'BETWEEN UN-BEING AND BEING':
VISION AND METHOD IN SELECTED POEMS OF
JOHN DONNE AND T. S. ELIOT

by

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Abstract

Common to certain poems of John Donne and T. S. Eliot is the expression of a desire for a unity of experience which will involve a reconciliation of the apparently contradictory demands of flesh and spirit. In an early poem, Eliot aligns himself with the poetic sensibility he perceives in Donne, a spiritual suffering expressed in sensory terms in the image of "the anguish of the marrow". The poetry of each poet develops the analysis of thought and feeling involved in the search for unifying, transcendent experience: in the poems of Donne dealing with profane and divine love, the relationships between man and woman, and man and God, are explored with wit and dramatic fervour; in the dramatic dialogues of the early poems of Eliot, the poetic persona seeks spiritual purpose in a world apparently devoid of belief and meaning. Comparison of poetic vision and method in Donne and Eliot is most valid in examination of the two long poems, Donne's Anniversaries and Eliot's Four Quartets. In these poems, an anatomization of the mutable, spiritually dead world is contrasted with the progress of the poet's own soul toward an understanding of divine love; divine love is seen to demand imitation of the suffering incarnate principle of virtue, symbolized by Donne as the maiden Elizabeth Drury, and by Eliot as the Incarnation of God. Similarity of technique in each poem consists in the use of a dialectical method of developing themes and definitions of "death", "birth", "wisdom", "love" and "joy". The imagery used by both poets involves paradoxes basic to Christian theodicy:
death-as-life, darkness-as-light, ignorance-as-wisdom, suffering-as-love. The expression of his belief is seen by each poet as a holy task, in which the drawing of all experience into a new unity is imitative of the divine unifying order.
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: "TWO WORLDS MEET IN MAN"

Donne, I suppose, was such another
Who found no substitute for sense,
To seize and clutch and penetrate;
Expert beyond experience,

He knew the anguish of the marrow
The ague of the skeleton;
No contact possible to flesh
Allayed the fever of the bone.¹

One of the most perceptive statements on the metaphysical sensibility of John Donne is contained in these two stanzas of an early poem by T. S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality". Eliot remarks, here, Donne's perception of the correspondence between apparent contradictions in the "two worlds" of man, and, fittingly, he expresses it in the form of paradox: there is a knowledge beyond the knowledge to be obtained by the senses, and the senses are the only medium available for the pursuit. A fusion of flesh and spirit exists in "That subtile knot which makes us man",² which is a source alternatively of pleasure and torture. Appropriately, spiritual suffering is expressed in sensory terms, "the anguish of the marrow", "the ague of the skeleton", "the fever of the bone".

In the final stanza of this poem, Eliot aligns himself with those who pursue a painful metaphysical speculation beyond libidinous "pneumatic bliss" to the "skull beneath the skin":

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¹ From T. S. Eliot, "Whispers of Immortality.
² From T. S. Eliot, "Poems".
But our lot crawls between dry ribs
To keep our metaphysics warm.

Like Donne, Eliot chooses to probe reality; but this choice alone does not, of course, make these poets unique, and it is therefore not the only basis for comparing them. The quest of the holy grail of reality has been made by many poets; what provides a basis for comparison of Donne and Eliot is the techniques they employ in transmuting their perceptions and feelings into art. Critical emphasis on these techniques is insisted upon by Eliot, as critic; the proper aesthetic consists, he says, in "a recognition of the truth that not our feelings but the pattern which we make of our feelings is the center of value."³

My purpose, then, is to examine some of the methods by which these poets create, or "counterfeit Creation",⁴ to use one of Donne's rare critical terms. In the sense that human activity often parodies the divine, their concern is to make words flesh, just as it was necessary for the divine principle to be embodied in a pattern for living and dying. In the poetry of each, we can follow a developing awareness of the meaning of divine love embodied in the Incarnation, an awareness which is parallel to the developing ability to express it in the poetry. The aim of each poet is to mold this awareness into a pattern, a "well-wrought urn". Discussion of the method of each poet, the "pattern" of structure and language, will reveal their common vision.

The "anguish of the marrow" which Eliot perceived in Donne and felt himself to share is derived from the sceptical frame of mind which is a prelude to faith. In both poets, there is a con-
scious cultivation of the sceptic impulse which consists in

... a sense of the inadequacy of human knowledge, a
consequent sensitivity to dualisms and contradictions,
a concern with paradox as expressing the complexity of
truth, a belief in the wholesome effect of doubt, and
a conviction that where knowledge falters a right life
can supply the only legitimate confidence known to man. 5

Describing the circuitous route to truth which sceptical inquiry
takes, Donne exhorts readers to

... doubt wisely, in strange way
To stand inquiring right, is not to stray;
To sleepe, or runne wrong, is: on a huge hill,
Cragged, and steep, Truth stands, and hee that will
Reach her, about must, and about must goe ... 6

Similarly, Eliot observed in the scepticism of Montaigne and Pas-
cal the first requirement of belief:

... he /Montaigne/ succeeded in giving expression to
the scepticism of every human being. For every man who
thinks and lives by thought must have his own scepticism,
that which stops at the question, that which ends in
denial, or that which leads to faith and which is some-
how integrated into the faith which transcends it. And
Pascal, as the type of one kind of religious believer,
which is highly passionate and ardent, but passionate
only through a powerful and regulated intellect, is in
the first sections of his unfinished Apology for Christi-
anity facing unflinchingly the demon of doubt which is
inseparable from the spirit of belief. 7

A fundamental scepticism results in the analytical nature
of the work of both Donne and Eliot, although the analysis takes
a slightly different form in each. In Donne's poetry, the imagery
functions logically in a kind of anatomization of experience, for
a new focus on ideas and experience. Dame Helen Gardner finds
this a common feature of metaphysical wit:

In a metaphysical poem the conceits are instruments of
definition in an argument or instruments to persuade.
The poem has something to say which the conceit helps
forward. It can only do this if it is used with an appearance of logical rigour, the analogy being shown to hold by a process not unlike Euclid's superimposition of triangles.

In arguing the logical resemblances between lovers and compasses, the marriage bonds and a flea, a decapitated man and the dying world, Donne pushes beyond the received wisdom regarding relationships to discover a new simplicity in reality. Donne's wit is thus an imitation of "holy mirth", to use Eliot's phrase, a congruence of levity and seriousness, idea and feeling.

Eliot probes to "the skull beneath the skin" by means of a similar perception of correspondence, but in contrast to the logical procedure of argument by conceit in Donne's poetry, there is often in Eliot's poems a juxtaposition of images in which relationships are discovered by indirection. For example, in *The Waste Land*, the image of the neurotic woman in Section II, "A Game of Chess", is superimposed on that of toothless Lil in the public bar; the result is an impression of the sterile loveless relationships which cuts across all historical and social particulars.

The analytical nature of the minds of Donne and Eliot produces in the poetry a heightened self-consciousness. This self-awareness results, paradoxically, in increased objectivity: the poet who observes is discriminated from the poet who experiences. Thus, in Donne's poetry, especially in the love poetry, there is a kind of ironic detachment, a self-mocking attitude. This is a feature emulated by Eliot:
... the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its materials.\textsuperscript{11}

The suffering which is held up for examination may not be diminished; in fact, it may be relived vicariously in the act of describing it,\textsuperscript{12} but the act of examining it is a measure of the poet's ability to control and order the chaos he perceives:

\begin{quote}
I thought, if I could draw my paines,  
Through Rime's vexation, I should them allay,  
Griefe brought to numbers cannot be so fierce,  
For, he tames it, that fetters it in verse.  
(Donne, "The triple Foole")
\end{quote}

Objectivity in their poetry is most often achieved by the creation of a dramatic setting for the experience to be presented and analyzed. Eliot has created an entire cast of characters, which one assumes to be various dimensions of a single poetic persona. In this tableau is J. Alfred Prufrock, hesitatingly baring himself to the disapproval of society, failing to achieve dignity even in his imagined death: "I have seen the eternal Footman hold my coat and snicker." There is the lady who is ironically unconscious of the twisted lilac stalk in her hand as she says "You do not know what life is, you who hold it in your hands" ("Portrait of a Lady"). There is animalistic Sweeney, "straddled in the sun" ("Sweeney Erect") or "letting his arms hang down to laugh" ("Sweeney Among the Nightingales"), and Gerontion, painfully aware of his spiritual deprivation and seeking some "closer contact" with vital meaning. There are the Magi, alone, frustrated, fearful that their own sacrifice has been mere foolish-
ness, puzzled about the purpose of their journey: "were we led all that way for Birth or Death?" And there is the Fisherking, symbol of Western man, imprisoned in his Waste Land, unsure of the precise terms of the sacrifice which he is asked to make, but aware that it is necessary and that he has failed: "These fragments I have shored against my ruins."

Donne's leading character in the drama is most often himself, or more specifically, various aspects of his poetic persona. He is the lover urging his mistress to join him where he lies in their bed ("Elegie: Going to Bed"), or bidding the sun first to leave them in the dark and then to find its true centre in their bed ("The Sunne Rising"). Elsewhere, the lovers are walking side by side while he delivers a philosophical monologue ("Lecture upon the Shadow"), or sitting silently in a garden ("The Extasie"). On occasion the garden of love is inhabited by the betrayed lover alone ("Twicknam Garden"), or there is a scene of mutual grief in separation ("A Valediction forbidding mourning"). Or there is the imagined future scene of the lover undergoing a post-mortem anatomy ("The Dampe") or appearing to embrace his mistress in their common grave ("The Relique"). In the divine poems, the actor is Donne, the penitent believer, in dialogue with God ("Holy Sonnet: Wilt thou love God, as he thee", "Holy Sonnet: Oh my blacke Soule"). In these poems, the dramatic setting is often his own projected union with God in death ("Hymne to God my God, in my sickenesse"), or the Resurrection ("Holy Sonnet: At the round earths imagin'd corners"). In the poetry of divine and
secular love alike, the dramatic scene is sketched in the opening lines by means of specific adverbs of time and place ("here", "now"), and an arresting conversational tone:

