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**A Study of Form and Content in Selected Poems
of T.S. Eliot**

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ملخص الدراسة

تتمحور الدراسة الحالية القالب والمضمون في قصيدتي ت.اس اليوت (الأرض اليباب) و (أربعاء الرماد). تقع الدراسة في أربعة فصول وخاتمة .

يلقى الفصل الأول نظرة عامة عن العصر الحديث وماديته المتصاعدة وإفلاسه الروحي الذي خلق شعورا بالخواء والجذب. يتتبع الفصل الثاني الأثر التقويمي أو البتكويني الذي جعل ت. اس اليوت من أعظم شعراء العصر الحديث والذي جسّد وصور قضايا عصره من خلال قصائده . يتناول الفصل الثالث بالدراسة والتحليل قصيدة ت.اس اليوت (الأرض اليباب) من حيث الشكل والمضمون والذات ينسجمان معا بشكل تناغمي بسيط.

يتناول الفصل الرابع بالدراسة والتحليل قصيدة ت. اس اليوت (أربعاء الرماد) من حيث الشكل والمضمون و الذات ينسجمان معا بشكل تناغمي بسيط كذلك. وتعتبر هذه القصيدة مرحلة جديدة في تطور شعر ت.اس اليوت .والشكل او القالب في هذه القصيدة يتكون من صور رمزية غامضة والتي جعلت القصيدة صعبة الفهم. وهذه القصيدة جعل الشاعر اليوت يستغرق في التفكير برؤية أخرى " هي الرؤية الوهمية في الحلم السامي " أربعاء الرماد " السطر ٧٨ " التي كانت غائبة في حداثة أعماله الباكورة.

Abstract

The present study aims at examining form and content in T . S . Eliot's *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday* .The study is divided into four chapters in addition to a conclusion.

Chapter One is an introduction which provides a general background of modern age, its rampant materialism and spiritual bankruptcy which has eventually created a sense of emptiness and barrenness in modern life.

Chapter Two traces the formative influence of Eliot that made him a great poet of the modern age, who has depicted these problems through his poems.

Chapter Three is devoted to the study Eliot's *The Waste land*, its form and content. In this poem, form and content go together reduced to its simplest terms.

Chapter Four examines the form and content in Eliot's *Ash Wednesday*. In this poem, form and content is also go together. The poem marks the beginning of a new phase in the poet's development. The form of this poem consists of obscure images and symbols which make the poem difficult. The poem compelled him to contemplate another vision. "*The unreal vision in higher dream,*"(*Ash Wednesday* L.78)* whose felt absence was his earlier subjects.

(All references to this text are from this editions and are quoted by page numbers in parenthesis)

Chapter One

Introduction

Thomas Stearns Eliot enjoyed a long life, span of more than twenty-five years, and his period of active literary production extended over a period of forty years. He has come to be regarded as one of the greatest of English poets, and he has influenced the course of modern poetry more than any other poets of the twentieth century.

Eliot's poetry cannot be understood without an understanding of his life and age. In this chapter, the researcher will, therefore, confine his attention to consider the social milieu in which Eliot matured and created, and then the main literary trends which influenced him and determined the tone of his poetry.

1.1: *The Life and Works of T.S. Eliot :*

1.1.1 *His life :*

T.S. Eliot was born in St. Louis, Missouri. After graduating from Harvard University he studied at the prestigious Sorbonne University in Paris. He briefly returned to Harvard to work on his PhD, then decided to settle in London. In 1915, he married the British dancer Vivien Haigh-Wood, who suffered from psychological problems. The marriage was extremely troubled and the couple separated in the early 1930s. Vivien Haigh – Wood died in 1947 and Eliot married for a second time in 1957.

In his early years in London Eliot held jobs as a teacher, bank clerk, assistant editor and reviewer for *The Times Literary Supplement*. With the help of the influential poet Ezra Pound, he began to publish his own poetry. *Prufrock and other Observations* appeared in 1917 and established him as a leading poet of the avant – garde. The work which followed especially the

radically experimental poem *The Waste Land* in 1922, consolidated his reputation.

Eliot's position as the foremost writer of his day was reinforced by his essays in literary criticism. The first of his critical works, *The Sacred Wood*, was published in 1920 and was followed in 1932, by his *Selected Essays*. His views on Metaphysical poetry and Romanticism are still widely cited today..

1.1.2 His works

T.S. Eliot was one of the most daring and innovative poets of the twentieth century. His early poems (1917–1927) reflect the disillusionment of a generation living in the aftermath of the First World War, a generation struggling with the horror of the war as well as the ambiguous heritage of the Victorian era. His finest early poem, *The Love Song of J. Al-Fred Prufock*, conveys the sense of emptiness, pessimism and lack of direction and determination that characterized life in those years.

The intellectual atmosphere of the period is best exemplified in the poem *The Waste Land* (1922), whose impact can only be compared to the breakthrough impact of Wordsworth's and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* of 1798. *The Waste Land* expresses the horror mixed with morbid attraction that the poet feels at perceiving the gloomy materialistic world of nothingness surrounding him while he searches for the meaning of life. The poem includes a parade of images, characters and situations symbolizing the spiritual aridity of a society.

T.S. Eliot is credited with creating modern poetry. His work marked a complete break with Victorianism and lingering traces of Romanticism. Drawing on the intellectual toughening wit and vigor of Elizabethan drama and the Metaphysical poetry of the seventeenth century, he created a new style of poetry which captured the complexities of life in the modern era. His

work has left an indelible mark on almost all the poets who have followed him. In 1948, Eliot's poetic excellence received the highest recognition when he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. He died in London in 1965.

1.2 The Twentieth Century Background :

The twentieth century is made up of two World Wars and their far-reaching consequences, together with the anticipation of a more terrible one. There is, beside the war, the difficult contemporary situation that each poet must have found himself in such situation as have been the outcome of science not merely in the form of new weapon of mass-destruction, but also in the shape of more insidious every day enemies of order and security.

The important fact that every poet - and indeed every serious writer - had to face in England in the first half of the 20th century was that the society in which he was living in a very high degree hostile to such spiritual life. The poet upto and including the Gorgeins, had been writing as though no such hostility existed. Even when they were realistic and satiric their work had been founded on the assumption that there was a class of common reader's with whom they could communicate, a class with a genuine culture and a real concern for spiritual values. If poetry was regain its honesty it would have to recognize the fact that the values of the old cultivated middle class were dead beyond to recall, and that it was necessary to find expression for anew sort of sensibility arising out of conditions that were a wholly different from those of the agricultural class-dominated society from which the old traditions of English poetry had sprung. The result would necessarily be a poetry that would appear to many readers brought up in these traditions to be both, "unpleasant and difficult". It would appear to be unpleasant because contemporary society was in a state of progressive degradation.

1.3.The Social background :

The year 1890 is considered as a turning point in the literary and social history of England. There were rapid social changes; and this change is to be noticed in every sphere of life. Industrialization and urbanization brought in their rouse their our problems of congestions, crowding, house shortage, increase in corruption, depravity and crime fall in the standard of sexual morality and a rapidly increasing repulsiveness and ugliness.

