual reader. Instead of passively commenting on the ills of his modern society, the Eliot of *Four Quartets* preaches renewed spiritual values that have long been neglected by his society. Here, Eliot is announcing a "withdrawal from an earlier commitment to principles, presumptions and structures of Modernism." (Ibid, 4). Henceforth Eliot is in search for a shared ground between him and his society; it is the ground of Christian orthodox ideals. The poet is trying to identify who he really is so as to reduce the "multiple selves" of his early poetry into "unity and purity" (Hamburger, 1982, 130).

Now, let us have a look at certain areas throughout the four poems of *Four Quartets* in relation to the main argument of the present paper. The first poem (*Burnt Norton*) discloses Eliot's deep regret of the past which could have been made into a better phase of life or "a rose garden" as he supposes:

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. (*Burnt Norton* I)

These are not only Eliot's feelings of regret, but they are the feelings of his generations and/or his readers too, for Eliot claims that his words "...echo/ Thus in your mind." (*Burnt Norton* I)

Through this confession, the poet is preparing his readers for more corrections of past beliefs and ideas. The first part of this poem tells us about such corrections as the poet moves to a type of imagery which cannot be claimed to any of his early poetry. Here, the poet sympathetically describes the waste landers of his early poetry as reaching a light at the end of a dark tunnel by the guidance of a thresh. Those waste landers, the poet imagines, have been led into “ the rose garden” which Eliot refers to earlier in this poem. The end of the first part of this poem unfolds a new philosophy which is different from what has shown up in Eliot’s early poems. For instance, reading the following lines, a reader may imagine Blake__ the mystical poet of *Songs of Innocence*__ not Eliot__the satirical poet and tough commentator of the 1920s:

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quitely,
The surface glittering out of heart of light,
And they were behind us reflecting in the pool.

.....

Go said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird. ... (Burnt Norton I)

These images are later exaggerated into what Eliot calls a “ twittering world” (Burnt Norton III), an image of purity and innocence pertaining to a newly born bird.

The movement of this first poem of *Four Quartets* is heading towards supremacy with the poet’s deeply felt desire for rebuilding the early broken images of his early poetry into something worthier: the closing lines of *Burnt Norton* refer to this ascending movement through the image of “the ten stairs” (Burnt Norton,part V) (cf. <http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/notes.htm>).

The second poem in *Four Quartets* is entitled *East Coker* in accordance with the name of Eliot’s ancestral home. The opening scene of this poem is one of solemnity and serenity. It describes the sharp contrast between the past and the present in the images of replacement of “Old stones to new building, old timber to new fires / Old fires to ashes. ...” (East Coker I). This is not to regret the life and achievement of his ancestors as much as it sets an unquestionable confidence in the power of change with the serge of time. What is important for our main argument is that the image of death and decay is seen by Eliot as a step towards something new -- new generations; this is not the typical image of death of his early poetry which has meant then an end of human vitality and energy. The idea of death is no longer an impediment to man’s activity—“ Houses live and die: there is a time for building / And a time for living and for generation.”(East Coker I). The idea of This idea of a time with meaning for man replaces that idea of time which is just consumed meaninglessly by Prufrock in decisions and revisions.

Later in *East Coker*, Eliot moves to another different ideal which reminds the reader-- by means of contrast not similarity—of an image in Eliot's *The Waste Land*; it is the image of marriage. The idea of marriage as an ideal in this poem is not the same as it appears in Eliot's early poetry. Checked against the marital life of Madam Sosostriis and Lil of *The Waste Land*, the description of marriage provided by Eliot in *East Coker* stands for a completely different view:

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 daunsing, signifying matrimonie____

A dignified and comodios Sacrament.

Two and two, necessarye conjunction.

Holding eche other by the hand or arm

Whiche betokeneth concorde. (*East Coker* I)

East Coker closes in this marital “concorde” of which Eliot's earlier married couples are denied. This poem is followed by the third poem of *Four Quartets* entitled *The Dry Salvages*.

The title of this third poem refers to a place in Eliot's early childhood in New England, the cradle of Puritanism which makes up his early religious background. Hence, the poem looks like a religious treatise wherein Eliot explains his views of time and the best way to free oneself of it in one's travel towards eternity and absolute purity. The poem opens with the image of an old river which, albeit it is old, is unjustifiably forgotten by those living in its neighbourhood. Eliot uses this image to symbolize the eternal omnipresence of God whose blessings and knowledge are ever flowing in every human being “The river is within us” (*The Dry Salvages* I)

Hence, *The Dry Salvages* is established on one central idea revolving around the assumption that religion represented by Christ is abiding in every man's heart (the river). In the poem Eliot describes a world of saints and sainthood that cannot be traced back to any of his early poems , save his later poetic drama. In the world of sainthood of the poem , Eliot is advising his readers to abdicate life as impure and not worth living; the alternative which he proposes is going through an experience which is similar to what he calls the “... intersection

of the timeless/ With time...”(*The Dry Salvages* V). And by “the timeless”, Eliot means God the Absolute Power whose image is embodied in Christ who simultaneously represents time and stands for the historic intersection with the timeless. Eliot in such an unmatched image is trying to tell us that Man's search for acceptable ideals in life cannot end except through that saintly intersection with the timeless or what Eliot describes as “a lifetime's death in love” (*The Dry Salvages* V).