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Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,  
Why dost thou thus,  
Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?  
("The Sunne Rising")
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Marke but this flea, and marke in this, 
How little that which thou deny'st me is;  
It suck'd me first, and now sucks thee  
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee.  
("The Flea")
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At the round earths imagin'd corners, blow  
Your trumpets, Angells, and arise, arise  
From death, you numberlesse infinities  
Of soules, and to your scattred bodies goe . . .  
("Holy Sonnet")
```

The effect of such dramatic staging as a backdrop to the anatomy of feelings is what Eliot has called "depersonalization", a distancing of the artist's personality: the poet's mind is the vessel in which the fusion of thought and feeling takes place, or to use Eliot's analogy, "the transforming catalyst".¹³ The ability of the poet to abstract himself from the drama, to be both partaker and observer, enables him to play with the experience, to see it from various angles, much as Hamlet holds the skull of Yorick and rotates it in his hands as he explores the meaning of death. This is a feature of the creative process in Donne, as Eliot has remarked:

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The usual course for Donne is not to pursue the meaning of the ideas but to arrest it, to play cat-like with it, to develop it dialectically, to extract every minimum of the emotion suspended in it.¹⁴
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But it is also a feature of Eliot's method: one thinks of the
self-conscious meditation of Prufrock, the relentless pursuit by Gerontion of "thoughts of a dry brain in a dry season", all the metamorphoses of the Waste Land figure as he seeks the meaning of restorative sacrifice, and finally, the descent of the persona of the Four Quartets into the "world of perpetual solitude" of the progress of the soul.

One vehicle of this dialectical method common to the poetry of both Donne and Eliot is their use of paradox. Apparent contradictions in the terms of analysis force one to see the experience or concept from various angles (as a kind of dialectical "theatre-in-the-round", as it were). As a device of rhetoric, paradox has a long and devious history; in the Renaissance, paradox meant a statement contrary to received opinion, with the additional connotation of incredibility, even of falseness. But paradox demands close attention in order for the reader to discover that it both lies, and speaks truth. When Donne said of his "official" exercises in paradox, the Paradoxes and Problems, "... they were made rather to deceave time than her daughter truth ... they are rather alarums to truth to arme her than enemies ... ", he was expressing the major function of paradox, that of provoking, by means of a "show of deceit", an analysis of experience or objects which may lead to truth. A modern definition of paradox calls it "any conclusion that at first sounds absurd but that has an argument to sustain it."

One source of the apparent absurdity or falseness of a paradox is its use of logic. This involves, ultimately, the
misuse of syllogistic logic, inasmuch as the poet may push his metaphor or argued conceit to its logical extreme in an effort to meld the correspondences he perceives in objects. Often the paradox is taken "to the point where its inadequacy for reflecting reality becomes fully recognizable." This has the effect of forcing the reader to examine not only the tenets of the paradoxical argument but also its processes:

The thinking process, examining itself for the "error" which brought it up sharp against paradox, turns back on itself to see how it got stuck upon the paradox, and if that paradox might have been avoided: a paradox generates the self-referential activity. Operating at the limits of discourse, redirecting thoughtful attention to the faulty or limited structure of thought, paradoxes play back and forth across terminal and categorical boundaries—that is, they play with human understanding, that most serious of all human activities.

Considering the Renaissance penchant for paradox, we should not be surprised to find paradox woven into the entire fabric of Donne's poetry and prose. Eliot's use of paradox, however, is concentrated in the later works—the plays and longer poems written after what is generally considered to be a turning point in Eliot's work, his conversion to the Anglican Church in 1927. In the two long poems of Donne and Eliot, the Anniversaries and the Four Quar-tets, the use of paradox to analyze processes of thought usually taken for granted is turned to a religious purpose: the Christian is admonished to know his God, and he therefore must structure new methods of arriving at this knowledge. At the beginning of each of these two poems, a paradox is stated involving the mystery of being, that is, the relationship of life to death, and of time to eternity. The paradox pivots on a bifurcation of defini-
tions of birth and death, time and eternity; the process of the poem is to examine these definitions. Because the truth to be uncovered refers to faith and is therefore more difficult to express than any truth of logic, the poems involve paradox as a figure of thought as well as a figure of speech.20 That is, they are expressing by means of paradox what they perceive in spiritual reality to be paradoxical sui generis. Found as an exercise in logic and linguistics, paradox is turned by these poets to a real examination of the ultimate failure of logic to describe certain impulses of the human mind and heart. Their use of paradox is perhaps what distinguishes metaphysical paradox from the more playful rhetorical paradoxes. It discovers "something inherently intractable in being itself"; it

springs in general from inadequacy, from the rents in linguistic and logical clothing; paradox might be called the science of gaps.21

What connects Eliot's use of paradox to Donne's consists specifically in the paradoxical core of the Christian faith:

From Origen to Chesterton, paradox has been the fittest flesh of a gospel which was and is "foolishness to the Greeks". Paradox is the only mode in which the intellect is able to grasp at all the fact of the cohabitation of the finite and the infinite. Christian paradox may be called the intellectual shadow of Eucharistic theology, an act of transubstantiation going on in the verbal marrow of wit.22

Christian paradox takes its impulse from a God who defines himself with a tautology—"I am that I am"—and presents himself in an even more amazing manifestation of paradox as the god who was born to die:

The fixed star at the centre of the Christian firmament
of symbol is the dogma of the Incarnation. In this
dogma, respecting as it does both the divinity of
the Word and the humanity of the flesh, is contained
the whole principle of the Christian aesthetic.\(^2\)

The argument of the *Anniversaries* and the *Quartets* traces the
poets' understanding and acceptance of this paradox. The goal
of each is to probe its meaning, in response to those "whispers
of immortality" until they amplify into an alleluia.

The emphasis of discussion in this thesis will be on the
two major poems of Donne and Eliot, the *Anniversaries* and the
*Four Quartets*, not merely because they each represent a monument
to the creative abilities of their respective authors, but be-
cause the similarities of theme, structure and imagery in these
particular poems form a framework for comparison of the work of
Donne and Eliot. Chapter IV will consist of an examination of
the aesthetic problems confronting each poet in his choice of
material and the molding of this material; Chapter V attempts
to compare the paradoxical imagery and theme in the progress of
the soul described in the *Anniversaries* and the *Quartets*. Inas-
much as the work of each poet is of a piece, we can see in it a
development and refinement of values which inhere from the begin-
ning to the end of the poetry; Chapters II and III, therefore,
will trace the development of some themes and techniques in the
work of each poet in turn.
Footnotes to Chapter I


6 "Satyre III", p. 25.


10 Eliot's own notes which accompany the poem ensure that the reader see the correspondences: "Just as the one-eyed merchant, seller of currants, melts into the Phoenician Sailor, and the latter is not wholly distinct from Ferdinand Prince of Naples, so all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias." p. 72.


12 This is certainly the case in Donne's Devotions, for example; he wrote them in order to "minister some holy delight", (quoted from a letter to Sir Robert Ker, January, 1624, in Selected Prose chosen by Evelyn Simpson, eds. Helen Gardner and Timothy Healy, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967, p. 156) but the source of their power....12
is his rediscovery of the agony of the sickness, physical and
spiritual, which he has endured and survived and is now telling.


14 "Donne in Our Time", A Garland for John Donne, ed. T. Spen-

15 Quoted from a letter to a friend, probably Sir Henry Wotton,
in 1600, in Selected Prose, p. 111. Donne's Paradoxes contain
their share of paradoxical praise of things unpraiseworthy, equivo-
cation, puns and limpid wit; they are the intellectual exercises
expected of a court wit of the 1590's. Conventional enough, they
contain mild bawdry (and even some misogyny if one is disposed to
find it):

"Women are like Flies, which feed among us at our Table, or
Fleas, sucking our very blood, who leave not our most retired
places free from their familiarity, yet for all their fellow-
ship will they never bee tamed, nor commanded by us....
Every Woman is a Science, for hee that plods upon a Woman all
his life long, shall at length find himselfe short of the know-
lledge of her..." 'A Defence of Womens Inconstancy' (pp.
5-7, in Selected Prose).

There are also poor puns, for example, in 'That good is more com-
mon than evil!:

"But I remember nothing that is therefore ill, because it is
common, but Women, of whom also; They that are most common,
are the best of that occupation they professe" (p. 10);

and some youthful cynicism:

"And hence I thinke proceeds that which in these late formall
times I have much noted; that now when our superstitious
civility of manners is become a mutuall tickling flattery of
one another, almost every man affecteth an humour of jesting,
and is content to be deject, and to deforme himselfe, yea
become foole to no other end that I can spie, but to give
his wise Companion occasion to laugh..." from 'That a
Wise Man is knowne by much laughing' (p. 17).

Among them, too, is a less frivolous paradox, to which Donne was
to return again and again, 'That all things kill themselves':

"Or how shall Man bee free from this, since the first Man
taught us this, except we cannot kill our selves, because he
kill'd us all" (p.11).

Donne passed much of his life meditating the immediacy of death.
The mock encomium, or formal defence of things unpraiseworthy, was
revived from classical literature in Renaissance humanist creations of

"... defences of the ant, the flea, the fly, the ass, the
fool, and folly; of the pox, of bastardy, of debt, of im-
prisonment, of tyranny; of hair, of baldness, of drunkenness,
of incontinence."
Less trivial examples of the genre exist in orthodox Christian sermons praising death, such as Thomas Becon's *Prayse of Death*, or Philippe de Mornay's *The Defence of Death* (see Henry Knight Miller, "The Paradoxical Encomium with Special Reference to its Vogue in England, 1600-1800", *Modern Philology* LIII:3 (Feb. 1956), p. 154).


19 Colie, p. 7. An example of the equivocation of paradox is the ubiquitous Liar paradox: "Epimenides the Cretan said 'All Cretans are liars'." If he is telling the truth then his statement is false and so he is lying; if he is lying then his statement is false and so he is not lying. There can be no resolution of the paradox, of course; it is completely circular. But it forces an examination of its structure, and in that it is not trivial.


CHAPTER II

JOHN DONNE: 'CORRESPONDENCIE ONLY HIS SUBJECT WAS'

Donne's paradoxical mind, his "ridling disposition", well fitted him for the sceptical approach to belief. As a theologian (a role he assumed long before his formal ordination in 1615), he worked within the framework of orthodox Christianity but even here he took no rest from continual 'expostulation' with God as to His nature and motives. In his final sermon, "Deaths Duell, or, a Consolation to the Soule, against the dying Life, and living Death of the Body", he presents for the last time the arguments for death as a means to new life by means of heavenly grace. The resolution arrived at in this final statement is anticipated by the same pattern of argument and synthesis in the Anniversary poems, but in other poems as well, descriptive of love sacred and profane, he explored all the possibilities of unifying experience.

Analysis of one facet of ekstasis is the concern of the Songs and Sonets; the "little death" of sexual union results in the same paradox as that offered by divine love: "To enter in these bonds, is to be free." ("Elegie: Going to Bed"). In these poems of profane love, often expressed in language descriptive of things divine, the mutability of the lovers is simultaneously described and denied. Love is as elusive as shadow,
Love is a growing, or full constant light;
And his first minute, after noone, is night.
("Lecture upon the Shadow", pp. 86-7),
and so in order for its illusion to be made real, time and space are manipulated by the lovers. The reflection of each in the other's eyes creates a world "Without sharpe North, without declining West", that is, without the coldness of dead love, or of death itself. Love "makes one little room, an everywhere", and transcends time:

Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time.
("The Sunne Rising", p. 93)

But faced with the palpable evidence of the dying life, the poet must present more specific evidence of the ways in which love transcends time. In "The Canonization", beginning with an admission of mutability, in his "five gray haires", "palsy" and "gout", the poet dismisses the representative of the outside world: "For Gods sake hold your tongue, and let me love". His love exists in a microcosm which does not affect the macrocosm:

When did the heats which my veines fill
Adde one more to the plaguie Bill?

Only the lovers themselves are consumed by the heat of their passion. But fleshly union effects a transcendent union, and so the accusation of lust by the unseen critic is parried in a series of conceits in the tightly packed third stanza, which almost defy paraphrase. These conceits are, as Dame Helen Gardner says, "instruments of definition in an argument or instruments to persuade." The lovers here may be "flies" but they are a special
kind, the taper fly, or moth which flies to its death in a candle flame. The jump to the next conceit is made so rapidly there is hardly time to make the logical association: "We are Tapers too, and at our owne cost die". The candle is itself consumed in giving light. There is even less logical connection in the movement to the next conceit, that of the lovers as the "Eagle and the dove", but what is probably meant is something like the necessary conjunction in love of active and passive, hunter and hunted, the flaming wick and the wax. The two images join in the image of the phoenix, who consumed itself in fire and rose anew from the ashes. That two discrete entities can fuse into one, and in their "death" rise phoenix-like argues the miracle of love. There is a further paradox, since out of nothing, love, like the non-existent phoenix, is created, and out of two sexes "one neutrall thing" is made. In love two "nothings" are made a something, and in ecstatic union, two selves are obliterated and lifted out of time.

Furthermore, if the ashes from which the putative phoenix rises prove to be only those of a dead love, or even of dead lovers, they will still gain immortality in the "well-wrought urn" of poetry: the argument of the fourth stanza draws attention to the poem's own devices. Here the language of divine love is made explicit: because they scorned that world of the first two stanzas, the lovers do not merit a worldly funeral with "tombs and Hearse" but (referring back to the phoenix image) their ashes can be as well contained in the love poem, a hymn proclaiming their transcendency as saints of love. Their story in the poem
will then be exalted as a pattern of love, as the medieval saints' legends were patterns for life. The poem then becomes its own symbol; it is an instance of the doctrine which it asserts; it is both the assertion and the realization of the assertion.

Religious imagery in another well-known poem attempts to argue the correspondence between human and divine Love. In "A Valediction forbidding mourning", the simile of the entire first stanza compares the parting of lovers to death, but the conventional image gives more complex support to the argument of the poem since the death described is of a "virtuous man", and the response to it is ambivalent. The dying man seems resigned and even eager for heavenly bliss ("and whisper to their soules, to goe"); his friends are sad and reluctant to specify the exact moment of death. The implicit contrast here between a religious man hopeful of union with God and a man for whom death is merely an end is logically aligned with the contrast between the spiritual affinity of lovers and the simply physical. In the second stanza, the poet suspends their right to the signs of disturbances in the universe which usually attend the misfortunes of the great, the "tear-floods" and "sigh-tempests". The third stanza contrasts the phenomena of the physical world, mundane earthquakes, with disturbances in the heavens which, though more important, do less ultimate harm, since they are guided by God's beneficence; the contrast is extended logically in the fourth and fifth stanzas to physical love, which cannot bear absence, and their more perfect love. Like the virtuous dying man, who intuits, through
faith, the promise of God's grace, they are "inter-assured of the mind". The image of the souls unified as beaten gold is expanded from stanza 5 ("But we by'a love so much refin'd") into a justification of the separation, as the separation of religious persons in death is justified: they

endure not yet
A breach, but an expansion,
Like gold to ayery thinnesse beate.

The logical association of the gold, perfect substance in alchemy, is made with the compass image, in the next stanza, by means of the alchemic symbol for gold:

The circumscribed circle with the compass in its centre, was the symbol for gold, alchemically the only metal that was indestructible.

In addition to the logical implications in the compass image of the sexual love between the lovers:

It leanes, and hearkens after it,
And growes erect, as that comes home,
and the aspect of the indivisible pair common to the compass and the married couple, there are religious implications in the conceit which connect it logically with that of the virtuous dying man with which the poem begins (making the poem itself circular in structure): the circle which the compass describes was a conventional symbol both for perfection and for eternity. The reunion of lovers is thus likened to the union of resurrected souls.

There is an underlying awareness in the Songs and Sonets, however, that the ecstatic union of lovers is, after all, merely a parody of divine union. Overwhelming passion is being described but the wit of the poet constantly plays over the subject matter
to effect that detachment observed in great poetry by Eliot. In "The Legacie" Donne plays with the concept of the lovers' death and immortality: "I dye/As often as from thee I goe" he says, but logic compels the recognition that he is not dead if he lives to write a poem. In restoring himself to her he will be, then, "Mine owne executor and Legacie". He sidesteps logic by inventing a second figure to act himself in the drama while the poet observes:

I heard mee say, Tell her anon
That my selfe, that is you, not I,
Did kill me . . .

He cannot leave his heart with her in his absence, and so

It kill'd mee'againe that I who still was true,
In life, in my last Will should cozen you.

Even the fickle heart he finds in himself cannot be given her because she has it already. That the wit here is entirely self-conscious is evident by the devices of self-reference and the I-me division; it is as if Donne anticipated the dry retort of a Rosalind: "Men have died from time to time, and worms have eaten them, but not for love."

It is this consciousness, the "anguish of the marrow" as Eliot phrases it, that more often than not underlies the love poems. If lovers cannot achieve immortality for any more than an ecstatic timeless moment, they can be joined in the grave, as in the wittily macabre but beautiful image of "The Relique":

When my grave is broke up againe
Some second ghost to entertaine,