According to W . R . Goodman, (1988:608):

The atmosphere has increasingly grown. More and more smoky and noisy, and city slums raise their ugly, heads on all sides. There has been a loosening in sex taboos and increase in sexual promiscuity, for public opinion does not operate as a check in a crowded city .:

Among these are the decay of moral values and religious faith, the predominance of a purely naturalistic view of life and man, the mechanization of both external existence and the individual personality, the change from command stability to urban complex society. As a result, anxiety and a sense of insecurity mixed with doubt about human dignity and freedom led the modern man to question the very value of scientific and technological advancement that was undertaken with the high hope and promise of peace and prosperity for all. The scientific progress of man seemed to clash with human and ethical values.

The modern mind felt baffled by the conflict between the scientific and ethical aspect of the same phenomenon. As this problem worsened with the advancement of modern science and technology, hopes to resolve the conflict looked very far away, and so the very temper and sensibility of man get terribly shaken so –much so that the poet unlike his Romantic and Victorian

predecessors. Such as Wordsworth, Shelley, Tennyson and Arnold felt delighted to dramatize the conflict instead of prescribing programmers to solve it.

The century brought in an age of moral perplexity and uncertainty. The rise of the scientific spirit and rationalism brought to a questioning of allowed social beliefs, conventions, and tradition. In matters of religion it gave rise to skepticism and a Gnosticism. No doubt there was much questioning, much criticism of traditional beliefs in the Victorian age also, but the Victorian writer was not critical of the very fundamental, of the very basis of his social and moral order, on the whole his attitude was one of acceptance . Dickens and Thackeray are both critical writers, but they criticize only a few evils inherent in their social system. Basically, they accept their way of life, and are proud of it. By the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century, we find writers like Shaw, Wells and Galsworthy criticizing the very basis of the existing social economic and moral system.

To quote R. A . Scott - James, (1930 : 90):

The 20th century has, for its characteristic, to put everything, in every sphere of life, to the questions and, secondly, in the light of this skepticism , to reform, to reconstruct – to accept the new age as new, and attempt to mould it by conscious, purposeful efforts.

The whole sale criticism of the existing order from different angles and points of view, often opposite and contradictory, has increased the perplexity of the common man. Baffled and at bay, he does not know what to accept and what to reject.

It is now commonly, recognized that a note of anxiety is the most common characteristic of the modern age, as self-complacency was that of

the Victorian age. The atmosphere is charged with a spirit of depression, gloom, frustration and foreboding. Various reasons are assigned for the tragic pessimism of the age. It is pointed out that it results from social crises as economic depression, unemployment political upheavals, rapid increase of population, over-crowding, shortage of the necessities of life, sexual inhibitions and frustrations and recurrence of destructive wars, posing the mood of frustration and disillusionment lie much deeper. There is confusion of intellectual matters, there is a breakdown of ideals and values, and absence of sustaining faith. There is skepticisms and doubt- apathy and indifference, towards spiritual problems. Man needs a sustaining faith, but such a faith has vanished.

1.4 The literary Background :

The year 1890 be taken to be the turning point, for by this date most of the great Victorians were either dead or had practically ceased to create. Much that is traditional and Victorian still persists and will continue to influence 20th century poetry, but the new, revolutionary forces become more and more prominent, and it is clear that the future ties with them. Twentieth century poetry is a curious mixture of the traditional and experimental, of the old and the new. It is complex and many sided.

According to Ronald Bush, (1991:5):

*If modern literature existed with a fixed tradition ,
then it would be possible to judge it by standard of
technique and sensibility derived from that tradition. But
modern writers are governed by no traditional rules
accepted by themselves and their critics. What is meant
even by 'tradition' is highly disputable, because the*

strength of a tradition in the arts has certain relation to its claims to present a picture of contemporary life.

Modern poetry is a poetry of revolt traditional and as such there is much in it that is experimental, ephemeral, and puerile. The new poetry is a poetry revolt, resulting largely from the impact of science. This revolt is to be seen both in the form and content of poetry. Increasingly, the poet turns away from the decadent romantic tradition; a tradition which still persists in Georgian poetry. This revolt is best exemplified in the poetry of T. S. Eliot.

To quote R. A. Scot – James, (1930 : 105):

It is to use the word "tradition" equivocally to say that the Eliot of their severe intellectual outlook, a professed classicist, an uncompromising upholder of tradition, was also the man who led the attack on the traditional poetry, appearing as the foremost innovator of our time. For Eliot does not admit that this so-called traditional poetry is within the tradition in its sense.

The squalor and dinginess of an industrial civilization are reflected everywhere in the works of poets, like T.S. Eliot. After the great war poems appear in an ever increasing number on the vocabulary of the modern poet reflect the influence of science and scientific inventions. Realism in subject matter has led the modern poet to reject the highly ornate and artificial poetic style of the romantics in favor of a language which resembles closely the language of everyday life. Modern poetry is characterized by the use of colloquial diction, speech rhythms and prosaic words. This realism in diction and versification and in subject matter is a marked feature of the poetry of T.S. Eliot.

According to A.W. Goodman, (1988:206):

The same is true of Eliot's use of rhythm in which he reveals a full awareness of what he has called the reader's " auditory imagination" . He has also been full aware of the necessity for experiment in form for the creation of new form for a new content. He has never been to unwise as to avoid the rhythmical form of the past: instead he has adopted them, used them where they were necessary, and left himself free to try out whatever modification of conventions were made, necessary by his theme. Both in technique and in theme Eliot has exercised a powerful influence on the younger poets of the present age.

The new poetry is realistic and the poets consciousness of the grim realities of life has shattered all illusions and Romanic dreams. – The tragedy of every day life has induced in the poet a mood of disillusionment – and so the poetry today is bitter and pessimistic. As Scott James, (1930 : 19) points out :

Something of the restless spirit which animates so much modern verse can be traced back to the years immediately preceding the Great War, when several poets seemed prophetically conscious as it were, of the imminent economic and cultural upheaval. The early experimental poems of some of the characteristically "modern" poets, such as James Joyce the Sitwells, and T.S. Eliot, were filtering in to prints before, 1914. During the war poetry, and all the ideals for which poetry had

*ever stood, became swamped in the bitterness of
disillusion*

The great war was a nerve shattering experiences, man lost faith in accepted values and as a consequence this note of bitterness is even more pronounced after the war. *The Waste Land* reflects the tragic gloom and despair of the post War World .

To quote Goodman, (1988:614):

The Waste Land is an extremely moving, but extremely depressing poem. In the most skilful manners Eliot introduces various parallels with the great literature of the past, and places them next to lines describing the barrenness of England – The Waste Land – as it appears today. His much discussed poetry made a tremendous impact on the post war generation and is considered one of the general aim is clear.

Besides the influence of science, religion and mysticism, many other influences are at work on the modern poet. There has been a revival of interest in the poetry of Donne and the other Metaphysical poets of the 17th century. Thus as Goodman, (1988:601) points out:

Many young poets of today are studying with renewed delight the closely packet texture of 17th century Metaphysical verse, and the influence of Donne and other metaphysical has been in many ways.

The modern poet is constantly experiencing with new verse forms and poetic – techniques. The use of slang and colloquialism has become common the language and rhythm of poetry approximate more and more to those of common speech, the bonds of meter have loosened, and the use of "verse –

libre" has become increasingly common. No rules of rhyme or metre are followed, stresses vary according to emotion and verse rhythm is replaced by sense – rhythm . Symbols, often purely personal, are used in abundance to express pure sensation and vision and the result is increased vagueness and obscurity of such poets as years and T. S Eliot.