A comprehensive reading of *The Dry Salvages* shall tell us about an Eliot who is not the Eliot of “ *The Love Song*”, *The Waste Land* or *The Hollow Men*. He

is no longer dealing with defeatist and hesitant characters , but with individuals whose goals and ideals in life are made clear and well defined.

The last poem of *Four Quartets* can be taken as a conclusion to all what Eliot reflects upon in his previous three poems. The poem is entitled *Little Gidding* after the name of the home of “a religious community established in 1926” in Cambridge shire which was visited by Eliot in the mid 1930s

(<http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/notes.htm>). The opening part of the poem confirms Eliot’s continuous search of ideals for man’s existence or reality.

The poet expresses feelings of futility when one tries to identify oneself and one’s reality as well; the search of meaning or ideals in life is ever continuous and never ending for the meaning one arrives at

Is only a shell, a husk of meaning

From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled

If at all .(*Little Gidding I*)

This futility forces the poet to doubt even his own priorities in that search because

....Either you have no purpose

Or the purpose is beyond the end you figured

And is altered in fulfillment (*Little Gidding I*)

In that endless search of ideals, the goals seem never attainable and one may guess that had Eliot lived beyond 1965, he might have accordingly written another kind of poetry whose images, symbols and meanings would have looked unique and different. The poet actually refers to something similar to such uniqueness pertaining to this cyclic movement of that search in which the poet is engaged:

We shall not cease from exploration

And the end of all our exploring

Will be to arrive where we started...(*Little Gidding V*)

Hence meanings and the meaning of meanings are always volatile in accordance with time and the poet’s mental and artistic development. It is this volatility of meanings and the unlikelihood of their fixedness that makes the meaning of England, for instance, different from its counterpart in Eliot’s early poetry: England whose capital looked for Eliot as an “Unreal City” conquered by all types of dirt and psychological complexes in *The Waste Land* and “The Love Song of J.Alfred Prufrock” respectively, is changed in the poet’s mind into a holy place or a temple where one has

... to kneel

Where prayer has been valid. (*Little Gidding I*)

and

Here, the intersection of the timeless moment

Is England and nowhere. Never and always. (*Little Gidding I*)

Eliot here is not praising England for political commitment or nationalistic jingoism. Rather, he looks at England as a spiritual and religious support, and this look is a purely personal concern for it has not been widely shared by the majority of his contemporaries: it is these changing views in comprehending

differently the meaning of a fixed thing (England) which makes Eliot's later poetry different not only from his early one , but from his contemporary poets' as well.

Anyhow, Eliot in *Little Gidding* does not give ultimate answers to any of the central questions such as time, the meaning of reality and modern man's identity raised in his lengthy poem *Four Quartets*. He rather calls the reader not to stop at any given meaning of these and other questions, but to continue in the process of search simply because

...There are other places
Which also are the world's end, some at the sea jaws
Or over a dark lake, in a desert or a city__ (Little Gidding I).

Section Three: Conclusion

The sample poems discussed in this paper show us that T.S Eliot's poetry can be divided into two phases of development. The first phase starts with the publication of *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock and other Observations* (1917) which the paper describes as early poetry. This phase is brought to an end with the publication of *The Hollow Men* (1925). According to the main question of the present paper, Eliot tries to expose the worst “ ideals” that modern man embraces. Eliot is not happy of that but is actually interested to attack such dehumanizing ideals imposed on man by his surrounding milieu.

The second phase of Eliot's poetry is essentially connected with his being baptized as an Anglo-Catholic and naturalized as a British citizen in 1927. The poetry of this phase including *Four Quartets* does really date to the new personal experience in Eliot's life itself. One may not venture if one says that Eliot's poetry stops to be completely impersonal. The new light of hope granted to him through his later Anglo-Catholic conversion has its influence not only on his later poetry, but on his later poetic drama as well.

Hence, the “ ideals” of modern man in *Four Quartets* are not chosen by modern man but by Eliot himself According to his new vision of life. Here, Eliot is not exposing bad “ ideals” to be attacked as he does in his early poetry, but he is trying to impose the renewed Christian ideals, whether moral or spiritual, on man. Eliot appears guiding his society into a new world of purity and salvation: it is a world so innocent that Eliot describes as “ twittering” . The poem as such represents a re-exploration of moral and spiritual values as the best “ideals” to be identified by modern man and society.

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