(For graves have learn'd that woman-head
To be to more then one a Bed)
And he that digs it, spies
A bracelet of bright hair about the bone,
Will he not let us alone,
And thinke that there a loving couple lies . . .

Occasionally the ecstasy of lovers is possible and by it they gain self-knowledge and a shadow of spiritual ecstasy:

This Extasie doth unperplex
(We said) and tell us what we love,
Wee see by this, it was not sexe,
Wee see, we saw not what did move,

but it is dependent on the union of fleshly bodies:

We owe them thankes, because they thus,
Did us, to us, at first convey,
Yeelded their forces, sense, to us,
Nor are drosse to us, but allay.

("The Extasie", pp. 130-132)

This fusion of flesh and spirit is the "subtile knot, which makes us man". Just as the death of the body is necessary for a rebirth in religious terms, as we shall see in the discussion of the Anniversary poems, the "death" of lovers effects ecstasis. But the awareness that it is imperfect knowledge creates in Donne even further tension.

In "A nocturnall upon S. Lucies day, Being the shortest day", Donne speaks of a different kind of lovers' resurrection. The poem's occasion is the death of a beloved person, probably Donne's wife, Anne, on August 15, 1617, in giving birth to their twelfth child, and Donne apparently wrote it at midnight of Saint Lucy's day of the same year: "Tis the yeares midnight, and it is the dayes . . ." It is the dark time of the year when the light of the world has apparently been annihilated:

The Sunne is spent, and now his flasks
Send forth light squibs, no constant rays.
The sporadic light of the stars is an emblem of the fleeting quality of life. The world is dying, and dead, and yet by comparison, the poet is more than dead; he is an epitaph, a warning to lovers, as the expansion in the second stanza clarifies. The canonized lovers of "The Canonization" were to become the object of study for other lovers; here the remaining half of the couple proves a much grimmer object lesson, that of rank mortality. Out of nothing, love effected

... new Alchimie. ...
A quintessence even from nothingnesse.

With one ingredient of the distillation gone, the mixture is destroyed,

re-begot
Of absence, darkness, death; things which are not.

More than that, the alchemical experiment moves in reverse, in an "uncreation", a "reduction of creation to its components and, finally, to nothing once more."  

The problem of nothing in the Renaissance was not only an intellectual exercise in paradox; discussions of the void usually were brought round to discussions of the infinite, but

Even for logicians and rhetoricians, the twinned ideas of infinity and nothing are technically dangerous; since they are so wild, at the loose edge of conceptualization and of discourse, nullifying--literally--ideas of order and ordination, nullifying logical and rhetorical formulations. Certainly the two notions resist domestication within the mind: they are also psychologically destructive, threatening the familiar boundaries of human experience and of intellectual efforts to get the better of that recalcitrant experience.

But Donne knew what Pascal only later discovered to exist as the fact of the vacuum: since his wife's death he has become the
void. Before her death, the lovers had only played at annihilation, sometimes in the deluge of their tears,

Oft a flood
Have we two wept, and so
Drown'd the whole world, us two,

and sometimes by their distractions or separations,

Oft did we grow
To be two Chaosses, when we did show
Care to ought else; and often absences
Withdrew our soules, and made us carcasses.

This annihilation is refined and distilled, by her death, into his transformation:

But I am by her death, (which word wrongs her)
Of the first nothing, the Elixer grown.

He is not even the body of nothing, a shadow, because his light, his "Sunne" has been extinguished. The reader is given slight warning of the sudden turn the poem takes in the final stanza: what we have been led to think of as a totally nihilistic vision of deprivation turns into a festive hymn: "... she enjoyes her long nights festivall."15 Now the meaning of the dramatic setting of the poem becomes clear: Saint Lucy's night marks the point at which light begins to increase in the new year.16 The final four lines, out of a total of forty-five, give promise of a different kind of phoenix-rising through his love for his wife:

Let mee prepare towards her, and let mee call
This houre her Vigill, and her Eve, since this
Both the yeares, and the dayes deep midnight is.

Real death, then, rather than the lovers' metaphorical death, is the key to knowledge beyond the senses, and it is this which now must be studied.
The pattern for death and new life is Christ, but contemplation of the divine sacrifice is unbearable:

What a death were it then to see God dye?
It made his owne Lieutenant Nature shrinke,
It made his footstool crack, and the Sunne winke.

In turning his face away from this imagined scene toward the west (death), the poet bares his back for restorative correction:

0 thinke mee worth thine anger, punish mee,
Burne off my rusts, and my deformity...and when the divine image is restored in him, he finds that west (death) has become east (new life). The image of the line which returns to its first point as a circle recurs more vividly in a later poem, "Hymne to God my God, in my sicknesse" (pp. 390-392):

I joy, that in these straits, I see my West;
For, though there currants yield returne to none,
What shall my West hurt me? As West and East
In all flatt Maps (and I am one) are one,
So death doth touch the Resurrection."

Donne celebrates his own death more explicitly in the Holy Sonnets: he yearns for the time when

...gluttonous death, will instantly unjoynt
My body,'and soule,...
Then, as my soule, to'heaven her first seate, takes flight...
("Holy Sonnet: This is my playe's last scene", p. 340)

and even death would be annihilated:

Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadfull, for thou art not soe,
For, those, whom thou think'st, thou dost overthrow,
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.
("Holy Sonnet", p. 342)

Donne was not always so exultant about death, however; more often than not the sceptical humanist and lover struggled
with the devout believer and priest to produce an ambivalence
toward the mystery of death:

Oh my blacke Soule! now thou art summoned
By sicknesse, deaths herald, and champion;
Thou art like a pilgrim, which abroad hath done
Treason, and durst not turne to whence hee'is fled,
Or like a thiefe, which till deaths doome be read,
Wisheth' himselfe delivered from prison;
But damn'd and hal'd to execution,
Wisheth that still he might be'imprisoned.

("Holy Sonnet", p. 339)

This same ambivalence toward death forms the "perplexed
doubt" with which the meditation on death in the Anniversary poems
begins. Here again, all the terms of the definition are to be re-
examined and resolved in a consolation to the soul against the
dying life and living death of the body, in the union of divine
love.
Footnotes to Chapter II


3 Cf. Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress":

   And now, like am'rous birds of prey,
   Rather at once our Time devour,
   Than languish in his slow-chapt pow'r,
   Let us roll all our Strength, and all
   Our Sweetness, up into one Ball:
   And tear our Pleasures with rough strife,
   Through the Iron gates of Life.
   Thus, though we cannot make our Sun
   Stand still, yet we will make him run.

   The Metaphysical Poets, ed. Helen Gardner, ed., Penguin, rev. ed., 1966, pp. 250-252. The lovers in this poem control time inasmuch as they avoid his ravages by seizing love before omnipresent death overtakes them but they gain control at their own cost; their intense passion will speed the process of time. They both conquer, and are conquered by, time.

4 Sex is referred to as a "little death" in Renaissance poetry because in the sighs of the lovers, vital breath is lost, thus shortening their lives. Another poem, "The broken heart", emphasizes this aspect of love as a galloping consumption:

   He is starke mad, who ever sayes,
   That he hath beene in love an houre,
   Yet not that love so soone decayes,
   But that it can tenne in lesse space devour;
   Who will beleeve mee, if I sweare
   That I have had the plague a yeare?
   Who would not laugh at mee, if I should say,
   I saw a flaske of powder burne a day? . . .

   (p. 85)

5 The Metaphysical Poets, p. 21.

6 The fly was a common symbol of unbridled sexual passion; cf. Lear:

   The wren goes to 't, and the small gilded fly
   Does lecher in my sight.
   Let copulation thrive. . . (IV,vi)
7 Shawcross, in a footnote on p. 97, points this out and credits it to A. B. Chambers in an article in *JEGP* LXV (1966).


9 Shawcross, p. 400.


11 Many epitaphs on English tombstones convey a warning; I have seen many variations on this theme:

   Remember me as you pass by,
   As you are now so once was I.
   As I am now soon you will be.
   Prepare for death to follow me.


14 See Chapter 8 in Colie, "Le Pari: All or Nothing", which is a discussion of paradox in Pascal.


16 Shawcross suggests that the theme of resurrection in the poem was prompted by the fact that Anne died on the day of the Feast of the Assumption, the reception of the Virgin Mary into Heaven.

17 Cf. Sermon, "Preached upon the Penitential Psalms, 1623": "In a flat Map, there goes no more, but to make West East, though they be distant in an extremity, but to paste that flat Map upon a round body, and then West and East are all one. In a flat soule, in a dejected conscience, in a troubled spirit, there goes no more to the making of that trouble, peace, then to apply that trouble to the body of the Merits, to the body of the Gospel of Christ Jesus, and conforme thee to him, and thy West is East, thy Trouble of spirit is Tranquillity of spirit." *Sermons*, VI, 59.
CHAPTER III

T. S. ELIOT: 'THOUGHTS OF A DRY BRAIN IN A DRY SEASON'

The advantage of the poet, Eliot says, is "to be able to see beneath both beauty and ugliness; to see the boredom, and the horror, and the glory." Helen Gardner is not putting too much weight on the phrase, "the boredom, and the horror, and the glory", I feel, when she calls it a "summary of the development of Mr. Eliot's vision of the world." Certainly the early poems express an overriding sense of time as an unbearable burden, in a world which is a prison:

For I have known them all already, known them all -
Have known the evenings, mornings, afternoons,
I have measured out my life with coffee spoons.

The tedium gives way to terror in "Gerontion", where apprehension of the spiritual world reveals only the pain it yields. The persona sees only "Christ the tiger"; he cannot see the hypostasis of God as love. Only in the final poems is there a rejoicing in the glory, and even there Eliot expresses the necessity of suffering and of discipline:

Because I cannot hope to turn again
Consequently I rejoice, having to construct something
Upon which to rejoice.

It is necessary to go by way of doubt and pain to reach truth, as on Donne's craggy hill. Everywhere in the early poems of Eliot is the implicit expression of the paradox from Hera-
kleitos which prefixes *Burnt Norton*: "Ὀδὸς ἀνω κάτω μέα καὶ υπη, the way up and the way down are the same", and which was expressed similarly by Donne: "Therefore that he may raise the Lord strikes down."

Faced by the "thousand sordid images" of his soul in the "Preludes", the poetic persona still manages to propose the existence of some incarnate principle of regenerative sacrifice:

I am moved by fancies that are curled
Around these images, and cling:
The notion of some infinitely gentle
Infinitely suffering thing.

But it is a fleeting vision obliterated by the more palpable sight of "worlds [that] revolve like ancient women/Gathering fuel in vacant lots".

Suffering in "Gerontion" consists in the old man's awareness that his life is a shadow, a dream from which he can awaken, as does Prufrock, to a drowning. The advice of the Duke in *Measure for Measure* (from which speech is taken the quotation prefixing the poem) to be "absolute for death" offers a consolation to Claudio which is unavailable to despiritualized Western man. Gerontion feels, as Donne did in the "Nocturnall" poem, that he speaks from an immeasurable void,

I am an old man,
A dull head among windy spaces,

but there is no sudden resolution of the suffering as there was for Donne in that poem. Modern man requires signs, not as a confirmation of faith, but as an inducement: "Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!'" Yet he misinterprets the
symbols of Christian myth. They present only a mysterious threat:

In the juvescence of the year
Came Christ the tiger.

The symbols of the springtime death and resurrection of a god represent decay rather than growth. Gerontion feels, as Job felt, only the absence, the deprivation of God:

Vacant shuttles
Weave the wind.

But inasmuch as he has brought himself to the recognition of its possibility he is immeasurably closer than Eliot's earlier poetic persona, such as Prufrock, to a revelation of spiritual reality. He is at least prepared to exhort himself to face an alternative to his nightmare life. In the long passage beginning "After such knowledge, what forgiveness?", he presents himself with the alternatives. The passage in its repetition of "Think now" is similar to the long "think" passage in Donne's second Anniversary in which he invites his soul to meditate the details of a virtuous death. There is less assurance for Gerontion; Eliot's meditation is more abstract, more vague. Except for the first image which is visual,

Think now
History has many cunning passages, contrived corridors, the meditation proceeds by a presentation of concepts rather than of "visual aids" as in Donne's poem. Gerontion tells himself that history reveals the pattern of myth when man is least ready to receive it, and reveals it in such a way that the pattern cannot be made out:
She gives when our attention is distracted
   And what she gives, gives with such supple confusions
   That the giving famishes the craving.

Or perhaps the pattern is irrelevant or untimely:

   Gives too late
     What's not believed in, or still believed,
     In memory only, reconsidered passion. Gives too soon
     Into weak hands, what's thought can be dispensed with
     Till the refusal propagates a fear.

The blame for his confusion and doubt he places on history, the sum of human experience: he is the 'product of his environment', as psychologists say. But he is dimly aware of a failure innate in man, that his suffering is caused by the original fall: "These tears are shaken from the wrath-bearing tree." The paradox of the 'fortunate fall' eludes him. He only feels the immediate effects of a fall; the new testament of redemption brought by Christ holds no promise of mercy:

   The tiger springs in the near year. Us he devours.

But his meditation has had the effect of clarifying his relationship with God so that, unlike Prufrock, Gerontion can at least propose the 'overwhelming question'. Man has fallen away from God, initially because of fear and then because even his unholy terror of the unknown was eradicated by Baconian rational inquiry:

   I that was near your heart was removed therefrom
   To lose beauty in terror, terror in inquisition.

The "passion", in the sense of suffering, which man has lost, holds the key to his salvation, and man is closer to God's grace merely by asking:

   I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste, and touch: How should I use them for your closer touch?
The poem closes with a return to its initial focus on the "fractured atoms" of human existence, with Gerontion as he was before, "waiting for rain".

The paradox of death-in-life and life-in-death is revealed more fully in *The Waste Land*. Death can be either a release from the intolerable nullity which is one kind of suffering, or it can be a release to something, which is only faintly outlined, only felt by its absence. Man knows only "broken images", stones which give forth no water; in proposing the existence of redeeming water the poetic persona is now nearer salvation but he cannot know that. The senses he begged to know the use of in "Gerontion" still fail him:

---Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden, Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not Speak, and my eyes failed.

He must go on fishing in the filthy canal of his nightmare landscape. Fruitless human suffering is replayed again and again like the typist's gramophone record:

(And I Teresias have foresuffered all Enacted on this same divan or bed . . .

Again there is a revelation of Christ but it is mistaken, as it was in "Gerontion", for mere threat or delusion. The hooded figure which walks beside man is confused with the "hooded hordes" of the Waste Land inhabitants streaming over the bridges which cross their filthy river,

. . . swarming Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth.

The message the thunder speaks is heard but not understood, in
its offer of a 'peace which passeth understanding'. It consists of "Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata", that is, surrender, mercy, and control in the union of surrender and mercy. It is like the valediction of the "familiar compound ghost" at the end of Little Gidding, "you must move in measure, like a dancer" (LG, II, p. 205), and it contains the same paradox of the suffering love of God which demands an imitation of the suffering. In The Waste Land, man is not given the means to achieve the goal: the thunder's message is interpreted to us by three symbolic moments: a moment of surrender, a moment of release, and a moment of mysterious well-being. In the first, there is an act of the will, accepting, not refusing, abandoning its resistance. In the second, a liberating act is performed from without; the prisoner knows himself free. In the third, there is a union of powers from without and acceptance from within; with effortless ease the heart responds to controlling hands. These three moments are all we are given to hold to: we return to the arid plain and the single figure on the shore fishing.

Only in "Ash Wednesday" does the persona arrive at a revelation of what must be done in order to find peace. Right action here consists of fusing one's will with the will of God. It must be expressed as paradox:

Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still.

The key to caring and not caring is that detachment cultivated again in the Quartets: it allows man to observe his physical disintegration with equanimity, as did Ezekiel in the valley of the scattered bones. The poet's detachment allows him a measure of wit in the description of it:
Lady, three white leopards sat under a juniper-tree
In the cool of the day, having fed to satiety
On my legs my heart my liver and that which had been contained
In the hollow round of my skull.

His willingness to allow this, to "proffer my deeds to oblivion",
is the answer to the question Gerontion asked regarding the use
of his suffering senses, "How should I use them for your closer
contact?";

It is this which recovers
My guts the strings of my eyes and the indigestible portions
Which the leopards reject.

The scattering of the bones paradoxically effects union with
divine will:

Under a juniper-tree the bones sang, scattered and shining
We are glad to be scattered, we did little good to each other,
Under a tree in the cool of the day, with the blessing of sand,
Forgetting themselves and each other, united
In the quiet of the desert. This is the land which ye
Shall divide by lot. And neither division nor unity
Matters. This is the land. We have our inheritance.

Life is thus a "dreamcrossed twilight between birth and dying";
death is "the time of tension between dying and birth". The
message of the Thunder is now understood, but the lesson is to
be learned again and again. The final supplication of the poem
brings no resolution, only a recognition of what must be learned
with God's mercy:

Teach us to care and not to care
Teach us to sit still
Even among these rocks,
Our peace in His will
And even among these rocks
Sister, mother
And spirit of the river, spirit of the sea,
Suffer me not to be separated

And let my cry come unto Thee.
Thus, the paradoxical necessity of suffering is developed in Eliot's poetry. The process of discovering this necessity begins again the Four Quartets as if for the first time, but this time the glory of existence is seen to shine through the boredom and the horror.
Footnotes to Chapter III


5 pp. 29-31, Collected Poems.

6 The allusion is to Matthew 12:38-39. "Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee. But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ... ."

7 The image is a fusion of two in Job 7:6,7: "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle, and are spent without hope. O remember that my life is wind: mine eye shall no more see good."