Chapter Two

T.S. ELIOT : Formative Influence

T.S.Eliot has been seen as the most influential poet of the twentieth century, and his poem *The Waste Land* (1922) one of its most influential poems. For many years. Eliot was deemed to have rescued poetry from banality, sentimentality and artificiality, and brought, it into the twentieth century. There are now the occasional sounds of pick-axes chipping away at Eliot's throne from those who wonder if Eliot's values were entirely healthy for poetry in the twentieth century.

2.1 Parental Influences :

Eliot was greatly influenced by his parents and his grandfather. He inherited his religious and academic interests from him. Eliot's grandfather was a Unitarian, Clergy, and who founded the Unitarian church and the Washington University at St. Louis. His mother was a writer of caliber, much interested in technical innovations, and this must have conditioned the poet's own technical interests.

According to H.L.Sharma, (1975:7):

Eliot also expresses his sense of gratitude for having been born in St.Louis, in fact, I think he stated . I was fortunate to have been born here, rather than in Boston, or New York or London.

2.2 His Poetic Creed:

In the Music of Poetry, (1942:90) Eliot has underscored the essential unity of his critical and creative writings which we should do well to keep constantly in mind in the present section.

The critical writings of poets owe a great deal of their interest to the fact that at the back of the poet's mind, if not as his ostensible purpose, he is always trying to defend the kind of the poetry he is writing or to formulate the kind he wants to write. Especially when he is young, and actively engaged in battling for the kind of poetry he practices; he sees the poetry of the past in relation to his own.

It is, therefore, not unreasonable to elaborate his poetic credo and poetic technique, his artistic aims and ideals with the help of suitable citations from his own literary criticism. We shall start with his famous declaration, in 1928, that he was a classicist in literature, a royalist in politics and an Anglo Catholicism religion. His classicism, in the first place, was a reaction against Romantic subjectivism and emotional excess, in the direction of impersonality, objectivity and the universality of the artistic emotion. He is naturally over emphatic and even dogmatic in his statements on this point. In "*Tradition and The Individual Talent*", he asserts positively that poetry 'is not a turning loose of emotion but an escape from emotion, not an expression of personality but an escape from personality' (1980:13) – a point to which he returns again and again. In great poetry there is always a distinction between the man who suffers and the mind which creates. Even Shakespeare, the soul of impersonality and negative capability, was constantly struggling to transmute his personal agonies into the stuff of universal art. The advance of the poet in artistic maturity is always to be measured by the degree of his success to generalize and depersonalize his personal emotions and experiences which are generally his starting point :

The abstract conception of private experience at its greatest intensity, becoming universal which we call poetry, may be affirmed in verse. (Ibid, 94)

One way of achieving this release from personal bias and private emotions is the adoption of a dramatic technique of expression, described in his famous phrase 'objective correlative' – a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion. Artistic creation, which is an attempt to organize the chaotic feelings and imaged into a pattern, is, in itself, an effective way of mastering, controlling and depersonalizing the 'squads of personal emotions'; Impersonality is achieved, further, through the individual artist's allegiance to some authority outside himself, which Eliot regarded as the hall – mark of the 'classic', This external authority, in his early writings, is literary and cultural which takes the whole of Europe as a single unit and English literature itself as an integral part of the entire literature of the West from time of Homer to this day. The point is discussed at length in his oft-quoted essay, *Tradition and The Individual Talent*; which wisely reconciles the claims of convention with the necessity of individual freedom and new experiments. Allegiance to tradition rests upon historical consciousness, the awareness not only, 'of the pastness of the past, but also of its presence'; Eliot is at pains to emphasize the dynamic nature of tradition which is in a process of constant modification by the advent of literary masterpieces in the later epochs. A great work of today automatically alters the existing order in literature and, likewise, even the most original artist of the modern age may, in fact, be under the greatest obligation to the old masters of art and poetry. Thus the words of the dead are 'tongued with fire', but every fresh generation has to translate them into its own idiom . In his later writings, however, tradition becomes more and more precisely identified

with the Christian dogma and the Christian way of life where the individual is subordinated to the authority of the Church and is content to live as an active member of a community where internal conflicts and tensions are not detrimental to its unity and solidarity in essential matters.

Side by side with this development, Eliot manifestly shifts his ground from poetry as an autonomous discipline to poetry as criticism of society, from an insistent need to separate poetry and religion to the paramount necessity of uniting the two for mutual enrichment and the redemption of the contemporary society from the slough of secularism. It is not without significance that the spiritual ordering of experience in his *Four Quartets* clearly invokes the analogy of the artistic pattern in the verbal structure of poetry, and his *Poetry and Drama* the function of art is described in terms of spiritual and mystic repose :

It is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon ordinary reality, and thereby eliciting some perception of order in reality to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation. (1983:100)

Eliot has insisted upon the maturity of classicism as distinguished from the immaturity of the romantic art and temper. Part of this maturity lies in what he describes as 'unified sensibility'; the unity of thought and feeling, the capacity to present 'emotional equivalents of thought', which means that poetry is not a spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, 'but the art of making emotion capable of intellectual formulation. The mature art is an amalgamation of 'disparate experiences', of gravity with levity, of the sordid with the sublime; here intellect is at the tip of the senses and senses are the channels of thoughts. Poetry is not inspiration but organization and the poetic mind is the creative crucible where thoughts, sensations, images and

experiences are constantly forming new wholes. One recalls a striking statement in his essay, *The Metaphysical Poets* (Selected Essays, p.35):

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experiences; 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 type writer or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always making new whole.

The unified sensibility also implies the need of combining the creative and the critical operations of the mind. Eliot is at pains to stress the supreme necessity for the poet to follow the ideal of Horace, to write in a heat and correct at leisure, or the practice of Virgil who brought forth his verses like the young ones of a she-wolf (uncouth and misshapen at birth) and licked them into shape later on:

The larger part of the Labor of an author is critical : the Labor of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing (Ibid, p. 3).

2.3 French symbolists :

The continental literature which Eliot proposed to adopt as the instrument of this regeneration and rejuvenation was the French literature of the late 19th century which was dominated by the symbolists. He lighted upon Arthur Symons's book, *The Symbolist Movement in Literature* (1899) which introduced him to poetry of Jean Lafarge. It also opened his eyes to anew poetry and new technique which seemed to answer the needs of the young intellectual, preparing for his poetic venture. At a later date he frankly

acknowledged his debt to several figures of the movement , Baudelaire , Carbiere and Lafarge :

To quote Eliot (1951 :9):

From Baudelaire I learnt the poetical possibilities of more sordid aspects of the modern metropolis, of the possibility of fusion between the sordidly realistic and the phantasmagoric, the possibility of juxtaposition of the matter-of-fact and the fantastic and that the source of new poetry might be found in what had been regarded as the impossible, the sterile, the intractable, unpoetic .

Lafarge attracted him by similar qualities, because he also, like Carbiere before him, had tried to get rid of all worn-out poetic words, to forge language to express new feelings of urban civilization and work out a sort of poetic shorthand, to register the working of a mind simultaneously possessed of diverse and conflicting feelings. His art combined great freedom and flexibility of versification with precise and vivid images drawn from sources grand as well as prosaic. The symbolic technique in general, may be briefly characterized in the words of Wilson, as a medley of images, deliberately mixed metaphors, the combination of the grand and the prosaic manners, the bold amalgamation of the material with the spiritual.

The standard quality which drew Eliot towards the French symbolist was their utmost condensation of form. All in-essential are eliminated and comprehensiveness and vastness is gained through extreme condensation and compression. A great deal of experience is packed into a little space. Connecting links are left out, and in this way poetry approximates more closely to the actual working of the brain, I.A. Richard's phrase, " music of

idea" applied to *The Waste Land*, suggests Eliot's particular affinity with Laforgue.

According to Matthiessen (1947:79) :

Prufrock in the movement of its verse, its repetition and echoes, and even in its choice of theme, seems of all Eliot's poems to have been written most immediately under Lafarge's stimulus. Wetly surprised based on sudden contrasts as in the line "I have measured out my life with coffee spoons," come with the effect of an electric shock, and the futility of Prufrock's existence is painted through a single ironic picture.

Through Lafarge, Eliot was led to other and earlier French symbolists, like Charles Baudelaire. While Lafarge influenced Eliot's style and technique, his spirit was influenced profoundly by Baudelaire.

Baudelaire felt with special and unique intensity the torturing impact of the great modern city upon the individuals. He could realize, and so suffer intensely, that beneath all the slogans of his age scientific-programs, humanitarian movements, there lies the essential sickness and agony of the human heart and soul. This agonizing sickness has been a fact in every age and country, and this is conveyed by Eliot through his picture of the "unreal city" in *The Waste Land*. In this famous passage, Eliot has presented, very much like Baudelaire the intolerable burden of modern city life its lack of purpose and direction, its lack of beliefs and values resulting in it "*heap of broken images*", (*The Waste Land*, L.22)* reflecting the breakdown of values in the post War World.

To quote Traversi (1976 : 19) :

"The heap of broken images" represents in any case, only one of the two pillars of the construction upon which The Waste Land rests. Against them the poet aims to set an awareness of what is left, still available to us, of the continuity of significant tradition. Here we must be more than usually careful not to simplify. Its not - as many critics of his work have asserted - that Eliot is setting a nostalgically conceived past against a sordid present, or urging the rejection of what is actually before us in the name of an imaginary, or at any rate in accessible, past perfection.

The influence of the French symbolists mingles and fuses in the poetry of Eliot with that of the English Metaphysical poets and the Jacobean dramatists

2.4 Jacobean Dramatists:

This interest in the French symbolists must have confirmed Eliot's preference for the English Metaphysical poets, especially Donne and Marvell, and the Jacobean dramatists who lived in a world of chaos and anxiety similar to our own, standing neck-deep amid the wrecks of the old orderly universe gone to pieces under the impact of new ideas and outlook of life, striving as best they could to 'shore the fragments against their ruin' and contrive some order, however momentary and precarious, out of the "heap of broken images" (W.L.L,22). They also had reacted against the stereotyped diction, imagery and sentiments of the Sonneteers and the elaborate opulence and highly stylized manner of Spenser, to cultivate a familiar and colloquial style, a complex and flexible rhythm and an intricate and all-inclusive texture of poetry, descending to materials grossly commonplace, grotesque and non-

poetical and soaring up in to the realms of the sublime and spiritually noble and thrilling :

"What Donne strove to devise was a medium of expression," says Eliot, " that would correspond to the felt intimacy of his existence, that would suggest sudden contrasts, by harsh dissonance as well as by harmonies, the actual sensation of life as he himself had experienced.....The conversational tone, the vocabulary at once colloquial and surprisingly strange, rapid association of ideas, irregular verse and difficult sentence-structure as a part of fidelity to thought and feeling, the flash of wit resulting from the shock of contrast (Eliot , 1951 : 50).

There is conspicuous similarity between the age of Donne , and the modern age, and this accounts for the revival of interest in the Metaphysical poets after a neglect of two centuries . Donne and the Jacobean dramatists were actually conscious of the corruption and decay of their age, and so is Eliot. Donne tried to revitalize the English tongue by bringing it into touch with the language of everyday use, Eliot seeks to impart energy and virility to it by viewing English literature as part of the European literary tradition. Both are great innovators, reformers and critics.

Another peculiarity of Donne, which fascinated Eliot, was his ability, "to convey the whole experience". He could convey the genuine whole of tangled feeling, the extraordinary range of feeling from the highest to the most serious, from the spiritual to the most. Sensual, that can be experienced in any single moment. In other words, Eliot found in Donne a unified sensibility, instead of a dissociation of sensibility, he could feel a thought, there was, a

direct sensuous apprehension of thought or a recreation of thought in to feeling. Such and interweaving of thought and emotion is a sign of maturity and wisdom, and Donne, Chapman, Webster, and others in the 17th century had it and hence Eliot's admiration for them. All these poets and dramatists Donne, Marvel, Crashow, Vaughan, and Webster- had a firm grasp over human experience, an almost religious comprehension of the reality of life. At every step in Eliot's poetry, is found evidence of the impact of the Metaphysical tradition . *Gerontion* and *The Wasteland* reveal to the fullest extent Eliot's indebtedness to the Metaphysical and Jacobean tradition .

To quote Eliot (1951:289) ...

It appears likely", he observes in the context of the true bearing of the Metaphysical manner upon the contemporary poetic technique, "the poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive more indirect, doing violence to the syntax, in order to force, to dislocate, if necessary, language into his meaning...

2.5 Influence of Dante

No account of the formative influences on Eliot can be complete without a consideration of all-pervasive and most profound influence of Dante, the poet of *The Divine Comedy*. Eliot read Dante around the year 1911 with the help of a prose translation . Eliot's indebtedness to Dante, and the extent of his feeling for him, is reflected in his having called him, "the most universal

poet in a modern language". Further, Eliot admired his precision of diction, his clear visual, images and his great economy in the use of words.

According to Vikramaditya (1965 :16):

Eliot had admitted, what his poetry fully confirms, that Dante has remained throughout the most significant single influence on his poetry. The grand representative of medieval Catholicism, at once most personal and most traditional, narrowly dogmatic and essentially European, the explorer of Inferno who, at last, climbed to Paradise through suffering and contrition, with a manner highly economical, precise and pictorial ... Dante was best fitted to strike many and most intimate chords in the heart of Eliot who was launching upon a similar but more difficult poetic mission in an age given wholly and unreservedly to secular concerns...

It is, indeed, impossible to enumerate all the influences which were operative on a mind at once widely erudite and profoundly philosophical; yet, in passing, we may refer to his keen interest in Greek tragedy and mythology, evident in his plays and many of his poems, and, among his contemporary writers, single out Joyce and American Henry James and Ezra Pound for special mention. His favorite modern philosopher was Bradley, on whose *Appearance and Reality* practically charts out his mental progress from early cynicism to later mysticism.

To quote Eliot ,(1942 :204) :

For Bradley, I take it, an object is a common intention of several souls, cut out from immediate experience. The genesis of the common world can only

be described by admitted fictions ... On the one hand our experience are similar because they are of the same objects, and on the other hand the objects are only 'intellectual constructions' out of varied and quite independent experiences. So on one hand, my experience is in principle essentially public...And, on the other, everything, the whole world is private to myself. Internal and external are thus not adjectives applied to different contents within the same world; they are different points of view.