10 Chapter §7: "The hand of the Lord was upon me, and carried me out in the spirit of the Lord, and set me down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones, / And caused me to pass by them round about: and, behold, there were very many in the open valley: and, lo, they were very dry. / And he said unto me, Son of man, can these bones live? And I answered, O Lord God, thou knowest . . . ."

11 The same paradox is restated in the plays. In Murder in the Cathedral Becket knows that the willing suffering of man in patience is the action required by divine love. The chorus of women, like Gerontion and the Fisher King, express the horror of "living and partly living" but they can more readily accept it than can the persona of the early poetry:

Thomas: They know and do not know, what it is to act or suffer, And suffering is action. Neither does the agent suffer Nor the patient act. But both are fixed In an eternal action, an eternal patience To which all must consent that it may be willed
And which all must suffer that they may will it, 
That the pattern may subsist, for the pattern is the action
And the suffering, that the wheel may turn and still 
Be forever still.

(p. 32, intro. and notes Nevill Coghill, London: Faber, 1935)

The pattern for this suffering is in the life and death of Christ and all his martyrs; man's response to the paradox is necessarily paradoxical: cf. Archbishop of Canterbury's Christmas morning sermon, 1170, in the "Interlude" of the play:

"... at this same time of all the year that we celebrate at once the Birth of Our Lord and His Passion and Death upon the Cross, Beloved, as the World sees, this is to behave in a strange fashion. For who in the World will both mourn and rejoice at once and for the same reason? For either joy will be overborne by mourning, or mourning will be cast out by joy; so it is only in these our Christian mysteries that we can rejoice and mourn at once for the same reason." (p. 55)

A martyr is defined by Becket in this Christmas sermon as one who has succeeded in fitting his will to the will of God (p. 57); this does not necessitate the shedding of blood merely, but the acceptance of a painful knowledge, "the awful reality of the supernatural". (Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, p. 133) For most the knowledge is not to be borne, for man cannot bear too much reality:

We do not wish anything to happen.
Seven years we have lived quietly.
Succeeded in avoiding notice,
Living and partly living . . . (p. 29)

Mary, in The Family Reunion (London: Faber, 1939) is also witness to the paradox of suffering:

Pain is the opposite of joy
But joy is a kind of pain
I believe the moment of birth
Is when we have knowledge of death
I believe the season of birth
Is the season of sacrifice . . . (p. 56)

As she speaks, Harry's guilt is revealed to him in the shadowy forms at the window. It is a knowledge

... deeper than all sense,
Deeper than the sense of smell, but like the smell
In that it is indescribable, a sweet and bitter smell
From another world. (p. 57)
Agatha expresses this "moment of illumination" in sensuous imagery as well:

There are hours when there seem to be no past or future,
Only a present moment of pointed light
When you want to burn, When you stretch out your hand
To the flames. (p. 96)

Knowledge to make one "expert beyond experience" is only describable in terms of sense experience.
'THE VISIBLE REMINDER OF INVISIBLE LIGHT': POET AS MAKER

One thread of the complex tapestries which make up Donne's Anniversaries and Eliot's Four Quartets must be examined apart from the themes and imagery. This is the part of each poem in which attention is drawn to the devices of the poem itself, and the reader is made as aware of the form of the poem as he is of the content. Although it is true that the form of the poem is its content to a certain extent, it is necessary, I feel, to try to separate the skeleton from the flesh in order to better understand the whole. The purpose of this chapter, then, is to examine the poesis of each work, how the poem means, as distinct from what; but first we must consider those parts of each poem in which the poet draws attention explicitly to his role as creator.

Underlying both poems is the knowledge that the poet is expressing what is in fact inexpressible, transcendent knowledge. Yet it must be voiced:

Nor could incomprehensiblenesse deterre
Me, from thus trying to emprison her.

(AW 469-470)

Here, Donne loads the word "incomprehensiblenesse" with a weight of meaning. The Latin root, prehendere, "to grasp", gives Donne's word the sense of something man's mind cannot grasp, cannot encompass. This sense of something which cannot be con-
tained by man's mind implies a knowledge which can be and is contained in divine knowledge. The word, as Donne uses it, has the connotation of all that knowledge of which God as Logos is comprised and which man cannot fully comprehend. The concept of the Logos is a paradox central to Christian thought, the container and the thing contained, co-existent and the same:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the word was with God and the Word was God" (John 1:1). It is an idea beyond man's fathoming:

... the logos doctrine, that deity is its own idea as well as all other possible ideas involved in the idea of divine totality, perceives knowledge as from inside the mind of God. ... The logos idea is a very confusing one—it allows for both unity and infinite variety and relates, by a kind of immanence theory, all things to one surreal essence, the logos itself. The logos is the idea of all ideas, an idea in its essence paradoxical, reflexive, at once active and passive, sufficient to itself and creative of other modes."

In approaching the meaning of divinity, man is fettered by imperfect understanding and imperfect material with which to express his incomprehension. Perfection must be conveyed through an imperfect medium, words; because of the connotative nature of language, meaning is never fixed:

Words strain, 
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden, 
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish, 
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place, 
Will not stay still. 

(BN V, p. 180)

Like the cosmos, language is in continual flux; words become loaded with some meanings and cast off others. At the same time, the poet must contend with stereotyped response to lan-
language, which he must break down, annihilate, and then recreate. He must master and control his medium, which, like the soul in its divine dance, must be "still and still moving" (EC V, p. 189). He must be profoundly critical at every stage of the creative process. In East Coker II, following the apocalyptic imagery detailing the correspondence between cosmic and mundane chaos and aberration which mark the prelude before the world is brought to "that destructive fire/Which burns before the ice-cap reigns", Eliot the critic takes a look over the shoulder of Eliot the poet and comments ironically:

That was a way of putting it—not very satisfactory:
A periphrastic study in a worn-out poetical fashion,
Leaving one still with the intolerable wrestle
With words and meanings.

This is an example of the tough-mindedness of the poet: in his attempt to cut through all apparent diffuseness of experience to prove the underlying unity, his own creation must undergo analysis. He must be objective enough to see and point out where he has failed to measure up to his own standard:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years--
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of l'entre deux guerres--
 Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure
Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which One is no longer disposed to say it. And so each venture Is a new beginning, a raid on the inarticulate
With shabby equipment always deteriorating
In the general mess of imprecision of feeling,
Undisciplined squads of emotion.

(EV V pp. 188-189)

This critical faculty necessitates the kind of detachment advocated by Eliot, in the passage quoted in Chapter I, in "Tra-
dition and the Individual Talent":

... the more perfect the artist, the more completely separate in him will be the man who suffers and the mind which creates; the more perfectly will the mind digest and transmute the passions which are its materials. 3

He cannot even hold the illusion that his artistic experience is a new one:

And what there is to conquer
By strength and submission, has already been discovered
Once or twice, or several times, by men whom one cannot hope
To emulate--

(EC V, p. 189)

The poet expresses in each new age, or reasserts, what has been expressed by others before him. Donne recognized this when he undertook the "great Office" of Moses in his Anniversaries:

Vouchsafe to call to minde, that God did make
A last, and lastingt peece, a song. He spake
To Moses to deliver unto all,
That song: because hee knew they would let fall
The Law, the Prophets, and the History,
But keepe the song still in their memory.
Such an opinion (in due measure) made
Me this great Office boldly to invade.

(AW 461-468)

Past writers thus serve as models:

Someone said: 'The dead writers are remote from us because we know so much more than they did.' Precisely, and they are that which we know. 4

In the sense that human activity often parodies divine activity, the poet can be said to create ex nihilo, but the Christian poet especially recognizes that his creation is itself still a nothing in comparison with God's:

How weak a thing is Poetry? (and yet Poetry is counterfeit Creation, and makes things that are not, as though they were) How infirme, how impotent are all assistances, if they be put to expresse this Eternity. 5
Immediately following the passage quoted above from *Burnt Norton* V on the mutable nature of words, Eliot contrasts the image of the perfect immutable divine idea of God, Christ as *logos*, Word, who was also assailed by the temptation to change his purpose:

> The Word in the desert
> Is most attacked by voices of temptation,
> The crying shadow in the funeral dance,
> The loud lament of the disconsolate chimera.

What the artist must aim for in his work is a pattern which will be, like the incarnate divine principle,

> Caught in the form of limitation
> Between un-being and being.

The "incomprehensiblenesse" of what he must do requires the use of images and symbols.

In seeing correspondences between all things and all concepts, the metaphysical poet brings them together in a paradoxical marriage of opposites: the divine union of all creation is adumbrated in the poet's perception of associations in the mundane. The task of the poet is to bring his imagery, drawn from common life, to the "first intensity", in Eliot's phrase. Thus this imagery is stripped of all but the associations the poet intends; it is idealized into a symbol, or bare outline of the image:

A symbol . . . is a point at which pure form and concentrated meaning strive to come to terms. So that the more the poet relies on symbolism, the more formal as well as meaningful does his expression become.

Donne's "carkas verses" are elevated by the motivating symbol of Elizabeth Drury: she is the song to be played upon
the organ of his elegy ("Funeral Elegy", 28), and in turn, by his example, the good play her on earth ("Funeral Elegy", 106). In his selection of a pattern of symbols, the poet often risks being misunderstood. As William Drummond reports, Ben Jonson thought

'That Done's Anniversarie was profane and full of blasphemies: that he told Mr. Done, if it had been written of the Virgin Marie it had been something; to which he answered that he described the Idea of a Woman, and not as she was.'

Some others attributed to hypocrisy the "first intensity" Donne achieved in the poem, since he had not known the girl, Elizabeth. In a letter Donne lamented the obtuseness of some readers, and accepted the blame for having "descended to print any thing in verse":

... my purpose was to say as well as I could: for since I never saw the Gentlewoman, I cannot be understood to have bound myself to have spoken just truths, but I would not be thought to have gone about to praise her, or any other in rime; except I took such a person, as might be capable of all that I could say. If any of those ladies think that Mistress Drawry was not so, let that Lady make herself fit for all those praises in the book and they shall be hers.

He should be forgiven the exasperation of his final remark: he would have been more dismayed at some modern responses to the poem. Marius Bewley regards it as Donne's private joke celebrating his apostasy from the Roman Catholic Church: the symbolizing of the Anglican Church in Elizabeth, Bewley regards a "grotesque apotheosis of the dead girl." 

Donne's idealization of his symbol is also misconstrued, but more sensitively and sympathetically, by O. B. Hardison as
a "formal epideictic type" in which praise of Elizabeth herself is the motive:

Elizabeth is Donne's chief concern throughout both poems, and the praise of God is a secondary theme, almost a by-product of the fact that praise of any created object is indirect praise of its Creator. Hardison seems to ignore the fact that Elizabeth is never mentioned by name in the poem apart from the titles. Even if we accept the proposition that the name is not used for the same reason that God's name was not used by the Jews of the Old Testament, that is, because of the magic power of names, this does not account for the force both of Donne's horror and of his exultation in describing the death. The symbol must carry more weight than this.

Of far more plausibility is Frank Manley's interpretation of the symbol as the innate wisdom of God, lost in man through the Fall. This accounts for the paradox in the first Anniversary of the world's ambivalent response to the death. Through the death imposed on man with his fall away from divine wisdom, man may return to that wisdom: death is both a result of man's loss and a means to his gain. In the second Anniversary the poet has gained an indication of how man's return to grace may be effected--by means of the Augustinian possibilitatem boni, "the innate uprightness of the soul which is restored by grace":

In the second [Anniversary]... he has found his direction; through the realization of his soul's loss he has gained the wisdom that orients him toward God, and the entire poem surges upward toward eternal life.

This ambiguity toward death, then, accounts for the para-
doxical structure of the two *Anniversary* poems. They build toward the climax with a juxtaposition of contrasting meanings of death and of wisdom. The reader must keep in mind, as he reads the whole, two frames of reference (just as he does when he reads the logical paradox contained in a single sentence, as for example, in Paul's description of his suffering, "When I am weak, then I am strong", 2 Cor. 12:10). "Death" is both the death of the body and the death of sin in man; "wisdom" is both worldly *scientia* and otherworldly *sapientia*. The structure of the poems, then, is patterned on the discovery of these definitions which are seen in faint outline in the opening lines. This accounts for the circularity of the poem, in which the end is prefigured in the beginning and new beginnings are intimated in the end. The process of the argument of the poem is paradoxical: "through the use of reason it explores the limits of reason".

The contrasting patterns of the poem can be schematized thus:

**Anatomy**: lines 1-62 — the world has suffered a death, to which it responds with ambivalence; the world was defined by what has been lost and therefore no longer lives itself.

63-90 — yet it does exist in the new world born of this perplexing death; man's lost wisdom (virtue) remains in its ghost, the ideal form to be practiced by man.

91-144 — man was born to die, each generation is a degeneration down to nothing;

145-146 — yet only thus, by death, will man's stature increase (death, therefore, must have other meanings, to be explored further in the *Anatomy*).
lines 147-186 -- man tries to effect the wrong kind of annihilation, because he has lost his heart, the innate virtue

187-190 -- but he can make a "better grouthe"

191-238 -- the fall was simultaneous with creation; the magnetic force to restore man to God exists but was lost to this old world

239-246 -- reminder to man to dissociate himself, by means of the anatomy, from this loss

247-324 -- there is disproportion because heavenly wisdom is lost

325-338 -- the object of the anatomy is to strive for a matching to heavenly proportion

339-356 -- all perfection of colour has been lost

357-358 -- man's soul bears the colour of penitence; there is hope for man, therefore

359-376 -- there is perfection of colour to be studied in the symbol of virtue

377-398 -- loss of correspondence between heaven and earth

399-434 -- correspondence to be sought elsewhere in the ideal

435-end -- purpose of the poem to provide a bridge between the dead world and the new world; verse has a middle nature which can hold the opposing terms of existence together.

Progres: lines 1 - 22 -- world now is seen to be moving toward death, with ambivalence

23 - 48 -- by contrast the poet will strive for life (new life) and his poems are an expression of this aim

49 - 84 -- thus the wisdom of the old world is no longer useful; death is celebrated because it has didactic value

85-120 -- the soul must therefore study its own body's death
lines 121-146 -- the perfection possible is symbolized by the perfection of all-encompassing divine wisdom
147-156 -- man must earn heavenly wisdom by imitating it himself in a good death
157-178 -- meditation of perfect death resumed
179-219 -- release to union by disintegration in death
220-250 -- divine wisdom
251-293 -- ignorance of soul imprisoned in flesh
294-382 -- wisdom of the soul in the watchtower of the mind, the pattern of which is a prelude to the essential joy, toward which the soul must aspire
383-434 -- contrast of the illusory joys of the old world
435-472 -- soul can work up to pitch of essential joy by means of imagination in the poem; by imitating ideal form of wisdom, some joy is therefore possible on earth
473-486 -- danger of pride in earthly joy
487-510 -- paradox of increasing perfection in heaven
511-end -- the pattern for life and death realized in the poem itself; the discovery of the poem's purpose is the poem itself.

By the end of the poem, the dirge has turned into an alleluia in which divine wisdom is both the end of the exploration and the means, "both the object, and the wit" (PS, 442). As means, divine wisdom is invoked by Donne to act as his Muse, the male principle, joining with the poet as womb to bring forth the child-poem:

... be unto my Muse
A Father since her chaste Ambition is,
Yearly to bring forth such a child as this,
These Hymes may worke on future wits, and so
May great Grand-Children of thy praises grow.

(PS, 34-38)

Donne is thus the direct mouthpiece of God, the Trumpet pro-
claiming the Word embodied in his symbol, the ecstasis of
spiritual rebirth. He has become, by means of divine will, the
poem, both the song and the choir (AW, 10):

nor wouldst thou be content,
To take this, for my second yeeres true Rent,
Did this Coine beare any'other stampe, then his,
That gave thee power to doe, me, to say this,
Since his will is, that to posteritie,
Thou shouldest for life, and death a patterne bee,
And that the world should notice have of this,
The purpose, and th'Autority is his;
Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame
The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came.17

(PS, 519-528)

In a similar way the meaning of Eliot's poem consists
in its form, the images, symbols and contrasting parts which
make up the whole. The first object of attention is the poet's
language. As we saw at the beginning of this chapter in dis-
cussion of Donne, words have an intractable nature and the poet
must control, in order not to be controlled by, his medium:

The task of the poet, in making people comprehend the
incomprehensible, demands immense resources of lan-
guage; and in developing language, enriching the mean-
ing of words and showing how much words can do, he is
making possible a much greater range of emotion and
perception for other men, because he gives them the
speech in which more can be expressed.18

The object of the poet is to learn how "To purify the dialect
of the tribe" (LG II, p. 204).

A measure of his success with words, paradoxically, is
his ability to convey meaning at a subverbal level: "It is a
test . . . that genuine poetry can communicate before it is understood." The words in a poem have an affective as well as an intellectual meaning; that is, "the total meaning structure cannot be completely described in cognitive terms." How this affective meaning is achieved is by means of what Eliot called an "objective correlative" in the imagery, a term which is now part of contemporary critical jargon. It is "the only way of expressing emotion in the form of art," which Eliot defines as

... 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.

It is expressed more clearly, I think, by Smidt, who defines "objective correlative" as,

an objective observation in terms of a subjective experience, and a general truth in terms of a subjective truth. The idea or emotion is made concrete, but in another context than that of the poet's original experience.