2.6 Objective Correlative :

By his nature as a thinking and feeling being, a centre of consciousness, Eliot is moved to structure reality, to see it in relation to certain assumptions of a normal nature. For the writers of the past, normally involved as they were in a common tradition, these assumptions amount – as we have suggested – to a world picture which, provided them with a framework on which the poet could build; it served for what Eliot, using a phrase which has achieved perhaps more notoriety than he can have foreseen, called an 'objective correlative' for his own emotions.

To quote Eliot (1983:78):

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

This 'objective correlative' is, briefly, the unifying principle which every artist requires if he is to impose form, shape, on the apparent chaos of his initial experience: and Eliot would have agreed with nearly all the great writers of the past that this is what the artist is called upon to do. His way of doing it is conditioned by the kind of experience which his age offers him, and which Eliot saw as being marked in the twentieth century by certain special characteristics:

When a poet's mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experiences; the ordinary man's experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love,.... These experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the type-writer or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes (Ibid ,p.273) .

The early Eliot differed from most of his contemporaries in this clear perception of the facts and in his readiness to accept the consequences. He was a modern poet precisely in being unable to derive the structuring principle, the 'correlative' which , like al poets, he needed from assumptions and ideas that he could share with his society and assume, for the purpose at least of writing his poems, to be true. The most he could do, as he came to see increasingly clearly in the course of his efforts to transcend the merely fragmentary or episodic, was to set a deliberately chosen framework side by side with broken, discontinuous experience. He did this, not assuming 'truth' or 'objective' validity of any kind as existing in the framework, but in readiness to wait to see whether, in the process of working out the original creative impulse, it would be found to fit and whether the sense of some

unifying principle would emerge. It must be stressed that there was , for Eliot as for his readers, no short cut to success in this endeavor. The reader, like the poet, could only tell if the poem constituted a unity, or had achieved form, at the end of the creative effort , after poem itself had been experienced stage by stage and in its totality .

It is time now to stop this cataloguing of influences which can never exhaust the innumerable constituents of a mind widely informative and extraordinarily receptive of impressions and experiences, observations of life and contemplations of literature, which were constantly blending together to form new wholes

Chapter Three

The Waste Land : Form and Content

T.S Eliot's first long philosophical poem, can now be read simply as it was written, as a poem of radical doubt and negation, urging that every human desire be stilled except the desire for self- surrender, for restraint, and for peace. It represents the culmination of Eliot's skill in the handling of traditional meters.

The technique of *The Waste Land* reflects its author's lively awareness of some of the major movements in the intellectual, philosophical and scientific spheres of the modern world, which were already shaping the art and literature of the age in England as well as on the continent.

American poetry since 1900, Mr. Louis Untermeyer has been pleased to remark about the nature of *The Waste Land* as follows :

It is doubtful whether The Waste Land is anything but a set of separate poems, a piece of literary carpentry, scholarly joiner's work, the flotsam and jetsam of desiccated culture ... a pompous parade of erudition . (Lexis Freed ,1979 : 5).

The most extended use of implication has been made in *The Waste Land*. The past is juxtaposed with the present, the poet does not make any comment or directly state the implication of thus bringing together the past and the present. The significance is implicit, and the readers have to work it out for themselves. According to Robert B. Kaplan :(1970: 29)

Eliot's technique in The Waste Land consists of juxtaposition of extreme contemporaneousness with mysticism and religious symbolism derived from the

past. The poem abounds with illustrations of the juxtaposing of past and present on many levels. The structure of the poem is built out of the contrast in time of which the most obvious and ironically ... Eliot's conception of the past as an active part of the present.

At the same time the contrast between the past and the present is quite glaring and has been constantly emphasized in the poem. Man has never been a perfect creature and every age of human history has been guilty of those follies and crimes which are disfiguring the life of the race in the present age. Yet in the days gone by there was a fairly wide-spread faith in a set of moral and religious values which constituted the permanent standard for measuring the dignity and degradation of society. This faith gave a depth and sanctity to every object of nature and every activity of man, lending to human existence it self a double layer of meaning, literal as well as spiritual, thus, spring and winter, fire and water, sowing and reaping, washing, bathing and drowning, the union of men and women, the drought and rainfall, etc. were given a spiritual depth below their apparent surface. This naturally brought into being a number of rituals and ceremonies connected with the events of social and individual life where this belief was actually enacted .

In verbal irony there is opposition between the language used and the meaning intended. in the opening of "The game of chess",the voluptuous luxuriance of a society lady's room has been described with an extravagance suggestive of Cleopatra's splendor and majesty.

Ironic contrast are frequent in *The Waste Land* . The behavior of the typist is juxtaposed with the behavior of the lady in the Goldsmith's song in the *Vicar of Wade field* and the contrast is ironical. A kind of irony, dignity is

imparted to the entire episode of the sordid encounter of the Youngman with the typist by the use of rhyme.

The distortion of values is brought out frequently by means of ironic contrasts. Thus Mrs. Porter washes her feet in "soda water"(W.L.L.200) not to purify her spirit, but to make her skin fairer to catch and befool more males :

*Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring,
On the moon shone bright on Mrs. porter
And on her daughter.
They wash their feet in soda water
(W.L.L.199-201)*

However, it may be pointed out here that Eliot's use of irony is not always so simple. To quote Cleanth Brooks,(1969-9):

*Eliot makes use of ironic contrast between the
glorious past and the sordid present – the crashing of :
But at my back from time to time I hear. The sound of
horns and motors, which shall bring Sweeney to Mrs.
Porter in the spring (W.L.L.196-198). The poet works in
terms of surface parallelisms which in reality make
ironical contrasts, and in terms of surface contrasts
which in reality constitute parallelisms :*

3.2 Diction and Versification

The researcher is now in a position to analyze more minutely and in greater details Eliot's handling of language and his mastery over words and skill in combining them in a significant and artistic organization. From his critical pronouncement, quoted close where, we can clearly understand. Eliot's emphasis upon the poet's power of renewing and enriching the

language and his deliberate aim to avoid the conventional romantic tendency towards diffusion and exuberance with a decided preference for the colorful poetical words which had resulted in a cleavage between the poetic diction and the language of prose and the living speech actually spoken by men. The aim was to bridge the gulf between poetry and prose and vitalize the language of poetry through a generous in fusion of the current, colloquial and apparently trite and unpoetical phraseology of the daily speech.

The diction in *The Waste Land* thus has three important elements:

- (a) The familiar words heightened and raised to the level of poetic intensity and suggestiveness , This element appears in the meditation of the protagonist, it dominates the opening and closing parts of the first section and practically the whole of the beautiful fourth movement and the major part of the final section .
- (b) The language of the common conversation scattered throughout the poem, where the diction is simple and unvarnished, yet the words and phrases conceal the art of fastidious selection.
- (c) Quotations and phrases from other writers. Eliot's use of borrowings is not decorative but it is functional and organic. The quotations and echoes are always pressed in the service of complexity and enrichment of the style. The words and phrases are not mechanically reproduced, but they are freely altered, modified and transformed, new-corned and stamped with new significance in the original context of the poem.
- (d) Eliot's use of language of all categories is marked by economy, precision and appropriateness. He would not use two epithets where only one can serve the purpose, but the one finally used will have the stamp of inevitability in the context, as well as a strong

aura of association and suggestiveness. We have noted the explosive force of the word "synthetic" in the description of Belladonna's luxury drawing – room and here note in passing other expressions of similar precision and wealth of association ... "stirring dull root", "dull canal", "lean solicitor", "dirty ears" etc. We may also include under this head his effective use of vivid concrete and pictorial words which would have delighted. T. E. Hume, the Imagist, the fairest sample of this aspect is provided by the opening song of the Thames daughters :

The river sweats

oil and tar

The barges drift

With the turning tide

Red sails

Wide.

(W.L.L 266-270)

In order to indicate that there is no barrier between time past and time present Eliot does great violence in his tenses. There are rapid shifts in tenses from the past to the present and vice versa. Often the two tenses are juxtaposed in the same line, as in the following :

*And still she cried, and stills the world
pursues.*

'Jug Jug' to dirty ears

And other withered stumps of time

Were told upon the walls ; starting forms.

(W.L.L.102-105)

According to Vikramaditya, (1965: 18) :

Great subtlety is shown by the poet in the handling of pronouns and the various tenses of a verb for effecting connections and combinations ... This is doing violence to the syntax in order to remove the barrier between the past and the present. Then, notice also the shift from singular to plural form of the personal pronoun:

*I have heard the key
Turn in the door once and turn once only
We think of the key, each in his prison
(W.L.L.412-415).*

3.3 Rhythm and Versification:

Eliot's versification in *The Waste Land*, as in other poems, is characterized by varied flexibility, mobility and extreme sensitiveness to the variations in emotional tone and intellectual tempo. the meter is always a part of the meaning and music enriches the sense through its powerful suggestive effect. Thus there is a running contrast between the slow, grave and majestic movements of the lines representing the meditation of Tiresias and the light colloquial and informal ease clearly reflected in the conversation of the waste-landers.

To quote Lexis Freed, (1979: 15)

Hence it is that I.A. Richards calls Eliot's poetry, "the music of ideas" There is a sudden shift from the serious to the light, thus emphasizing the flippancy and frivolity of modern life. In the very opening of the Burial of the Dead, the formal rhythm of Tiresias meditation

*are sharp contrast with light and colloquial rhythms of
the conversations of Marie with her male companion*

The very change in the rhythm in forceful reminder of transition from gravity to frivolity from serious to the flippant plane of life. After the moving rhythm of "April is the cruelest month" we come upon the jaunty rhythm of "summer surprised us" to feel at once the shocking intrusion of the superficialities of the rootless and soulless humanity. At the crucial points the sense of contrast is most effectively suggested by the sudden charge of rhythm.

Sudden change of rhythm is often used to convey a sense of contrast between the external show and the infernal reality. Thus the sense of the pomp and grandeur of the fashionable lady's life in "A Game of Chess". is conveyed through the use of grand, majestic slow-moving lines, which are in sharp contrast with the broken lines, consisting of nervous ejaculation of the lady, which soon follow. In this way, the sense of the transitoriness and emptiness of her life is conveyed, and it is contrasted with the outward pomp and splendor of her life.

Similarly, the slow – moving majestic rhythm descends to the ballad – like simplicity in the passage dealing with Mrs. Porter and her daughter, who wash their feet in soda-water, and the sense of ironic contrast is thus conveyed.

To quote Vikramaditya,(1965:183):

*The most emphatic illustration is provided by the
second movement where the external splendor and
glamour of the lady are magnificently conveyed by the
richness and grandeur of the verse movement, which,
however, clashes violently with the nervous and broken*

*ejaculations of the lady, and the clash vivifies the
brittleness of her splendor and the disorganization of
her inner life which that splendor can but ill conceal. In
a subtler way the same sense of contrast is rhythmically
conveyed in the passage which begins formally, but not
without ironical overtone*

But of my back from time to time I hear

The sound of horns and motors

Which shall bring .

(W.L.L.196-197)

Eliot's use of onomatopoeic lines is original and striking, are made to serve an important function in their particular contexts. Thus, the passionate longing for water with the poignant sense of its absence. The song of the hermit – thrush, closely echoing the fall of water " Drip, drop, drop, drop " etc. Similarly in same movement the trumpet notes of the crowing cock "Co co rico co co rico " – actually enforces the effect of the end of confusion and darkness and the approach of morn and the moment of deliverance the repeated "OOOO" echoes closely the bust of meaningless ejaculation, like the opening of soda – water bottle.

3.4 The Charge of Obscurity:

The Waste Land has been described by many critics as an obscure poem, bristling with contorted lines and unintelligible passages and symbols. The charge is fairly sweeping and embraces the bulk of the modernist poetry. Eliot himself has noted the fact and offered an explanation for it, thrusting the burden of responsibility upon the unpoetical age. To quote Eliot, (1951 : 100):

"The charge," he remarks, " has been brought against the more original literature of our time, that it has been written for a small and exclusive audience ... this is consequence not of individual aberrancy but of social disintegration in the literary aspect of critical decay. It arises from a lack of continuous communication of the artist with his friends and the fellow artists and the small number of keen amateurs of arts, with a larger public educated in the same way, of taste cultivated upon the life literature of the past, but ready to accept what is good in the present, when it is brought to their notice, and so with the world at large.

This true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough. The esoteric nature of the modernist literature arises generally from the technical complexity, verbal ingenuity and an allusiveness of style which tends to patronize out – to – the – way, obscure and specialized branch of learning.

The most obvious factors responsible for the obscurity and difficulty in *The Waste Land* is:

- (a) The rigorous compression has been practiced by the poet.
- (b) The poet has used the method of the interior or monologues which produce without any external aid or organization.
- (c) The use of novel techniques, like the ' mythical method" are in themselves as source of confusion for the readers.
- (d) The extreme allusiveness of Eliot's style is a source of difficulty.
- (e) The use of symbolism and the indirect or oblique way of expression is another source of difficulty in the poem.
- (f) Eliot's use of complication is another source of difficulty.

All these causes make, *The Waste Land*, a very difficult and complex poem, if not an obscure one. However, this difficulty vanishes once we understand the mythical technique used by the poet, its basic theme and its complex system of symbolism. The advice at I.A. Richard who called it "music of ideas" must also be remembered. The poem should be read as a whole, and its general sense and symbols must be allowed to sink deep into the mind. *The Waste Land* may require some study and pains taking, but a study of its the ultimate reward of consummate scholarship. The poem will then be discovered to contain a hard core of wisdom and good sense.

If the foregoing analysis is sound at least in its general direction it would appear that *The Waste Land* is something more than the poem of despair and disillusionment it was so commonly assumed to be when it first appeared. Eliot himself, indeed, made this clear in a published comment on the first reception of his work. To quote Eliot, (1942 : 344):

When I wrote a poem called. The Waste Land some of the more approving critics said that I had expressed "the disillusionment of a generation", which is nonsense. I may have expressed for them their own illusion of being disillusioned, but that did not form part of my intention.