One thinks, for an example in Eliot's work, of the pattern of images in The Waste Land which convey an experience of sudden illumination:

'You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
'They called me the hyacinth girl.'
-Yet when we came back, late, from the hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light, the silence.

A sensitive reader of The Waste Land, aware of all the implications of this experience in its context in this passage, is alert to the appearance of these images elsewhere in the poetry,
where they have the same objective validity although the circumstances are different. Thus, in the Quartets, the recurring images relating to this garden experience, the flowers, the figure who intends some communication, the failure of the senses, the moment of ecstasis between life and death, the light and silence, take on a meaning made richer by a reading of the earlier poem.

More important for an understanding of Eliot is to see the way in which he forms words into patterns. As in other metaphysical poetry, a new fusion of parts into wholes, images into image patterns, is achieved by means of the conceit, which is

... an integral element of the metaphysical style since it is the most compelling means of making the desired union of emotion and thought by bringing together widely divergent material in a single image. Instead of being ornamental, it is wholly functional: only by its use does the poet feel that he can express the precise curve of his meaning.23

For an example, take the image of the Chinese jar whose perfection of form Eliot must emulate in his poetry:

Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.

(BN V, p. 180)

The force of the conceit is contained in our awareness of the very different problems encountered by the maker of poems and the maker of jars: the jarmaker's object is to transcend the lifelessness of his material and imitate movement; the poet's aim is to overcome the necessary movement of his words, through
space on the page and through time as they are read, and to achieve the impression of stasis. But the two objects are not so incomparable: by means of pattern each artist achieves his ends. Just as the jarmaker makes the lump of clay move in the form and pattern of the jar, the poet molds images into an accretion of meaning.

An analysis of the parts of the structure of the *Quartets* reveals the perfect balance of oppositions, obtained on the spiritual level in the Incarnation, and on the aesthetic level in the fusion of form and content. In Eliot's poem, the analysis of structure is made easier by the division of each *Quartet* into five movements, and of each movement into stanzas of varying line length and alternating lyric and discursive language. Nevertheless, the whole structure defies the kind of rigid schematization made by some critics, although these are certainly helpful. Within each movement, I see a juxtaposition of the double terms of the argument, in the developing awareness of new knowledge based on an examination and rejection of past experience. The structure of the whole poem balances, as in the *Anniversaries*, contrary experience and ideas throughout:

**Burnt Norton:**

I --- man is imprisoned in unredeemable time
   -- the experience of the rose garden, not yet understood, promises a possible redemption of time

II -- the whirling flux of the cosmos, seen in correspondences of microcosm and macrocosm
   -- a different kind of movement in pattern, which is stillness, and must be understood through experience in time
III -- the unreal city of the "place of disaffection"
   -- the necessity of a real darkness
IV -- the world of death
   -- the possible world of rebirth
V -- the imperfection of the medium
   -- the perfection of the Word, the balance 'Between un-being and being'

East Coker:
I -- the beginning of life prefigures the end in death
   -- the joining of flesh is necessary
II -- chaos in the cosmos; knowledge is fixed in the wrong kind of pattern
   -- the only wisdom is in humility, in professing ignorance
III -- darkness of death
   -- darkness of God which is light
IV -- pain and disease, death
   -- health, rebirth
V -- inarticulation of poet, inability to make fusion
   -- unifying divine love transcends all consideration

Dry Salvages
I -- human time
   -- universal time
II -- dreary round of man's life
   -- Annunciation promises new life
III -- necessity of accepting time, of not thinking of the "fruit of action"
   -- future exists in every action
IV -- prayer for those whose lives have ended in the sea
   -- the angelus promises hope and new beginnings
V -- wrong knowledge
   -- necessity of self-surrender to understand the Incarnation, i.e. right knowledge

Little Gidding
I -- the setting for another experience of illumination
   -- understanding of the experience cannot be preconceived, the purpose will be "altered in fulfillment"
II -- destruction of meaning of past experience
   -- possibility of restoring in refining fire
In *Little Gidding* the images and themes of the first three *Quartets* are ingathered and patterned in a new context; in a very real sense the poem is circular, for it returns at its end to the beginning and yet all that lies between has changed the context of the end. By the final movement of *Little Gidding*, Eliot has a clearer vision of the "condition of complete simplicity" which will bring him, as a man, into the rose garden again and for the first time. But more important, for us as readers at least, he has been brought as a poet to a new beginning in which, though ironically it meant an end to his poetry, he has at last realized what he meant to say:

The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph.

One of the self-generating paradoxes woven into both poems is that of self-reference: the poet is both detached observer searching for the meaning of the experience, and the participant involved in and searching for the meaning of the experience. It is a paradox infinitely regressive, like the reflection in the mirror of the reflection in the mirror. The difficulty inherent in viewpoint was the subject of Eliot's doctoral dissertation on F. H. Bradley, in whose metaphysics
reality or 'Immediate Experience', the condition prior to thought and therefore to analysis, is known to be unanalyzable. Relating this kind of experience has been imaged as like trying to photograph one's own footprints as they are made:

The task of the metaphysician from the outside, must seem endless and futile, since he can never have what he is in pursuit of, and yet he always has it, or it has him.

This phenomenon accounts for the complexity found in both Donne and Eliot in their search for simplicity. In describing the appeal of Donne to the twentieth century, and particularly to Eliot, Matthiessen notes Donne's ability to express complexities as they are perceived:

What he stoved to devise was a medium of expression that would correspond to the felt intricacy of his existence, that would suggest by sudden contrasts, by harsh dissonances as well as by harmonies, the actual sensations of life as he himself experienced it.

The metaphysical sensibility of the seventeenth century was lost in later poets in response to the demand, initiated by Bacon, for clear and distinct categories of inquiry; but it is a sensibility which Eliot advocated as being particularly efficacious for modern poets:

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, in order to force to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning.

The poet of "refined sensibility" was one who was capable of seeing everywhere the correspondences between objects:

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

In its perception and its expression, the creation of poetry, for Donne and Eliot alike, is a holy task:

It is ultimately the function of art, in imposing a credible order upon reality and thereby eliciting some perception of order in reality, to bring us to a condition of serenity, stillness and reconciliation; and then leave us, as Virgil left Dante, to proceed toward a region where that guide can avail us no farther.
Footnotes to Chapter IV

1 All quotations from Donne's *Anniversaries* and Eliot's *Four Quartets* are from the editions by John T. Shawcross, *The Complete Poetry of John Donne*, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1967; and T. S. Eliot: *Collected Poems 1909-1962*, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1963, respectively. Abbreviations used are as follows:

AW Anatomy of the World  
PS Progres of the Soule  
BN Burnt Norton  
EC East Coker  
DS Dry Salvages  
LG Little Gidding


6 Cf. his essay on Baudelaire: "It is not merely in the use of imagery of common life, not merely in the use of imagery of the sordid life of a great metropolis, but in the elevation of such imagery to the first intensity--presenting it as it is, and yet making it represent something much more than itself--that Baudelaire has created a mode of release and expression for other men." *Selected Prose*, p. 180.


....57


12 The full title of the first Anniversary is "An Anatomy of the World. Wherein, By occasion of the untimely death of Mistress Elizabeth Drury the frailty and decay of this whole World is represented", and of the second, "Of the Progress of the Soule. Wherein: By occasion of the Religious death of Mistris Elizabeth Drury the incommodities of the Soule in this life and her exaltation in the next, are contemplated"; "her" is taken to refer to the soul.

13 Colie emphasizes this aspect of the symbol of Elizabeth Drury:
   "For him [Donne], the 'name' of a thing, its logos, glorified in both Stoic and Christian traditions, was all-important. From the logos, the originating word of God, all things took their form; the lady whose death had robbed the world of its soul, and thus of its life, had a name whose divine properties exceeded the 'naming-magic of Agrippa. Her name, Donne tells us, defined the world, gave it form and grace; when the world forgot her name, it forgot its own and thus ceased to know itself. Lost to the world though the sovereign power of her name is—and in a splendid practical illustration of his notion, Donne never assigns the lady a name, nor ever calls by their proper names her subsidiary representatives, Astraea, Queen Elizabeth, and the Virgin Mary—that secret name has the power, in poetry, to 'refine' coarse lines, and make prose song". pp. 424-425.


15 Ibid., p. 48.

16 Loc. cit.

17 In one of the sermons on the Psalms, Donne explained why David's prayer of thanksgiving is reserved until the end of the set, Psalms 6, 7, and 8: "But therefore might David be later
and shorter here, in expressing that duty of thanks, first, because being reserved to the end, and close of the Psalme, it leaves the best impression in the memory. And therefore it is easy to observe, that in all Metrical compositions, of which kind the booke of Psalmes is, the force of the whole piece, is for the most part left to the shutting up; the whole frame of the poem is a beating out of a piece of gold, but the last clause is as the impression of the stamp, and that is it that makes it currant." Sermons, VI, 41.

18 "A Talk on Dante", given 1950, quoted in Selected Prose, p. 96.


21 "Hamlet" in Selected Prose, p. 102.

22 Smidt, Poetry and Belief . . ., p. 41.


26 Matthiessen, p. 12.


28 Ibid., pp. 110-111.

29 "Poetry and Drama", ibid., p. 81.
CHAPTER V

THE ANNUVERSARIES AND THE FOUR QUARTETS:
ROAD MAPS FOR THE SOUL

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the method and meaning of the *via negativa* of the soul's progress toward unity with God, as it is explored in the *Anniversaries* and the *Four Quartets*. Discussion of these poems will deal in turn with the recurring themes and imagery of the paradoxes of birth implicit in death, knowledge dependent upon ignorance, the spiritual development from nothingness to something, and the discovery of true self-hood in a total and painful self-abnegation, a discovery in which both the means and the end is heavenly joy. In Christian belief, all these paradoxes are fused in the paradox of the Incarnation, the miraculous fusion of divine principle and human flesh. In the poems, the discovery of the meaning of these paradoxes forms the created whole which is the poem itself.

The starting point (and end, as we shall see) of the soul's progress in both poems is the question of whether or not death has value. In "An Anatomy of the World", the "frailty and decay of this whole world" is illustrated by the death of Elizabeth Drury, but from the beginning, Donne poses the am-
bigness, the world is

... succour'd then with a perplexed doubt,
Whether the world did loose or gaine in this.

(AW 14-15)

Is death an end or a beginning, and if a beginning can death then be called desirable? Initially, and at regular points in both poems, Donne proposes the paradox of a mourning-celebration of the particular death of a virtuous girl and of death in general. The paradox of the "perplexed doubt" gains poignancy from the hyperbolic description of the world in mourning:

This world, in that great earth-quake languished;
For in a common Bath of teares it bled.

(AW, 11-12)

But the subsequent response is ambivalent: "... it joy'd, it mourn'd" (AW 20).

Similarly, in Burnt Norton, having received a hint of "our first world" in the rose garden vision, the poet questions the possibility of rebirth. In death, or in sleep which is the parody of death, there is apparent finality:

Time and the bell have buried the day,
The black cloud carries the sun away.

(BN, IV, p. 179)

But immediately, the question is raised, although haltingly: is death an end, does the black cloud obscure the sun's warmth forever, or,

Will the sunflower turn to us, will the clematis Stray down, bend to us; tendril and spray Clutch and clinging?
Chill
Fingers of yew be curled
Down on us?

(BN IV, pp. 179-180)
The answer is an immediate affirmation of faith:

After the kingfisher's wing
Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
At the still point of the turning world.

The imagery and paradox of this passage are rich and complex. The sunflower is a symbol of the spiritual light of the son-sun, Christ; the blue of the clematis symbolizes Mary or the grace-giving quality. The flash of the kingfisher's wing answering "light to light", like Shelley's skylark and Hopkins' windhover, is a hint, merely, of the presence of God. It is silent and invisible, yet present there to be perceived by the still soul at the still point. The downward gesture of the clematis suggests the reaching of God down to man, which is implied in the Heracleitean fragment prefixing the poem, "the road up and the road down are the same". The mercy of God thus assured, however, does not diminish the pain and horror of death, symbolized by the "fingers of yew". In order for us to comprehend the value of death, we must hold it up for examination. The meditation on the "dying life" forms the core of the first Anniversary, "An Anatomy of the World" and of the second and third Quartets, East Coker and Dry Salvages.

The first irony of human life is that man begins to die from the moment of conception: "We are borne ruinous" (AW, 95). Every child's birth is a re-enactment of the Original Fall:

. . . children come not right, nor orderly, Excerpt they headlong come, and fall upon An ominous precipitation.

(AW, 96-98)

Implicit in every birth is the death brought upon mankind by that
So delightful is the "little death" of sexual union, we willingly "kill ourselves to propagate our kinde" (119). These are the horns of the dilemma: the regeneration of the species leads to the degeneration of the individual—"And yet we doe not that; we are not men" (111). Here it is the voice of the Donne of the "Elegies" and "Songs and Sonets", never entirely lost in the sacred writings, which asks, and answers, the question "How witty's ruine?" (AW, 99).

The theme of the ceaseless flux of the physical world, in microcosm and macrocosm alike,

The circulation of the lymph . . . figured in the drift of stars,
(BN, II, p.177)

is expanded in East Coker. Echoing Donne's concept "We are borne ruinous", Eliot's poem begins "In my beginning is my end". Death is ever-present in life. The earth consists of "flesh, fur, and faeces" and the dead nourish the living. Hence, the image of

The association of man and woman
In daunsinge, signifying matrimonie --
(EC I, p. 183)

although representative of the attempt in ritual to impose pattern on the chaos of ceaseless flux, gives way to the hint of the grinning skull beneath the skin:

Mirth of those long since under earth
Nourishing the corn.
The circle of the dancers around the bonfire is very different from the dance in the refining fire of *Little Gidding* because its rhythm is tied to that of the seasons. It is a fertility rite where "leaping through the flames" indicates the physical desire necessary for the "coupling of man and woman/And that of beasts". Yet, lest this vision seem balanced in favour of the spiritual life in the duality of body and spirit which is implicit in both Donne and Eliot, Eliot pictures the physical union of man and woman as "A dignified and commodious sacrament". Their union is a "necessarue conjunc­tion" and "betokeneth concorde". It may be reducable to "Dung and death", but it is the necessary condition of man: "And yet we doe not that; we are not men."

Nevertheless, there is degeneration with each successive generation: man is "Contracted to an inch, who was a span". (AW, 136). His allotted time of life has shrunk as well:

> Alas, we scarce live long enough to trie
> Whether a new made clocke runne right, or lie.  
> (AW, 129-130)

Just as the little world of man is degenerate, so too is the macrocosm. The maiming one would expect in man's first violent fall was suffered by the world itself in its cradle:

> The world did in her Cradle take a fall,  
> And turn'd her braines, and took a generall maine  
> Wronging each joynt of th' universall frame.  
> (AW, 196-198)

Because the angels fell first, creation and the fall are simultaneous; "In my beginning is my end":

...64
So did the world from the first houre decay.  
The evening was beginning of the day.  
(AW, 201-2)

There is decay and sterility written into the scheme of things:

The father, or the mother barren is.  
The clouds conceive not raine, or doe not powre  
In the due birth-time, downe the balmy showre,  
The'Ayre doth not motherly sit on the earth,  
To hatch her seasons, and give all things birth.  
Spring-times were common cradles, but are toombes;  
And false-conceptions fill the generall wombgs.  
(AW, 380-386)

In contrast with the possibilities of human virtues  
as symbolized by Elizabeth Drury, mankind without virtue is a lowly creature:

Thus man, this worlds Vice-Emperor, in whom  
All faculties, all graces are at home;  
And if in other Creatures they appeare,  
They're but mans ministers, and Legats there,  
To worke on their rebellions, and reduce  
Them to Civility, and to mans use.  
This man, whom God did wooe, and loth t'attend  
Till man came up, did downe to man descend,  
This man, so great, that all that is, is his,  
Oh what a trifle, and poore thing he is!  
(AW, 161-170)

The loss of "intrinsique Balm" (AW, 57) in man's fall from grace has led to the death of even the least sinful:

Her death hath taught us dearely, that thou art  
Corrupt and mortall in thy purest part.  
(AW, 61-2)

The hand of man smells of mortality; "Dung and death" are pervasive.  Yet despite the apparent hopelessness in the contemptus mundi meditation in the Anatomy and in the first movement of East Coker, there is a glimmer in both poems: in the third movement of East Coker, Eliot recalls the vision of
the rose garden which is

Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
Of death and birth.

(EC III, p. 187)

I have italicized "requiring" because the connection of the object belonging to this transitive verb is ambiguous: the attainment of ecstasy seems to depend on, or require, something which involves the agony of birth and death. Since what follows in the fourth movement is an extended image of Christ as the "wounded surgeon", it would seem that what Eliot is insisting on is the interdependence of flesh and spirit, that the health of the latter requires the disease of the former. This is the answer to the objection, ending Burnt Norton, that once the perfection of the rose garden is experienced, however momentarily, the "waste sad time/Stretching before and after" is "ridiculous". Ridiculous it may be, and it does indeed give rise to the "Mirth of those long since under earth/Nourishing the corn", but it is necessary.

The paradox of health and life implicit in disease and death infuses Donne's poem as well. The poet is performing an anatomy on the cadaver of the world, which strangely enough is not dead, although it is so putrified it cannot bear a complete dissection (AW, 435 ff.). Oblivious to this ambiguous state of health, the world assumes it is well, yet it is in a "Letargee" or "neutralitie" (AW, 24, 92). But out of this mundane corruption "a true religious Alchimy" (AW, 182) can be effected by means of the study of the pattern of virtue. The lesson of the