It is, in fact, a poem which stands in a close relationship to both his earlier and his later verse, summing up the positions reached in the 1917 and 1920 volumes and anticipating – though not entering upon – the aim of the later work, which is the creation of poetry at once fully contemporary and genuinely "religious". It is important not to simplify in this matter, and more especially not to read the poem for what it is not, an explicit statement of belief. The gap between a modern secular experience, honestly accepted as the only starting point available to a poet who recognizes the obligation to

reflect his time as it is, and traditional religious forms is not of the kind that a true poet can bridge by mere assertions of belief. The attempt to do so can only lead to a kind of rhetoric and abstraction that is of its nature unpoetical and that has always been contrary to everything that Eliot admired in the literature of the past and sought to express in his own poems.

The true importance of *The Waste Land* lies precisely in the refusal to simplify, to produce a final statement of belief which was not adequately based on experiences as given in the course of the poem. In so far as the inspiration of the work includes Christian elements and this is clearly not so in the same sense as in *Ash Wednesday* or the *Four Quartets* : its 'Christianity' not only co-exists with other, and non-Christian aspects. Which are in no sense subjected to a religious 'message' or conclusion, but is seen to emerge from a development which is thoroughly and without prejudice contemporary. It is the sense of this scrupulous integrity in the conception and execution of *The Waste Land* which not infrequently seemed to fail Eliot in his later prose writing, But which he succeeded in affirming -and the fact stands greatly to his credit – in the best verse of his later years.

Chapter Four

Ash -Wednesday: Form and Content

4.1 Introduction

T.S. Eliot's *Ash Wednesday* series of poem, which was published in its final form in 1930. Offers perhaps the most ready approach to the later poetry. The Christian is best deflected in *Ash Wednesday*, a major poem in six parts, which appeared as separate poems from 1927–30, and in its present form as a single poem in 1930.

Ash Wednesday depicts the struggle of the human soul trying to work out its own salvation. As has been well said, *Ash Wednesday* occupies a transitional place among the works of Eliot. *The Waste Land* is his Inferno, *Ash Wednesday* his Purgatories and *The Four Quartets* his Paradiso. In the first poem we get glimpses of Hell, in the middle one the struggle of the poet for self-purification, and in the last one glimpses of paradise.

Ash Wednesday is Eliot's first poem at distinctively Christian inspiration. The title, it is hardly necessary to say, has penitential implications, though these are not necessarily such as to imply a 'personal' or biographical content.

The 'I' of these poems need not be taken to the poet speaking in his voice, though it is clear that, whatever he may be, his experience is related to that of the author. What we have is the poem as a self-sufficient and self-explaining creation, and in the case of Eliot it is more than usually inappropriate to seek to go beyond this to search for the 'man' personally revealing himself through the poem.

Though the poem is intensely personal, the poet has succeeded in imparting universality to the purely personal. As Duncan Jones, (1959:14), points out:

The "I" who speaks is not so much a personality as a will. And in keeping with this in personality, at its peaks and climaxes, the poetry passes into the anonymous language of the Church.

4.2 The Theme of Warning

The opening lines of Part {1} present the image of a man standing at a turning on a stair, or on a path going up-hill, and constantly looking down at the comforts and pleasures which has left behind. Symbolically it means that the poet is trying to work out his spiritual salvation, he is tempted by the pleasures of the world, and has to struggle hard to overcome the temptation. As T-S- Pearce ,(1973 : 10) says :

In the constant repetitive assertion. It is possible to feel already in the verse a striving to keep this position. It is as if the poet was working through the spiritual discipline, while he is constantly drive to "turn again". He is attracted to the world. While he tries to convince himself that his real experience of it has passed.

The first line: "*Because I do not hope to turn again*"(A.W.L.1) is a literal translation of the opening line of "Ballet", a poem by Guido Cavalcanti, and "*Desiring this man's gift and that man's scope*"(A.W.L.4)is a borrowing from a Sonnet of Shakespeare.

Now the theme of both these poems is introspection, solitariness and despair, and so the lines at once strike the key – note of the poem, that it is concerned with the penitential side of spiritual life, which begins with the process of self – examination and self – exploration.

What the poet is stating, accordingly, is not merely a personal impression, but what he has come to see as an inescapable law of life. It is

necessary to renounce, deliberately and consciously, in what amounts to an act of affirmed choice, the things that had once been regarded –neither wrongly nor unnaturally at the time – as source of 'hope': the very things which had formerly presented themselves as life, as glory, as imparting a sense of meaning and achievement to each man's involvement in the temporal process:

Because I do not hope to know again

The infirm glory of the positive hour

Because I do not think

Because I know I shall not know

The one veritable transitory power

Because I cannot drink

There, where trees flower, and spring flow,

for there is nothing again (A.W.L .10-16)

Now the poet 'knows' – the word carries a sense of affirmation, of conscious and deliberate choice, against the nostalgic implications of 'hope' – that he cannot, in his present situation, find satisfaction in what was once indeed a "veritable' but 'transitory power' : 'veritable' because its former attraction cannot be denied, because it lives still, if only in the memory, but evidently 'transitory', as being no more relevant to the needs of the present time.

It is not that the past moments at illuminations were in any way worthless or illusory in themselves . On the contrary, they may have been– were – intensely moving, even genuinely transforming; but it is part of the nature of such things – and of our nature – that the moment of illumination which continues to live only in the memory cannot serve as a source of life in what is at every moment an essentially new situation. A renunciation, accordingly,

needs to be made, at the appropriate moment in time and in full consciousness, and so:

I renounce the blessed face

And renounce the voice

Because I cannot hope to turn again

Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something

Upon which to rejoice (A.W.L.21-25)

The poet finds consolation in the fact that the pleasures of this world are momentary, transitory and fleeting . He rejoices that "*things are as they are*" (A.W.L.20), and decides to renounce the "*blessed face*" and "*the voice*" for instance, carnal love, love of woman. The face is 'blessed' because it is that face of the beloved, and the 'voice' is her voice tempting the poet. He will not regret the loss of his capacity for enjoyments of the world, rather he will rejoice in building up his spiritual life. He would try to sit to cultivate detachment – to care and not to care – To wait on God, and turn to prayer and devotion.

To quote Duncan Jones, (1959: 13)

The language of the last two lines is no longer the poet's own: the "I" is lost in the voice of the Church invoking Mary. The repetition of, "now and at the hour of our death" (A .W.L.47), stresses the relation of the present to eternity. Life is felt as, the time of tension between a birth and dying in the first part as well as in the sixth.

4.3 Symbolism

The poet's grosser self is dismembered and dissolved, and the agents of his purification are also white.They are three white leopards under a Juniper

tree. They remind us the spotted leopards in Dante. But Dante's leopards are sinister beasts, while the three leopards here are agent of good

According to Traversi (1976: 64)

The three white leopards who devour the human remains under the tree in the desert also have their literary connection. They recall the beasts, which were also three, who met Dante at the outset of his journey in the "dark forest" in the middle point, which was also a turning – point, of his life. There is little sense in these beasts ...

F.O.Matthiessen (1947) rejects the suggestion that these beasts symbolize, the World, the Flesh and the Devil. Duncan Jones seems nears the truth when he regards them as symbols, "*of goodness of the lady*" (A.W.L.47), "*her loveliness*" (A.W.L.48), and the fact that, "*she honors the virgin in meditation*"(A.W.L.49).