anatomy is two-fold and paradoxical:

The heart being perish'd, no part can be free.
And that except thou feed (not banquet) on
The supernaturall food, Religion,
Thy better growth growes withered, and scant.

(AW, 186-9)

Man can effect a "better Growth" by emulating the incarnate pattern of virtue; assent to this pattern for life is given in certain of the symbolic forms of religion. The Eucharistic symbol is more explicit in Eliot:

The dripping blood our only drink,
The bloody flesh our only food.

(EC IV, p. 188)

Similarly, Elizabeth dead is, like the "wounded surgeon", both healer and medicine. Now the memory of her virtue acts like medicinal herbs on the sick body of the world:

Since herbes, and roots, by dying, lose not all,
But they, yea Ashes too, are medicinall.

(AW, 403-4)

In balanced, axiomatic clauses, the paradox of health-in-disease, life-in-death, is stated as the central lesson of East Coker. The paradoxes describe the Passion of Christ, the "wounded surgeon" and "dying nurse" who experienced a sacrificial death, but the present tense in the passage suggests a continual re-enactment of the Passion, for the suffering, as well as the virtue, of the dying God serves as a pattern for man. As a patient in the earthly hospital endowed by the "ruined millionaire" (fallen Adam), man is not offered salvation as a palliative:

... [the] constant care is not to please
But to remind of our, and Adam's curse,
And that, to be restored, our sickness must grow worse.
(ED IV, p. 188)

The via negativa of the soul's progress demands acceptance of a healing pain:

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

This illuminates the paradox of the Easter Passion: in comprehending the happy death of man and of Christ, the Christian can say "We call this Friday good."

Thus, one symptom of the fever suffered in the "frigid purgatorial fires" is the great thirst which ironically is a healthy symptom:

Thirst for that time, O my insatiate soule,
And serve thy thirst with Gods safe-sealing Bowle.
Be thirsty still, and drinke still til thou goe.
'Tis th'only Health, to be Hydropique so.

(PS. 45-8)

Similarly, the wounded surgeon has the solution to the "enigma of the fever chart" in East Coker IV: the thirst of the fevered soul is an indication of eventual health.

The argument corollary to the "dying life" thus forms the other side of the paradox: just as physical birth implies our death, so too death engenders a spiritual rebirth. "We are born with the dead" (LG, V) means both that we are born dying and that we are only born at the moment of death. Furthermore, the body plays a vital part in the rebirth:

For though the soul of man
Be got when man is made; 'tis borne but than
When man doth die, Our body's as the wombe,
And as a mid-wife death directs it homg.

(AW, 451-4)
Paradoxically, then, the body is both a prison and a cradle for the soul:

Think in how poore a prison thou didst lie
After, enabled but to sucke, and crie.
(PS, 173-4)

The body is a "Province pack'd up in two yards of skinne" (PS, 176), and the imprisoned governor of this province is liberated only by death. A good man has title to grace, yet he must die in order to claim it:

... though a good man hath
Title to Heaven, and plead it by his Faith
And though he may pretend a conquest, since
Heaven was content to suffer violence,
Yea though he plead a long possession too,
(For they're in Heaven on Earth, who Heavens workes do,)
Though he had right, and power, and Place before,
Yet Death must usher, and unlocke the doore.
(PS, 149-156)

This is the difficult lesson to be learned by the virtuous soul; the methods of learning likewise involve difficulties.

iii

The dilemma of the orthodox Christian is an epistemological one: impelled to comprehension of an incomprehensible God through moral self-examination, he must turn his attention to methods of knowledge. At all times, moreover, he is aware of imperfection—he sees but "through a glass darkly"—and uncertain of the efficacy of his own part in the process of right knowledge: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8).

Conscientious practice of belief obliges him to accept these contradictions as, for example, Nicolas Cusanus did. Perfection
of "learned ignorance" proceeds from the knowledge that

The relationship of our intellect to the truth is like that of a polygon to a circle; the resemblance to the circle grows with the multiplication of the angles of the polygon; but apart from its being reduced to identity with the circle, no multiplication, even if it were infinite, of its angles will make the polygon equal the circle.\footnote{...}

This description of the polygon which merely approaches the perfection of the circle is the substance of the Christian impulse to self-knowledge. Mindful that the "doctrine of learned ignorance is an earth-bound view of transcendent knowledge", and thus imperfect, the believer undertakes the task in humility, a condition which brings him unknowingly closer. The paradox of learned ignorance turns on the distinction between two kinds of knowledge, that of the world, which is illusive, and that of the self, which is elusive.

Explicit in both the Anniversaries and the Four Quatrains is the necessity of holding up for ridicule the knowledge of this world in order to uncover knowledge of the self, and thus each poet performs an anatomy on the dead world. In the Anniversary poems, the dissection is carried on in the "glimmering light" of the pattern of virtue lost in the death of Elizabeth (AW, 70-74). Donne states the didactic necessity of an examination of imperfect worldly knowledge:

This new world may be safer, being told
The dangers and diseases of the old.
(AW, 87-88)

The first Anniversary, then, is a description of the cadaver, elucidating to those who can bear to listen to its smell, and
it is necessarily hurried:

So the worlds carcasse would not last, if I
Were punctuall in this Anatomy.
Nor smels it well to hearers, if one tell
Them their disease, who fain would think they're wel.

(AW, 439-442)

The second Anniversary begins with the observation that such an
anatomy has limitations which must be recognized:

Let thine owne times as an old story be,
Be not concern'd: study not why, nor whan;
Doe not so much, as not beleve a man.
For though to err be worst, to try truths forth,
Is far more busines, then this world is worth.

(PS, 50-54)

This looks forward to Eliot's doctrine of "detachment"
(LG III), which allows one to see the things of time in per­
spective. The imprecations here against "trying truths forth"
does not mean that one should ignore entirely the knowledge
which the world offers, else why bother anatomizing it; rather,
this poem distinguishes between that kind of learning sought in
order to "doubt wisely" and that sought merely to propose "A
hundred controversies of an Ant". The more important discover­
ies such as the "New Philosophy" of Kepler and Galileo, "cals
all in doubt" (AW, 205); but it is a doubt which fragments unity
and order:

'Tis all in pieces, all cohaerence gone;
All just supply, and all Relation;
Prince, Subject, Father, Sonne are things forgot.

(AW, 213-215)

Worldly learning is self-cancelling:

And one soule thinkes one, and another way
Another thinkes, and 'tis an even lay.

(PS, 267-8)
When irrelevant facts such as "how the stone doth enter in/The bladders Cave, and never break the skin" or "how blood, which to the hart doth flow/Doth from one ventricle to th'other go" (PS, 269-272) cannot be determined, how can man know that which is most important to him—the self? The soul is thus "oppress'd with ignorance" (PS, 253):

Poor soule in this thy flesh what do'ist thou know,
Thou know'ist thy selfe so little, 'as thou know'ist not,
How thou did'ist die, nor how thou wast begot.

(PS, 254-6)

All this world's knowledge is at the level of the lowest form in the soul's school. Only in the "watch-towre" of the mind can things be apprehended beyond the limitation of "being taught by sense, and Fantasy". (PS, 292) Unlike Glanvill's Adam, man now needs spectacles, that is, magnifying glasses and telescopes with which "small things seem great,/Below" (293). By contrast what knowledge is required in Heaven shall be learned instantly; there

Thou shalt not peepe through lattices of eies,
Nor heare through Laberinthes of eares, nor learne
By circuit, or collections to discerne.

(PS, 296-8)

The knowledge the soul has of its own immortality is got by faith and not by reason:

Nor dost thou, (though thou knowst, that thou art so)
By what thou art made immortall, know.

(PS, 259-260)

And the "worthiest book" in which it is to be learned is the pattern of virtue symbolized by Elizabeth Drury:

Shee whose example they must all implore,
Who would or doe, or thinke well, and confesse
That aie the vertuous Actions they expresse,
Are but a new, and worse edition
Of her some one thought, or one action.

(PS, 306-310)

Similarly, the "wisdom of humility" aspired to in the
Quartets is contrasted with the trivia of "this twittering
world" where the false wisdom of the living dead is

Only a flicker
Over the strained time-ridden faces
Distracted from distraction by distraction
Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
Tumid apathy with no concentration.

(EN, III, pp. 178-9)

As in the "living Tombe" (PS, 252) of Donne's world, experience
in the unreal city is empty of meaning:

Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
That blows before and after time.

It is as gaseous as the audible smell of the cadaver Donne
anatomizes, a mere "Eructation of unhealthy souls".14

If the wisdom of these men of the business world is
useless, of even less value is the "wisdom of age"; it is a
"deliberate habitude" (EC, II) and, unlike the "stupid alacrity"
to which Donne exhorts his soul (PS, 63), it is a deceitful
serenity, giving way to

... fear of fear and frenzy, their fear of possession,
Of belonging to another, or to others, or to God.

(EC II, p. 185)

If viewed as a final discovery, the wisdom of experience is but
"the knowledge of dead secrets"; there can be no final discover­
ies in a temporal sphere because of the continual flux:

The knowledge imposes a pattern, and falsifies ... And every moment is a new and shocking
Valuation of all we have been.

(EC II, p. 185)
The path of sensory experience leads, like the "lattices of eies" and "laberinths of eares", into...

...a dark wood, in a bramble,
On the edge of a grimpen, where is no secure foothold,
And menaced by monsters, fancy light,
Risking enchantment.

(EC II, p. 185)

The final stanza of the third movement of East Coker, following the exhortation to learn from "the agony of death and birth", is a description of the via negativa. It is a long passage which summarizes well the paradoxical teaching of the soul:

To arrive where you are, to get from where you are not,
You must go by a way wherein there is no ecstasy,
In order to arrive at what you do not know
You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance.
In order to possess what you do not possess
You must go by the way of dispossession.
In order to arrive at what you are not
You must go through the way in which you are not.
And what you do not know is the only thing you know
And what you own is what you do not own
And where you are is where you are not.

(p. 187)

This is a knowledge which must be discovered, however, and that discovery is the task of the rest of the poem. It entails an anatomy of the carcass of human life; the "drifting wreckage" of Dry Salvages is offered to our curiosity as evidence of our mutability. Thus, the river is both a "conveyor of commerce" and a destroyer of illusions, "reminder/Of what men choose to forget". The past cannot be disowned in the illusory philosophy of progress; it recurs in the "sudden illumination" of meaning when we recognize
The backward look behind the assurance
Of recorded history, the backward half-look
Over the shoulder, towards the primitive terror.
(DS II, p. 195)

This, then, is the necessity of meditation on the past: "Time
the destroyer is time the preserver" of the first moment of
human agony, the wrecking of the soul:

The bitter apple and the bite in the apple.
And the ragged rock in the restless waters,

present themselves to the memory of man as evidence "not only
of the pastness of the past, but of its presence".16 This
knowledge should free man from pursuing "A hundred controver-
sies of an Ant" but it eludes most men who, especially in
times of "distress of nations", turn instead to those who

... communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or scry,
Observe disease in signatures, evoke
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm
And tragedy from fingers; release omens
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable
With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams
Or barbituric acids, or dissect
The recurrent images into pre-conscious terrors--
Explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams.
(DS V, p. 198)17

Ultimately, this learning is not less inadequate,
though it is less ambitious, than that of the New Philosophers;
but whether by means of astronomy or astrology,

Man hath weav'd out a net, and this net throwne
Upon the Heavens, and now they are his owne
(AW, 279-280)

and he himself will be enmeshed, in the process, unless he
turns to the "wisdom of humility". The "watch-towre" of the
mind is symbolized, in Eliot's poem, by Little Gidding, a
place where "prayer has been valid", where the lesson to be learned is supraverbal, not to be apprehended through "lattices of eies" and "laberinths of eares":

And what the dead had no speech for, when living, They can tell you, being dead: the communication Of the dead is tongued with fire beyond the language of the living. 
(LG I, p. 201)

Here, "sense and notion" must be abandoned so that the soul will be ready for the lesson of the master, the "familiar compound ghost". The location and time of the lesson is both specific and general, "England and nowhere. Never and always", because it is both in time and out of time. ("Only through time time is conquered.")

Before we focus on the goal of the soul's progress, we must first examine the conditions propitious for good learning: in both poets these involve paradoxes expressed in imagery of light and darkness, stillness and motion, disproportion and concord, nothingness and something, and time and eternity.

It is said that from the bottom of a well one can see the stars at mid-day as brightly as if it were midnight. Similarly, the eyes must be blinded to this world in order to focus on the light of the new world. The "saint Lucies night" (PS, 120) and the "midwinter spring" (LG I, p. 200) both contain a promise of the increasing light of eternity. Yet it is a light to be apprehended only in "the dark time of the year" (LG I), the dark time of the soul which is "the dark-
ness of God*. Here, one is blindly conscious of what is being removed:

As, in a theatre,
The lights are extinguished, for the scene to be changed
With a hollow rumble of wings, with a movement of darkness on darkness,
And we know that the hills and the trees, the distant panorama
And the imposing façade are all being rolled away--
(EC III, p. 186)

The self is being purged and the eyes blinded by the light of God's darkness.¹⁸

In Donne's poem the eyes are blinded by death:

... death is but a Groome
Which brings a taper to the outward roome,
Whence thou spiest first a little glimmering light,
And after brings it nearer to thy sight.
(PS, 85-88)

But in Eliot, the light appears in this life to the "unseen eyebeam", in adumbration, merely, at first:

And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight . . .
The surface glittered out of heart of light . . .
(BN I, p. 176)

The rose garden is inhabited by presences, "dignified, invisible", echoes reflected in the pool, who are recognized when seen for the first time at the end of the poem:

We die with the dying:
See, they depart, and we go with them.
We are born with the dead:
See, they return, and bring us with them.
(LG V, p. 208)

But between these two points in time, or rather, out of time, is the division between what Underhill calls the "first mystic life" or 'Illuminative Way', and the "second mystic life" or 'Unitive Way'.¹⁹ This is the dark night of the soul, a state
of misery and negation of self:

Internal darkness, deprivation
And destitution of all property,
Dessication of the world of sense,
Inoperancy of the world of spirit;

*BN III, p.179*  

The light is then revealed in *Little Gidding* as that of a "midwinter spring", where the "brief sun flames the ice" *(LG I, p. 200)*, like the frigid purgatorial fires of *East Coker*:

A glare that is blindness in the early afternoon.
And glow more intense than blaze of branch, or brazier,
Stirs the dumb spirit: no wind, but pentecostal fire
In the dark time of the year.

*(LG I, p. 200)*

It is the light at the still point of the turning world, "a white light still and moving" *(BN II, p. 177)*, the refiner's fire which effects the metamorphosis of the soul from base metal to pure gold in a "true religious Alchimy" *(AW, 182)*.

The imagery in Donne's poem emphasizes the negation, rather than the darkness, to be experienced before this metamorphosis can take place. The world in the first *Anniversary* lost all identity with the death of Elizabeth Drury:

Thou hast forgot thy name, thou hadst; thou wast
Nothing but she, and her thou hast o'rpast.

*(AW, 31-32)*

The old world now exists but only in a state of putrefaction, while the possibility of the new world is faintly outlined in the memory and "figuring forth" of the ideal, the paradise within. The story of mankind describes a physical diminishing in stature:
... so in lengthe is man
Contracted to an inch, who was a span
(AW, 135-6)
which apparently must proceed to a point infinitesimal:

Onely death addes t'our length: nor are we growne
In stature to be men, till we are none.
(AW, 145-6)

Littleness held a fascination for Renaissance men:
things of the microcosm were thought copies of the greater perfection of the macrocosm. Thus, if man could now be thought of as a distillation of the virtues of the fathers, there would be no cause for alarm, but

'Tis shrinking, not close-weaving, that hath thus,
In minde and body both bedwarfed us.
(AW, 153-4)

Man seems to be striving for a return to the elemental chaos out of which he was created:

We seeme ambitious, Gods whole worke t'undoe;
Of nothing he made us, and we strive too,
To bring ourselves to nothing backe;
(AW, 155-8)

Man is a "nought" (PS, 84) and, like other unpraise-worthy subjects of paradox, not worth study; yet in aspiring to the divine pattern of perfection, he seeks to "peece a circle" in union with God. The playful Renaissance speculations on the qualities of "nothing", "zero" and the circle of perfection, merged the two:

... the ideas of perfection and totality connected with omnis and the image of the circle combine with the nihilism of the idea of nothing. The letter "0" and the figure itself ... framed of nothing, the
whole cosmos is a box of 0's. '0' (zero) is the
cipher which "deciphered"—that is, understood and
un-nothinged—makes "all".\footnote{25}

Thus, the futile attempt of medieval and Renaissance mathe-
maticians to square the circle\footnote{26} is turned around by Donne
into the more profitable task of circling the square; in Eliot,
too, in order to become something, the soul must find "the
unimaginable/Zero summer" which follows "midwinter spring".
Like Elizabeth Drury, then, he must become "all this All"
(PS, 376).\footnote{27} In the disproportion and flux of the world man
knows, this part of the journey of the soul is probably the
most difficult.

For ages, man had thought of the spherical shape of
the head, of the earth, and of the Ptolemaic universe, as an
imitation of the "Hieroglyphick" of God, the circle of per-
fection.\footnote{28} But the New Philosophy discovered the motions of
the heavens to be labyrinthine:

We thinke the heavens enjoy their Sphericall
Their round proportion embracing all.
And yet their various and perplexed course,
Observ'd in divers ages doth enforce
Men to finde out so many 'Eccentrique parts,
Such divers downe-right lines, such overthwarts,
As disproportion that pure forme ...

\textit{(AW, 251-7)}

The sun cannot "Perfit a Circle" (269) and

... of the Starres which boast that they do runne
In Circle still, none ends where he begunne.

\textit{(AW, 275-6)}

Nor does the earth keep her round proportion: her face is
blemished with "warts and pock-holes" (AW, 300). Lovers, too,
even in the transcendent union of their love, are victims of the flux:

Poore couse'ned cose'nor, that she, and that thou,
Which did begin to love, are neither now.
You are both fluid, chang'd since yesterday.
(PS, 391-3)

Some of this movement, however, can be said to bring man closer to God; in the grotesque but appropriate image of the decapitated man, which opens the second Anniversary, the dead sometimes imitate the quick:

His eies will twinkle, and his tongue will roll
As though he beckned, and cal'd backe his Soul,
He grasps his hands, and he pulls up his feet,
And seemes to reach, and to step forth to meet
His soule.

(PS, 13-17)

His gestures are confused, but indicate the proper intentions, at least: he aspires to union. It cannot be won until the soul is fitted to the pattern of virtue, Elizabeth, who is "beauties best, proportion", in comparison with whom the universe is square:

To whose proportions if we would compare
Cubes, th'are unstable; Circles, Angulare.
(PS, 141-2)

The circle of her soul's perfection is as impervious to analysis as Yeats's dancer:

... though all do know, that quantities
Are made of lines, and lines from Points arise,
None can these lines or quantities unjoynt,
And say this is a line, or this a point.
(PS, 131-134)

Furthermore, this heavenly perfection can receive addition:

Shee, who by making full perfection grow,
Peeces a Circle, and still keepes it so,  
Long'd for, and longing for'it, to heaven is gone,  
Where shee receives, and gives addition.  

(PS, 507-510)

In meditating on it, Donne's soul can touch this circumference from its base point, the earth:

Then, soule, to thy first pitch work up againe;  
Know that all lines which circles doe containe,  
For once that they the center touch, do touch  
Twice the circumference; and be thou such.  

(PS, 435-8)

Thus, the soul is an immeasurable line between heaven and earth: when the soul is hatched from the shell of the body, it "dispatches in a minute all the way,/Twixt Heaven and Earth" (PS, 188-9). Like the marrow which "strings fast the little bones of necke, and backe" (PS, 212), "So by the soule doth death string Heaven and Earth" (PS, 213). The implication is, of course, that God makes the descent just as man moves upward:

This man, whom God did wooe, and loth t'attend  
Till man came up, did downe to man descend.  

(AW, 167-8)

The past tense, "did wooe", "did down descend", indicates the specific meaning of the Incarnation, but the Incarnation recurs in men's hearts continually; and man must attempt to reach God as well. The soul is repeatedly exhorted to move "up, up". (PS, 294, 339, 345, 347, 349, 351, 353, 356). As in the Heraclitean fragment prefixing the Quartets, the way up and the way down are one and the same for the diameter of the circle.
Eliot turns this circle image around: in Burnt Norton it is the centre to which the soul aspires and the cyclic movement is that of the time-bound universe, captured in never-ending flux. Furthermore, there are analogous wheels within wheels:33

The dance along the artery
The circulation of the lymph
Are figured in the drift of stars.
(BN II, p. 177)

Donne's planets execute a serpentine motion; Eliot's

Simulate(s) triumphal cars
Deployed in constellated wars
Scorpion fights against the Sun
Until the Sun and Moon go down
Comets weep and Leonids fly
Hunt the heavens and the plains
Whirled in a vortex . . . 
(EC II, p. 184)34

There is a fusion here of the personified celestial bodies in a constant drama, as seen by the Greeks, and of the combatants in the final apocalyptic war in heaven described in Revelations.

Man's movements are less catastrophic, but are nevertheless feverish. Some ceremonies of man are intended to ensure, in a magical way, the very cyclical motion of time and the universe which constitutes his prison. The "dignified and commodious sacrament" of matrimony (EC I) features a circle dance around the fire:

Keeping time
Keeping the rhythm in their dancing
As in their living in the living seasons.

In contrast to this charming portrait, the cycle of human
life is more often merely dreary, as in the cycle of life
marked by the rhythm of the river in Dry Salvages, and in the
motion of the fishermen "forever bailing/Setting and hauling"
(DS II, p. 193). Even here, though, there is a possibility
of breaking out of the circle with

... the hardly, barely prayable
Prayer of the one Annunciation.  
(DS II, p. 194)

But understanding of the Annunciation is only possible in
time and through time. An examination of human history re-
veals that "... the moments of agony ... are likewise
permanent/With such permanence as time has." Therefore,
although "Time the destroyer is time the preserver", that is,
the preserver of all those moments in history held up for
our examination and comprehension, there is a consolation if
one poses a timelessness in opposition to time, a still point
at the centre of the whirling universe. The still point is
timeless, yet can only be perceived in reference to time;
that is, just as it was necessary for the Word to be made
flesh, so too this still point is apprehended by the flesh.
Eliot symbolizes this point as the motionless, fleshless
dance; the paradox is evocative of Part V of Burnt Norton in
the image of successful art, which, like the Incarnation of
the divine creative principle, is an "intersection of the
timeless with time":

Only by the form, the pattern,
Can words or music reach
The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
Moves perpetually in its stillness.  
(BN V, p. 180)
In the mystic experience, it is common for the subject to "become" one with the object of meditation; one strives for abnegation of self and unity with "other". Julian of Norwich, for example, speaks of being "enfolded" into God. This is what Eliot means, I think, in Part V of *Dry Salvages* when he recalls the momentary imagining of the rose garden experience; it is

> ...music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts.

In the words of the figure in the empty street in *Little Gidding*, one condition of being in the rose garden or the "refining fire" is that you must move in measure like a dancer. Paradoxically, the soul is admonished to be still:

> I said to my soul, be still, and let the dark come upon you
> Which shall be the darkness of God
> (EC II, p. 186);

yet it is also beckoned to move:

> Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
> Round the corner . . .
> (BN I, p. 175)

There is no resolution of the paradox—"We must be still and still moving" (EC V, p. 189)—but it may at least be understood in terms of the relationship of time to the timeless. St. Augustine recognized the difficulties of this understanding:

> Who speaks thus sceptically about God's eternal qualities, do not yet understand thee, O Wisdom of God,
Light of souls, understand not yet how the things be made, which by Thee, and in Thee are made: yet they strive to comprehend things eternal, whilst their heart fluttereth between the motions of things past and to come, and is still unstable. Who shall hold it, and fix it, that it be settled awhile, and awhile catch the glory of that ever-fixed Eternity, and compare it with the times which are never fixed, and see that it cannot be compared.  

Death suspended time for Elizabeth Drury:

Some moneths she hath been dead (but being dead, Measures of time are all determined) But long shee'ath beene away, long, long.  

and in moving into union with God, the soul

Dispatches in a minute all the way, Twixt Heaven and Earth . . .  

The point of the long passage (PS, 189-206) listing the regions of the air and the order of the heavenly bodies which the soul does not stop to recount is both that such disputes as the Ptolemaic versus the Brahaic order of planets are irrelevant, and that heaven is not there-then, but here-now:  

Heaven is as neare, and present to her face, As colours are, and objects in a roome Where darknesse was before, when Tapers come.  

Released from time, the soul's progress is paradoxically "long-short" (PS, 219).

Logically, then, the meditation in the second Anniversary in which Donne instructs his soul to think itself into a "religious death", like that of Elizabeth, is in the present tense. The little drama moves from the last broken breaths of the dying man, to the sounding of the death knell, to the
reading of the will (in which the inheritance of sin is repaid to Satan by the immaculate blood of Christ), to the weeping of friends and the burial ceremony. But this ceremony "Laies thee to sleepe but a Saint Lucies night" (PS, 120); this last long night is a prelude to the eternal light, and is thus "long-short". Since death and its logical corollary, rebirth, is present in every moment, time continually posits its opposite, timelessness. The sounding of the trumpet at the final resurrection is given in the Bible as a prophecy and hence is in the future tense:

In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump; for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.

(I Cor. 15:52)

But Donne uses the past tense in conveying this prophecy:

Thou art the Proclamation; and I ame
The Trumpet, at whose voice the people came.

(PS, 527-8)

Perhaps he is merely fulfilling the couplet's need for a rhyme with "ame", but it is unlikely. I prefer to think of it as a final flag by a master of paradox, waved as a warning to those who would try to get a fix on the "still and still moving" eternal moment.

In *Burnt Norton* the meditation on the futility of time,

If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable,

is immediately followed by the shadowy awareness of a return to Eden,
Down the passage which we did not take  
Towards the door we never opened  
Into the rose-garden.

"What might have been" is then, suddenly, no longer an abstraction of "a world of speculation": the still point has a reality as cogent as the whirling pattern of the "boarhound and the boar". But at this point in the poem its meaning is unclear:

I can only say, there we have been: But I cannot say where,  
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.  
(BN II, p. 177)

Comprehension of what must be "partial ecstasy . . . partial horror" is avoided:

Yet the enchainment of past and future  
Woven in the weakness of the changing body,  
Protects mankind from heaven and damnation  
Which flesh cannot endure,  
(p. 178)

but consciousness must be cultivated so that in recalling "the moment of the rose-garden" in time, time may be conquered. Observation of the way in which art conquers time, as in the pattern of the Chinese jar, leads to a comparison, in the fifth movement of Burnt Norton, of imperfect words and the perfect Word. Christ in the wilderness was tempted to vacillation, yet "Love is itself unmoving"; the pattern for the still point is unmoving Love (one of the many hypostases of God), which is timeless,

Except in the aspect of time  
Caught in the form of limitation  
Between un-being and being.
The end of the journey of the soul is an understanding of this gift of love: "The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation." (DS V, p. 199) First, however, human time, "a time for living and for generation" and for dying, must be examined. Thus, the paradoxes of the required agony of birth and death, leading to restoration, already discussed above, lead to the awareness that "love is most nearly itself/When here and now cease to matter" (EC V, p. 189). Next, in *Dry Salvages*, we are brought to an examination of what Bodelsen calls "amorphous time", "time not our time . . . /Older than the time of chronometers" (DS I, p. 192). This is cosmic time, symbolized by the ocean which holds "hints of earlier and other creation" as mutable as man; but just as the inertia of Donne's world argues "its everlastingnesse" (PS, 2), so too

We cannot think of a time that is oceanless
Or of an ocean not littered with wastage
Or a future that is not liable
Like the past, to have no destination.

Because man cannot bear very much reality, he cannot think of the futility of his actions, of "making a trip that will be unpayable/For a haul that will not bear examination" (DS II, p. 194).

As an alternative and a way into the timeless moment of the still point, one must cultivate a detachment, which brings release from reliance on the "fruit of action": this is the lesson of Krishna:
He who sees the inaction that is in action, and the action that is in inaction, is wise indeed. Even when he is engaged in action he remains poised in the tranquillity of the Atman.41

Only a few are capable of fulfilling the required "Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender" (DS V, p. 198); total sacrifice, like the "lifetime's death in love" undertaken by saints and more especially, by Christ is necessary in order

... to apprehend
The point of intersection of the timeless
With time ... 
(DS V, p. 198)

which is the gift of Incarnation. The "impossible union" of flesh and fleshlessness, time and timelessness, in which "past and future/Are conquered and reconciled" is only half understood in a life given over entirely to "prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action". And the right action of fusing one's will with that of God, which is enjoined by Krishna,42 is an impossible goal for most men. Most can be content only

If our temporal reversion nourish
(Not too far from the yew tree)
The life of significant soil... (DS V, p. 190)43

The promise made to the soul, and implicitly to the reader, at the beginning of each poem is fulfilled and revealed for the first time in the final lines of each. The imagery of the journey's end is quite different for each of the two poets, although its ultimate implications are cer-
tainly the same for both, within the Christian frame of reference. How this "amazing grace" reveals itself is the subject of the next, and final, section of this chapter.

Because the progress of the soul must go by way of total negation of the ego before the true self is revealed, the central poems of the Quartets, East Coker and Dry Salvages, seem to offer no hope of recapturing the light which appeared to the "unseen eyebeam" of Burnt Norton. The paradoxes of necessary suffering are explicitly given in East Coker IV, but as lessons that must be learned with more than intellectual assent. This is to be realized in the "refining fire" of Little Gidding. Inasmuch as its structure resembles that of the other Quartets, Little Gidding is a coda of the soul's progress, the final stage in the education consisting in the words of the "familiar compound ghost" of the second movement and the catechism of the fourth. It is both a separate expression of the mystical discovery of self and the total fabric of the Four Quartets made up of thematic and imagistic threads to the other three. In this sense, Little Gidding represents both a return and a journey into new territory. The object of the journey is the comprehension of eternal joy.

The first movement, as in the other poems, is located in a place which had personal associations for the poet; the chapel at Little Gidding represents a return, but the return
is more than the visit of a devout Christian to a restored monument. The naturalistic and symbolic imagery of the first stanza offers a clue: at a literal level, the description is of a rare sunny day in the usually bleak English December,

When the short day is brightest, with frost and fire,
The brief sun flames the ice, on ponds and ditches,

but the next line makes this a miracle beyond the merely meteorological:

In windless cold that is the heart's heat.

The juxtaposition of cold and heat recalls the paradox of East Coker:

If to be warmed, then I must freeze
And quake in frigid purgatorial fires.

(EE IV)

It is the "pentecostal fire/In the dark time of the year",
which is the "darkness of God". Unlike the dance through the flames in East Coker I the scene here has no "earth smell/Or smell of living things", because this is the time of regeneration for the soul:

This is the spring time
But not in time's covenant.

The soul must undergo further cleansing before it is fulfilled in the "unimaginable /Zero summer".

Again, the possibility of fulfillment is questioned:

And what you thought you came for
Is only a shall, a husk of meaning
From which the purpose breaks only when it is fulfilled
If at all. (my italics)

and the via negativa is restated:
you would have to put off
Sense and notion.

The imagery of the three lyric stanzas of the second movement recalls that of the preceding poems, but with a new sense: here, the human endeavour imaged previously perishes in the refining fire. The rose petals whose dust is disturbed in recalling the rose garden vision of *Burnt Norton* are burned away now, leaving the hint of death, the "ash on an old man's sleeve". The "autumn heat" and the "vibrant air" of *Burnt Norton* I mark the "place where the story ended", that is, necessitate a denial of all previous experience, even that of the rose garden vision which impelled this progress of the soul. The dust which constituted man in the imagery of *East Coker* I is identical with that of the "house/The wall, the wainscot and the mouse", and as in *East Coker*, it is all reduceable to "flesh, fur, and faeces". But here there is no restoration, no generation, but rather a negation, "The death of all hope and despair". In the second stanza, the "flood and drouth/Over the eyes and in the mouth" are a ghastly parody of the baptism, and thus recall the destructive power of water in *Dry Salvages* I, "destroyer, reminder/Of what men choose to forget", that is, their mortality. The "parched, eviscerate soil", recalling and at the same time denying the efficacy of the "life of significant soil" so hopefully nourished at the end of *Dry Salvages*, here "Gapes at the vanity of toil"; thus there is a new recognition that even the contemplative life is equated with the toil of the fishermen in
Dry Salvages, "forever bailing,/Setting and hauling . . . a haul that will not bear examination." This mocker of human endeavour is the laughter without mirth which evokes the "country mirth,/Mirth of those long since under earth,/Nourishing the corn", but in Little Gidding even this cyclical organic process is stopped in the "death of earth".

The elemental imagery of the third lyric stanza has the same ambiguous meaning that it has in The Waste Land, and accordingly carries the same symbolic sense of being reborn of the water and of the spirit. Here, the water and fire exist beyond the temporal framework and in fact override it: they "succeed/The town, the pasture and the weed"; they "deride" the failure to accept the sacrifice which is rewarded by understanding of the meaning of the Incarnation; and they destroy the physical material of the chapel which survives as a symbol of the validity of prayer. The "death of fire and water" means, then, both the perishing of the water of Dry Salvages and all that it implies for the temporal flux, and of the flames of desire in which the wedding dancers leap in East Coker, and also the further meaning of death by fire and water, which is the promised rebirth by water and spirit.

The dialogue with the "dead master" occurs in the second of the two historic moments in which the poem is located, another "uncertain hour" in Britain's history. Accordingly, the imagery is military: the "dark dove" is a German bomber returning to the "horizon of his homing"; the dead leaves
which rattle like tin describe the after-effects of the bomb explosion; the two speakers "trod the pavement in a dead patrol" like that of the civilian watch. But the poet's experience, while located in wartime reality, has all the confusion and paradox of dream because the message brought relates to the purgatorial vision. First, the figure reveals the dismal "gifts reserved for age". These are sensual depletion, bitter laughter at human folly, and finally, recognition of the sins of commission, "which once you took for exercise of virtue". The "life of significant soil" of Dry Salvages must be nourished with detachment, or "right action" in order to liberate the self from temporal attachment or love, to union "beyond desire" with divine love.

There is a pause at this point for the reassurance that through the agony of sin ecstasy can be realized. It is in the quotation from Julian of Norwich:

Sin is Behovely, but
All shall be well, and
All manner of thing shall be well.46

This restates the paradox of the 'fortunate fall'--that fleshly excoriation is necessary for the concomitant acquisition of a "paradise within, happier far". The inclusion of Milton, in the following meditation on right action, with his royalist enemies who died on the scaffold in the civil strife seems natural; in the ultimate scheme of things they all "are folded in a single party" of death. This resolution of antinomies in the temporal sphere adumbrates that in the eternal
sphere, the final fusion of the fire and the rose.

The fourth movement of *Little Gidding* is a lyrical vision in which the "dove descending", the bomber of the third movement, is transmuted into a symbol of the purgatorial flames of the Holy Spirit. Now the "flame of incandescent terror", the communication of the dead . . . tongued with fire beyond the language of the living, (LG I) is seen to be the fire which engulfs and destroys the fires of lust and of political strife, the "sin and error". Man has the choice, here, "to be redeemed from fire by fire", but it is a Miltonic choice: the choice is to accept total negation of self will in alliance with the omnipotent will of God. The "intolerable shirt of flame" is one which "human power cannot remove". In these lines, the pivotal point of the entire *Quartets*, Eliot alludes to the conclusions Julian of Norwich came to regarding the significance of her "shewings", and they have the same catechismic structure: "Who devised the torment? Love".