The Part II of the poem describes a vision, and the division may have helped the poet in working out his salvation, as the three dreams of Dante helped him to reach the entrance of the Purgatorio. The three stairs may correspond to the three stages of Dante's Purgatorial Mount, or it is possible that the recollection of these got mixed up in the poet's mind with the three steps into Purgatorio which Dante has to climb after his vision. However it may be, as the poet climbs the stairs, he looks down again and again. At the first turning of the second stairs, he sees below a twisted shape, struggling with, "*the devil of the stai*(A.W.L.54), with "*the deceitful face of hope and despair*" (A.W.L.55).

4.4 Stress on Silence:

The next section, Part V, is the richest musically, but a bit confusing, for in it, sometimes it is the poet who speaks, and sometimes it is the voice of Jesus Christ which is heard speaking to his followers. To quote Duncan Jones(1959: 91):

Throughout the poem there is stress on silence as a precondition for spiritual awareness. The noise of the world is contrasted with the silence of God and the Lady. Everywhere, in the desert and on the sea, there is noise, and the people walking in spiritual darkness, involved in the whirl of world activity, refuse to listen to the voice of God, and avoid the blessed face of the Lady.

The fourth poem in the sequence, opening on the pronoun 'who' takes up and develops the theme of the Lady, a Beatrice – like figure, never forgotten from the past. The figure is now being developed in accordance with the poet's present, sublimating purpose. To be noted is the stress laid, throughout the poem, on the word 'between' :

*Who walked between
The various ranks of varied green
Here are the years that walk between, bearing
Away the fiddles and the flutes...
The silent sister veiled in white and blue
Between the yews. (A.W.L.105-109)*

The lady who 'walks' in the garden full of flowers, violet, white, and blue, is the 'Lady of Silences'. The colors are symbolic– violet symbolizes penitence, white purity, and blue is the color of Mary, and of the celestial things in general. This nun-like figure once moved like ordinary beings – moved

among others as they moved– talking of trivial thing. In this way, she a acquired knowledge of 'eternal color' i.e. of suffering which is universal.

To quote Traversi, (1976 : 74):

... Memory, indeed, is of the essence of this intense, intangible experience, in Eliot as it had once been in Dante. What is remembered lives again and is in the process transformed by what has happened in the time between. Appropriately, therefore, the poet, as he considers his own condition, is moved to echo what were perhaps, for Eliot, the most consistently evocative lines in all poetry, those which convey Arnaut Daniel's prayer at the end of Canto XXVI of the Purgatorio : 'Sovegna Vos'. 'Be mindful': a prayer that, it should be remembered, is almost immediately followed in Dante's poem by the renewed vision of a transformed Beatrice, one of whose purposes is to lead the poet, after he has passed through the flames which separate him from her and from the Earthly Paradise, to reconsider the aberrations of his own past life as 'prelude to entry into a new state.

The reference to Arnaut Daniel's words, 'Sovegna Vos', 'be mindful of my pains', puts us in mind that the Lady has suffered, and it is through suffering and penance that she has acquired the power to redeem the world . It is in this way, that she can redeem the barrenness of the modern waste land. :

*Here are the years that walk between, Bearing ,
Away the fiddles and the flutes, restoring ,*

*One who moves in the time between Sleep and
waking, wearing
White light folded, sheathed about her, folded,
The new year's walk , restoring,
Through a bright cloud of tears, the years, restoring.
With a new verse the ancient rhyme .Redeem.
The time . Redeem .
The unreal vision in the higher dream .
While jeweled unicorns draw by the gilded hearse.
(A.W.L.107-116)*

The experience, it should be noted, the figure may be Beatrice or she may be Virgin Mary. Dante saw the glorified Beatrice in a divine pageant, and this vision provides the framework for the procession of years in which the poet sees the Lady moving. She rides a chariot drawn by 'jeweled unicorns' . Line is strongly reminiscent of Spenser. The years have taken away from her 'fiddles and flutes', i.e. she has been purified of all physical desires and transformed into something divine and holy. This is further emphasized by the fact that the poet views her sheathed in white, like Dante's Beatrice. And like Dante's Beatrice she, too, inspires the poet, and his poetic power is rejuvenated 'Redeem the time', suggests the restorative and regenerative power of the lady.

It is this very lady 'the silent sister veiled in white and blue', who in the next passage is said to walk behind the garden god, between the yew trees. The garden god is 'the broad – backed figure' of part III, but now his flute is breathless, i.e. he has lost his power to enchant and distract. The poet has acquired self-control, self-discipline. He has risen above the pleasures of the senses which no longer distract his attention. It is the silence of the lady

which is all powerful, and when she gives the 'sign', perhaps the sign of the cross, the garden springs to fresh life, and the birds sings ,Redeem the time, redeem the dream'.

The vision ends with a line from the Prayer, Salve Regina, to the virgin as Queen, "And after this our exile". The vision departs, but the fact that the poet has had the higher, 'vision' makes him feel an exile in this world. Henceforth, the world is a waste land for him, a barren desert, a place of exile where he must stay, till death takes him to his real home in the other world of the vision, where the Lady is .

Ash Wednesday is a very complex and obscure poem with layers and layers of meaning within it, and this account of it does not more than introduce its barest structure.

Conclusion

T. S. Eliot's poetry is difficult, and to understand it, it is necessary to be able to follow his references to somewhat obscure corners of literature in several languages. In consequence his poetry appeals only to the bookish, and his public is strictly limited. He is a master of rhythm, and some of his verse is beautifully musical, even when the meaning eludes us. As a critic Eliot is an austere upholder of discipline his criticism has been almost as influential as his poetry. His admirers have as almost invariably happens, imitated and be lauded his less an admirable qualities.

Eliot was a great meterist and experimenter in verse forms. *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday* represent the culmination of Eliot's skill in the handling of traditional meters. Their basic measures are the heroic line which no doubt has been handled in every possible way. In the wasteland, Eliot has used a complex symbolic technique with the symbolism running from the beginning to the end of the poem to bring out the decay and desolation of contemporary civilization.

The Waste Land is not a mere diagnosis of distemper, or a mere expression of contemporary disillusion. It also conveys a message. It also suggests a reemploy, and holds out a hope of spiritual salvation. What *Ash Wednesday* do convey very notably in a sense of the continuity which is so marked a feature of all Eliot's important poetry. Implicit in the sequence is the intention of taking up again the theme of death, already explored in the wasteland, with a view to making of it the point of departure for something which, in the earlier poem, is at best only dimly foreshadowed a process of growth into acceptance, reflecting what could be called – again in Avery special sense – a conversion.

The main theme is an acceptance of conversion as a necessary and irretrievable act of decision following from man's distinctive privilege, and obligation, of choice: an act brings with it dangers and difficulties of its own, which may even turn out to be a false path or a deception, but the necessity of which needs to be acknowledged, in a spirit of recognized risk, if life is to have meaning at all.

In *The Waste Land* and *Ash Wednesday* Eliot shows that he is a great craftsman with words. His use of language is characterized by economy, precision, variety and appropriateness. The world not use two epithets when only once can serve his purpose. His use of complete, vivid and pictorial words, the handling of pronouns, adjectives and various tense of a verb the conversational tone are some of the distinctive features of his Poetic diction.

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