The paradox is one basic to Christian theodicy: the love of God expressed both in the exemplary sacrifice of Christ and in the gift of Grace is at once purgatorial and ecstatic. The "hands that wove/The intolerable shirt of flame" are the same as the "bleeding hands" of the "wounded surgeon" in *East Coker*: this love suffers and demands suffering.

Just as *Little Gidding* celebrates the mystery of di-
vine love, which is at once all demanding, "(Costing not less than everything)", and all-giving, so too the final third of Donne's Progres celebrates the goal and reward of the soul in bliss, "essential joyes". "Joy" is the key word of the end of the second Anniversary: it occurs at least twenty times in the last one hundred and fifty lines. The "casual joyes" of this world in their inconstancy bear no resemblance to the "essential joy" of the beatific vision, which derives from the immutable nature of God. Like the circle of perfection which is paradoxically "peeched" by the soul, this kind of joy

\[\ldots\text{ doth every day admit}\]

\[\text{Degrees of growth, but none of loosing it.} \]
\[(\text{PS, } 495-496)\]

It is a "full, and such a filling good" (445). Grace is given only by God who is "both the object and the wit" (442), that is, both the means and the end of the soul's quest to achieve heaven,

\[\text{Both where more grace, and more capacitie} \]
\[\text{At once is given.} \]
\[(\text{PS, } 466-7)\]

There is little in Donne's beatific vision, at least at the end of the second Anniversary, of the agony of acceptance of the purgatorial pain involved in Eliot's concept of Love who "devised the torment". Eliot's poem has the tone of a final statement, and indeed it is the "epitaph" of his major poetry. Much of the agony of the paradox of suffering love was expressed elsewhere by Donne, for example in the "Holy Sonnets" and especially in the Devotions. Thus, while Eliot's
poem expresses to the end the apparent contradictions of torment and love inherent in Christian theodicy, the end of Donne's *Anniversaries* is a hymn of thanksgiving which takes full account of the afflictions of the flesh described in the beginning, but which looks forward to God's last great "Venite" (PS, 44). The poet pauses to reassert the limits of "transitory causes" of joy, such as worldly love:

Poore couse'ned cose'nor, that she, and that thou,  
Which did begin to love, are neither now.  
You are both fluid, chang'd since yesterday;  
Next day repaires, (but ill) last daies decay.  
Nor are, (Although the river keep the name)  
Yesterdaies waters, and to daies the same.  

(PS, 391-396)

Nor can transcendent joy be sought by a union of world effort, as the builders of Babel thought, for the earth is a base point on which to pitch the circle of perfection. Diversification of worship is wrong action also: "No Joye enjoyes that man, that many makes" (434). Union of all diversity is effected only by God's grace in the first resurrection, the new life made possible by the Incarnation; this can be experienced in the "watch-towre" of the mind, but there is more to come: Donne's soul on its progress exhorts all souls to an expression of

Joy that their last great Consummation  
Approches in the resurrection.  

(PS, 491-492)

The use of "Consummation" here evokes, as Shawcross points out in the footnote, the final words of the dying God, "Consummatus
est."—"It is finished" (John 19:30), and in this sense the passage implicitly asks us to recall the suffering of Christ in the flesh, the suffering which is explicitly detailed earlier in the poem. The ambiguity of Christ's words, however, also remind us of his purpose in living and dying, the resurrection which makes death a blessing. The structure of Donne's poem thus evokes Christ's words at the last Supper: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful but your sorrow shall be turned into joy" (John 16:20).

The language describing the journey's end in each poem may be different but the tone is the same: both end with a triumphant pronouncement of the unifying power of the divinity.
CHAPTER V

Footnotes


3 This recalls Donne's final Sermon, "Deaths Duell": "But then this exitus a morte, is but introitus in mortem, this issue, this deliverance from that death, the death of the wombe, is an entrance, a delivering over to another death, the manifold deaths of this world. Wee have a winding sheete in our Mothers wombe, which growes with us from our conception, and wee come into that world, wound up in that winding sheet, for wee come to seeke a grave. ... . We celebrate our owne funeralls with cryes, even at our birth; as though our threescore and ten yeares of life were spent in our mothers labour, and our circle made up in the first point thereof. We begge one Baptism with another, a sacrament of tears; And we come into a world that lasts many ages, but wee last not." The Sermons of John Donne, eds. Evelyn M. Simpson and George R. Potter, 10 vols., Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, vol. 10, p. 233.

4 Quoted from Chrysostom by Basil Willey in The Seventeenth Century Background, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor (first publ. 1934), p. 39.

5 Consider, too, the humanistic source of the image: it is from the moral treatise, The Bóke Named the Governour, by Eliot's 16th Century ancestor, Sir Thomas Elyot. The full quotation, from "The Good Order of Dancing", follows:

"And for as moche as by the association of a man and a woman in daunsinge may be signified matrimonie, I coulde in declarynge the dignitie and commoditie of that sacrament make intiere volumes, if it were not so communely known to all men, that almost every frere lymitour carieth it writen in his bosom. ... . In every daunse of moste auncient custome, there daunseth to gether a man and a woman, holding eche other by the hande or the arme, which betokeneth concorde." (London: Dent, n.d., p. 94, first publ. 1531).
The image is like that of the sterile Waste Land contemplated by Eliot's Fisherking:

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water

"What the Thunder Said", p. 66.

Helen Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, New York: Dutton, 1959, suggests a reading of Isaiah, ch. 53, regarding the suffering compassion of Christ in conjunction with this passage.

Cf. Sir Thomas Browne: "for the world, I count it not an Inne, but an Hospitall, and a place, not to live, but to die in."

Significantly, the refrain "Shee, shee is dead", in the Anatomy, which is occasioned by the "untimely death of Mistris Elizabeth Drury" is changed to "Shee, shee is gone" in the Progres which is a meditation on the instructive, "Religious death" of the girl.

Manley explains the metaphor of disseizen thus: "The entire case is ironic, however, since this good man paradoxically pleads the exact points that should render such an action unnecessary. He has title, the strength to have assumed the title, and long possession. Nevertheless, the property is not actually his until he wins the suit against himself. His own life disseizes him."

Of Learned Ignorance, transl. Fr. Germaine Heron, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1954,p. 11. A paradoxical mathematician, Nicolas expands the mathematical metaphor to describe the Deity as "a machina mundi whose centre, so to speak, is everywhere, whose circumference is nowhere, for God is its circumference and centre and he is everywhere and nowhere ", p. 111.


Quoted (from The Vanity of Dogmatizing) by Basil Willey, p. 177: "Adam needed no spectacles."


Cf. St. John of the Cross: "If any man among you seem to be wise, let him become ignorant that he may be wise, for the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. So that, in order to come
to union with the wisdom of God, the soul has to proceed rather by unknowing than by knowing...." Ascent of Mount Carmel, 3rd rev. ed., trans. E. Allison Peers, Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Image, 1958, p. 31.

16 "Tradition and the Individual Talent", Selected Prose, ed. John Hayward, Penguin, 1953, pp. 22-23. The passage is an exhortation to the poet to cultivate historical sense, "a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and the temporal together."

17. Here is a compendium of the kinds of learning practiced by Madame Sosostris and her cohorts: astrologers, spiritualists, augers, horoscope-readers, diviners, crystal-ball gazers, handwriting readers, palmists, lot-casters and tea-leaves readers, Tarot readers, cabalists, drug-pushers, and amateur psychoanalysts. The clairvoyant of The Waste Land, however, "had a bad cold"; her fellow teachers in Dry Salvages are just as thick-tongued.

18 Biblical references to the hypostasis of God as light are too numerous to recount but cf. I Peter 2:9: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

Cf. also "There is in God (some say) A deep, but dazzling darkness."


20 There is a danger at this point that the soul may feel itself irrevocably alienated from God. Cf. "Holy Sonnet - Thou hast made me...":

"Despair behind and death before doth cast Such terror..." p. 346, Shawcross.

This is the despair of a man deprived of divine love:

"For the arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me."

Job 6:4

21 The journey of Eliot's Magi was made, too, in "the very dead of winter".

22 Cf. Ezekiel 1:4, "And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire enfolding itself, and a brightness was about it..."; and Malachi 3:2, "Who
may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like refiner's fire . . ."


24 The problem of self-annihilation was one which fascinated Donne all his life; it is, of course, also a theological problem: if death releases man to God, is he not justified in despatching himself to God more quickly? As Donne says, "mee thinks I have the keyes of my prison in mine owne hand," quoted (p. 27 in John Donne: Selected Prose, eds. Helen Gardner and Timothy Healy, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1967) from Biathanatos. This work is an exercise in casuistry, it is true, and like the paradox it is, it grossly overstates the arguments. Donne was conscious of the function of paradox in making man vigilant for truth when he declared "... as in the poole of Bethsaida, there was no health till the water was troubled, so the best way to find truth in this matter, was to debate and vex it" (p. 28). Nevertheless, he also states his purpose in Biathanatos thus: "So doe I wish, and as much as I can, effect, that to those many learned and subtile men which have travelled in this point, some charitable and compassionate men might be added" (p. 29); and the arguments of Paradox 5, "That all things kill themselves" (quoted pp. 10-11), outweigh, in wit at least, that of Paradox 9, "That only Cowards dare dye" (p. 15).


26. Ibid., pp. 320 ff.

27 In The Elder Statesman, Monica says of Lord Claverton's death, "In becoming no one, he has become himself . . .", p. 108, (London: Faber, 1959).

28 Sermon, "Preached at Pauls, upon Christmas Day, in the Evening. 1624"; "One of the most convenient Hieroglyphicks of God, is a Circle; and a Circle is endless . . ." Sermons, VI, 173.

29 Cf. "the round earths imagin'd corners", "Holy Sonnet" #165 in Shawcross.

30 It is the paradox of Zeno's arrow: at any given moment in flight the arrow is at a point and therefore at rest. Logically, then, the flying arrow is motionless. That is, a line consists of a number of points whose length is zero. Of course, the paradox here draws attention to conflicts in epistemology, depending as it does "upon a failure of concurrence between forms of logic and sense experience." Colie, p. 10. Cf. Browne: "what to us is to come, to his Eternitie is present, his whole duration being but one permanent point, without succession, parts, flux, or divi-
31 Colie describes, too, the paradoxes constructed on the idea of an egg as a sphere and hence an '0', a nothing, and as a symbol of generation, p. 226.

32 Donne even turned the concepts of the New Philosophy to a religious advantage: "for me thinks the new Astronomie is thus appliable well, that we which are a little earth, should rather move towards God, than he which is fulfilling, and can come no whither, should move towards us," from a letter to Goodyer, probably in 1608 or 1609, quoted in Selected Prose, p. 133.

33 Cf. Donne's Devotions, Med. X: "This is nature's nest of boxes: the heavens contain the earth; the earth, cities; cities, men; And all these are concentric; the common centre to them all is decay, ruin; only that is eccentric which was never made; only that place, or garment rather, which we can imagine but not demonstrate." Devotions Upon Emergent Occasions Together With Death's Duel, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1959, p. 63.

34 Eliot uses this "whirled-world" pun similarly in Ash Wednesday V:

Against the Word the unstilled world still whirled
About the centre of the silent Word.
One suspects that Donne had the same pun in mind in his repeated pejorative use of the word "world" in the Anniversary poems.

35 Cf. Underhill, Mysticism, Ch. X, "The Unitive Life".


38 "determined" has the meaning here of "terminated", Shawcross, p. 272.

39 "She moves through the regions of earth, water, air, and fire, and the spheres of the Moon, Venus, Mercury, Sun, Mars, Jupiter (Jove), Saturn ("his father"), and the Fixed Stars (the Firmament). The order given for Venus and Mercury is that of Tycho Brahe rather than Ptolemy." Shawcross, p. 296.


"Action rightly renounced brings freedom:
Action rightly performed brings freedom:
Both are better
Than the mere shunning of action."  Ibid., p. 56.

43 "Reversion" here refers to possession of the estate of life for a given time, but which ultimately reverts to its original grantor, God. The concept is related to that in the second Anniversary (149-156) describing the action of disseizen which man brings against himself (see footnote 10, above); Eliot's metaphor here also implies the communion the living and the dead enjoy, first as in East Coker, in a nourishing of life by the dead, and then in the heavenly community. The specific use of the term occurs in Donne's "Sermon of commemoration of the Lady Danvers, late Wife of Sir John Danvers. Preached at Chilsey, where she was lately buried." 1 July 1627:
"She expected that; dissolution of body, and soule; and rest in both, from the incumbrances, and tentations of this world. But yet, shee is in expectation still; Still a Reversionarie; And a Reversionary, upon a long life; The whole world must die, before she come to a possession of this Reversion; which is a Glorified body in the Resurrection."  Sermons, VIII, 91-92.

44 The chapel was founded in 1625 and used as a retreat by the family of Nicholas Ferrar until the dissolution of the religious community in 1647. It was restored for worship in the nineteenth century. Legend has it that Charles I rested there, "a broken king", on his way to give himself over to the Scots in 1648. Cf. Gardner, The Art of T. S. Eliot, pp. 177-178.

45 "... Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

46 Unfortunately the Grace Warrack edition of the Revelations of Divine Love was unavailable to me; the Wolters translation into modern English loses something: "But Jesus, who in this vision informed me of all I needed, answered "Sin was necessary -- but it is all going to be all right, it is all going to be all right; everything is going to be all right" (p. 103).

47 Compare the description of the baptism of Jesus in Jordan:
"And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him" (Mark 1:10), and the visiting of the Spirit of Pentecost on the Apostles:
"And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them" (Acts 2:4).

48 The tension of Paradise Lost consists in Milton's attempt to justify God's ways to man; God made man "sufficient to have stood, though free to fall", and the punishment which falls on "innocent frail man" when he exercises this choice is difficult to justify to short-sighted man.

49 The distinction between the first and second resurrections
is made earlier in the second Anniversary:

So by the soule doth death string Heaven and Earth,
For when our soule enjoys this her third birth,
(Creation gave her one, a second grace),
Heaven is as neare . . .

(PS, 213-216),

but Donne clarifies it in a Sermon "Preached at S. Pauls, upon Easter-day, in the Evening, 1624" on the text Apoc. 20:6 "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the First Resurrection", Sermons VI, 62-80. By means of grace, brought palpably to man's understanding in the Incarnation, Crucifixion, and Resurrection of God, man is redeemed from sin; the second resurrection is that of the soul to the body of heaven after the last Trumpet. In the Devotions Donne also describes his recovery from illness as a kind of resurrection: "...we shall have a resurrection in heaven; the knowledge of that thou castest by another glass upon us here; we feel that we have a resurrection from sin, and that by another glass too; we see we have a resurrection of the body from the miseries and calamities of this life. This resurrection of my body shows me the resurrection of my soul; and both here severally, of both together hereafter." Expostulation XXI, p. 140.
CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

Three centuries separate the poetry of Donne and Eliot, and if one were to examine closely the intellectual and social milieu of each man, perhaps as many differences as similarities of poetic experience would reveal themselves. Eliot, as publisher, poet, and critic of literary and social currents, seems to stand in sharp contrast to Donne the witty courtier-turned-priest. But, as Eliot insists, it is the patterns made from the poet's experience which should be the object of consideration, and it is in these transmutations of feelings and ideas into the forms of art that Eliot and Donne are most comparable.

The work of each poet is a whole, revealing to the reader not only an argument for belief, for this would make the poems mere proselytism, but a vision of what it means to seek and discover divine love. The goal of each poet is spiritual renewal in a fallen and mutable world; beginning with the premise that it is necessary to believe, each man goes on to examine, by means of deliberate scepticism, doubt, and objective self-analysis, the tenets of his belief. Aware that there is no anaesthetic for death and despair, the poet probes the meaning of death and its relationship to the
possibilities for spiritual rebirth. In coming to an acceptance of man's mutability and its part in divine reality, he holds up for examination all phenomenological experience through which he perceives intuitively his inner self, the divine spark.

In an effort to become "expert beyond experience", the poet must resolve the apparent contradictions in the demands of flesh and spirit; this he does by emulating the Incarnation of divine principle and human flesh, the idealized man in Christ. By this example, suffering is seen to be the key to timebound existence; it is the only way to make time meaningful, to redeem time through time, to "tune the Instrument here at the dore" before entering into heavenly harmony. Even in the most profane of Donne's love lyrics, his aim is to achieve some kind of unifying experience, either in transcendent physical union, or in a fusion of kindred souls. With wit and self-mocking objectivity, he examines his feelings and responses in the love relationship. The despair of man without faith is the focus of Eliot's early poetry and in this emphasis it differs from the witty and erotic love poetry of Donne; the development of each poet converges, however, in the experience analyzed in the Anniversary poems and the Four Quartets.

In these poems, their similarities in techniques are most apparent: each poem explores the via negativa of the
soul seeking an understanding of divine love. Each poet uses paradox in imagery to express what he perceives as paradoxical in the experience itself: death is to be described as a birth; divine light is sought in darkness and deprivation of worldly comfort; the soul is revealed as part of the divine "all this All" by stripping off the self. Right knowledge is a torment which is revealed as love. The "progress of the soul" is made by following a dialectical analysis and rejection of all experience, sensory and intellectual, in order to arrive at a knowledge of what had always been known intuitively. Reason is used to arrive at what can only be understood on a plane beyond discursive reasoning.

The triumph of tone at the end of the *Anniversaries* and *Four Quartets* is unmistakable: its source is found as much in the achievement of artistic purpose as it is in the attainment of spiritual goals. All the threads of the poem come together in a perfect reconciliation of opposites. In expressing the inexpressible, the poet has created a delicate pattern of his feelings,

Caught in the form of limitation
Between un-being and being.
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